

Evaluation of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Process and Outcomes Study Final Report September 24, 2012

Prepared for:

The U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training
Administration
Office of Policy Development and
Research
200 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20210

DOL Contract No.
DOLJ071A20545
SPR Project No. 1149

Project Director:

Deborah Kogan (SPR)

Principal Investigators:

Andrew Wiegand (SPR)
Lisa Schwartz (Mathematica)

Prepared by:

Social Policy Research Associates

Deborah Kogan
Hannah Betesh
Marian Negoita
Jeffrey Salzman
Laura Paulen
Haydee Cuza

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Liz Potamites
Jillian Berk
Carrie Wolfson
Patty Cloud

This page left intentionally blank

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ES-1
The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).....	ES-1
The SCSEP Evaluation	ES-3
Program Participants	ES-3
Program Structure and Operations	ES-4
Services	ES-6
Managing Performance	ES-8
Outcomes.....	ES-9
Program Challenges and Recommendations for Program Improvement	ES-10
Conclusion	ES-12
SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND AND STUDY DESIGN	
I. STUDY CONTEXT: OVERVIEW OF SCSEP.....	I-1
Program History and Goals	I-1
Funding Stream and Required Coordination.....	I-4
Service Delivery Arrangements	I-6
Expenditure Requirements	I-9
Performance Goals and Reporting	I-10
Program Guidance and Oversight	I-11
Recent Funding Challenges	I-12
Organization of the Remainder of this Report.....	I-13
II. STUDY OBJECTIVES AND METHODS.....	II-1
Conceptual Framework	II-2
Research Questions	II-5
Overview of Research Methods.....	II-6
SECTION TWO: CHARACTERISTICS OF SCSEP PARTICIPANTS AND KEY FEATURES OF LOCAL PROJECTS	
III. SCSEP PARTICIPANTS AND PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION BY GRANTEE AND SUB-RECIPIENT	III-1

Characteristics of SCSEP Participants	III-1
Characteristics of Grantees and Sub-Recipients	III-7
Program Participation Patterns	III-12
Key Findings on Participants and Participation Patterns	III-20
IV. LOCAL PROJECT STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION	IV-1
Types of Organizations that Operate Local Projects	IV-1
Staffing	IV-2
Coordination with Community Partners.....	IV-7
Policy Guidance, Oversight, and Support from National and State Grantees	IV-15
Key Findings on Local Project Structure and Organization	IV-19
V. PARTICIPANT SERVICES	V-1
Bringing Participants into the Projects	V-1
Helping Participants Navigate SCSEP: Service Planning and Case Management	V-5
Increasing Participant Skills.....	V-15
Helping Participants Enter Unsubsidized Employment	V-32
Key Findings on Participant Services	V-44
VI. MANAGING PROJECT PERFORMANCE.....	VI-1
Core Performance Measures.....	VI-1
Grantee Performance Levels.....	VI-4
Perceptions about Factors that Inhibit Performance Levels	VI-5
Strategies Used to Improve Performance Levels.....	VI-9
Unmeasured Outcomes.....	VI-13
Key Findings on Performance Management.....	VI-16
SECTION THREE: PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT	
VII. POST-SCSEP EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.....	VII-1
Employment Outcomes for Included Exiters	VII-1
Variation in Employment Outcomes Across Sub-recipients and Grantees	VII-6
Associations among Employment Outcomes and Characteristics of Participants and Sub-recipients	VII-7
Exploring Variation in Employment Outcomes Across Sub-Recipients	VII-14
Key Findings on Post-SCSEP Employment.....	VII-17
VIII. THE PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE	VIII-1

Findings from the Customer Satisfaction Survey	VIII-1
Findings from Participant Interviews and Focus Groups	VIII-19
IX. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS	IX-1
Key Features of SCSEP	IX-1
Perceived Tensions in the SCSEP Program Model	IX-4
Other SCSEP Project Challenges.....	IX-7
Recommendations for Program Improvement	IX-12
Conclusion	IX-15
Appendix A. Topic Guide for SCSEP National Grantee Interview	A-1
Appendix B. State SCSEP Director Topic Guide.....	B-1
Appendix C. Protocols for SCSEP Local Site Visits	C-1
Appendix D. Process Study Site Visit Write-Up Template.....	D-1
Appendix E. Technical Appendix on Quantitative Analysis of SPARQ Data.....	E-1
Appendix F. Tables From Quantitative Analysis of SPARQ Data.....	F-1
Appendix G. SCSEP Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey Protocol	G-1
Appendix H. Technical Appendix and Tables for Customer Satisfaction Survey Analysis.....	H-1

EXHIBITS

Exhibit II-1: SCSEP Program Logic Model	II-4
Exhibit II-2: Case Study Sites By Region	II-10
Exhibit II-3: Local SCSEP Projects Visited During the Process Study	II-11
Exhibit II-4: Case Study Site by Grantee	II-12
Exhibit II-5: Case Study Sites by Size of Service Area and Percent Rural Participants	II-13
Exhibit III-1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Included Exiters	III-3
Exhibit III-2: Barriers to Employment included in SCSEP Indicator of “Service to Most-in-Need”	III-5
Exhibit III-3: Characteristics of SCSEP Sub-recipients by Grantee Type, Program Year 2009	III-8
Exhibit III-4: Sub-recipient Size and Urbanicity	III-9
Exhibit III-5: Percent of Sub-recipients Serving Participants Below Age 65	III-10
Exhibit III-6: Percent of Sub-recipients Serving Participants Age 75 and Older	III-11
Exhibit III-7: Demographic Characteristics of Participants by Type of Sub- recipient: Percentage of Total Participants	III-12
Exhibit III-8: Community Service Assignments, Training, and On-the-Job Experience: Overall and Sub-recipient Averages by Type of Sub-recipient	III-13
Exhibit III-9: Average Quarterly Training Hours by Selected Participant Characteristics	III-15
Exhibit III-10: Spell Durations	III-17
Exhibit III-11: Distribution of Total Program Duration for Participants	III-18
Exhibit III-12: Median Total Program Duration by Select Participant Characteristics	III-18
Exhibit III-13: Demographic Characteristics of Excluded and Included Exiters, Program Years 2009 and 2010	III-19
Exhibit V-1: Paid Weekly Hours at Study Sites at the Time of the Site Visit	V-21
Exhibit V-2: Community Service Assignment Duration Policies	V-22

Exhibit V-3: Elements of High-Quality Community Service Assignments, as Viewed by Participants	V-24
Exhibit VI-1: Nationwide Performance on Core Measures: Average Across all Grantees	VI-4
Exhibit VI-2: Nationwide Performance on Core Measures: Proportion of Grantees Meeting Goals	VI-5
Exhibit VII-1: Employment of Included Exiters, by Select Participant Characteristics	VII-3
Exhibit VII-2: Mean Starting Hourly Wage for Included Exiters, by Select Participant Characteristics	VII-4
Exhibit VII-3: Median Earnings in Second and Third Quarters after Exit, by Select Participant Characteristics	VII-5
Exhibit VII-4: Employment in Third Quarter after Exit, by Select Participant Characteristics	VII-6
Exhibit VII-5: Variation in Employment Outcomes Across Sub-recipients	VII-7
Exhibit VII-6: Regression-adjusted Mean Employment Rate, by Subgroups	VII-9
Exhibit VII-7: Regression-adjusted Employment Rates, by Age	VII-11
Exhibit VII-8: Regression-adjusted Employment Rates, by Education	VII-12
Exhibit VII-9: Differences in Regression-adjusted Employment Rates Between Those With Certain Barriers to Employment and Those Without	VII-13
Exhibit VII-10: Regression-adjusted Employment Rates, by Level of Local Unemployment	VII-14
Exhibit VII-11: Variation in Entered-employment Rates across Sub-recipients	VII-15
Exhibit VII-12: Adjusted R-Square Values for Sub-recipient Employment Models	VII-17
Exhibit VIII-1: Demographic Characteristics of Customer Survey Respondents and the Universe of Program Participants (Program Year 2009 and Q1 of Program Year 2010)	VIII-3
Exhibit VIII-2: Average ACSI Score for SCSEP Compared to Other Public Sector Entities	VIII-5
Exhibit VIII-3: Average ACSI Score for Selected SCSEP Subgroups	VIII-6
Exhibit VIII-4: Average ACSI Score for Age Groups	VIII-7
Exhibit VIII-5: Average ACSI Score by Education	VIII-8
Exhibit VIII-6: Average Score for Survey Item “The Older Worker Program staff understood my employment interests and needs.”	VIII-10
Exhibit VIII-7: Average Score for Survey Item, “The Older Worker Program helped me obtain a community service assignment that was just right for me.”	VIII-11
Exhibit VIII-8: Average Score for Survey Item, “My host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful in my assignment.”	VIII-12

Exhibit VIII-9: Average Score for Survey Item, “The Older Worker Program helped me obtain the supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, housing or medical care, that I needed to meet my employment goals.” VIII-13

Exhibit VIII-10: Regression-Adjusted Mean ACSI Score, by Subgroups..... VIII-14

Exhibit VIII-11: Sensitivity of Overall ACSI Score to Variations in Satisfaction on Key Program Components (From Regression Findings) VIII-16

Exhibit IX-1: Frequency of Practices used by the Highest-performing Projects Compared to the Other Case Study Projects IX-12

Disclaimer

This report has been funded, either wholly or in part, with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA), Office of Policy Development and Research (OPDR) under Contract Number DOLJ071A20545. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many people whose cooperation and efforts have made this report possible. We thank the staff at each of the national SCSEP grantees, who met with the members of the study team in the late fall of 2011, helped orient us to the intricacies of SCSEP and shared with us their perspectives on the challenges they face in administering the program. We also appreciated talking with the state SCSEP administrators in the four states where we visited state-administered projects. Although this report focuses primarily on the variations in service designs and program operations at the sub-recipient (local project) level, we acknowledge the important role played by the national and state grantees in guiding and supporting local SCSEP projects.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the SCSEP managers and staff at the 29 local SCSEP projects we visited during the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012. These local program contacts went out of their way to arrange for us to visit host agencies, observe community service work sites, convene focus groups of current and past participants. They also provided detailed information about local project operations and talked frankly with us about program challenges and accomplishments. We would also like to express our sincere thanks to the SCSEP participants who shared their stories with us and described their experiences during and after SCSEP participation.

We would also like to thank the many people at the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) who supported this study in many ways. Special thanks are due to our current Project Officer, Upeksha Savi Swick, of ETA's Office of Policy Development and Research, and our previous Project Officer, Bogdan Tereshchenko, both of whom were tremendously supportive of the project and helped us move forward quickly to develop the study design and get the study underway. We also appreciate the thoughtful information and support provided by Judith Chase Gilbert, in the ETA Office of Workforce Investment's Division of Adult Services and Bennett Pudlin of Charter Oak Group, a consultant to ETA on SCSEP. Whenever we had a question about SCSEP policy or how SCSEP works, these two program experts provided the exact information we needed on a quick turn-around basis.

We would like to thank the many members of the project team whose contributions along the way were indispensable to the project. At Social Policy Research Associates, we thank the following site visitors, who, in addition to the authors of the report, visited local sites and brought back detailed information about project's key features and operational details: Michael Midling, Miloney Thakrar, Brandon Nicholson, and Melissa Mack. We also thank Andrew Wiegand and Ron D'Amico for their guidance and contributions to the study effort.

At Mathematica Policy Research, special thanks are due to the members of the site visiting team: Camila Fernandez, Lisa Klein, Tessa Kieffer, and Alicia Leonard. We also wish to thank the members of the SPARQ team, who generated the administrative datafiles used in our analysis and who also provided vital support and interpretation of the data: Sheldon Bond, Shelly Craig, and Matt Potts. Thanks are also due to our programmer, Mason DeCamillis, our senior reviewers Linda Rosenberg and Karen Needels, and Tom Armington, who provided valuable support for the final report writing task. We wish to thank as well both Lisa Schwartz and Dan Shapiro for their wise guidance and leadership throughout the effort.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Older workers—defined as those over the age of 55—account for an ever-increasing segment of the American labor force. As they grow in numbers, however, older workers are also particularly vulnerable to job dislocation, in part because rapid economic globalization has eliminated millions of jobs in manufacturing and other traditional fields of employment.¹ Older workers are also becoming a growing share of the long-term and very long-term unemployed, a trend that started before the recent recession and has steadily advanced. Between 2007 and 2011, the proportion of unemployed workers over 50 who were jobless for six months or more jumped from 24 percent to 54 percent.² Against this backdrop, the assistance offered by the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is of particularly timely importance.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

SCSEP was established in 1965 and incorporated under the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973. Operated by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA), SCSEP provides subsidized minimum-wage, part-time community service assignments for low-income persons age 55 or older who would otherwise have poor employment prospects. Over its 46-year history, SCSEP has responded to the fact that older workers tend to have more difficulty than younger workers in finding new jobs when they become unemployed because of their greater likelihood as a group to have lower levels of formal education and obsolete skills, and because many employers hold negative stereotypes of older workers.

More specifically, as the only federal employment and training program targeted specifically to older Americans, SCSEP aims to:

¹ Van Horn, Carl E., Kathy Krepcio, and Neil Ridley, "Public and Private Strategies for Assisting Older Workers," in *Older and Out of Work: Jobs and Social Insurance for a Changing Economy*, ed. Randall W. Eberts and Richard A. Hobbie, (Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2008), 205-224.

² McKenna, Claire, "Economy in Focus: Long Road Ahead for Older Unemployed Workers," *National Employment Law Project*, March 9, 2012.

- foster and promote part-time training opportunities in community service activities for eligible persons who are 55 years of age or older and who have poor employment prospects,
- foster individual economic self-sufficiency, and
- increase the number of older persons who enter unsubsidized employment in the public and private sectors.

Amendments to the OAA in 2000 and 2006 responded to the new economic realities facing older workers by emphasizing the training function of SCSEP’s community service assignments—to prepare older workers to transition to unsubsidized jobs at a competitive wage in the public or private sector. At the same time, the amendments highlighted that individuals with certain employment barriers should receive priority for services because they are most in need of assistance³. The 2006 amendments also established limits on participants’ duration in the program for the first time in the program’s history⁴. Subsequently, ETA released the 2010 Final Rule outlining the agency’s regulations for SCSEP based on the 2006 OAA Amendments. In the 2010 Final Rule, ETA clarifies that while all SCSEP enrollees must have an initial goal of unsubsidized employment, it may become clear through future reassessments that unsubsidized employment is no longer a realistic goal for some participants. In such cases, ETA directs SCSEP to help participants achieve the goal of self-sufficiency through other means, such as transitioning to other services or programs. Consequently, the goals of the SCSEP program remain broad enough to encompass community service, service to those most-in-need, economic self-sufficiency, and employment-related objectives.

SCSEP funds are awarded to both national grantees and state grantees, with national grantees receiving about 78 percent of the funds and state grantees receiving about 22 percent of the funds. National and state grantees are then responsible for designating local project operators to provide direct services to SCSEP participants and for monitoring local projects’ compliance with program regulations and assisting local projects in meeting the program’s goals. At present, 18 national grantees and 56 state/territorial grantees administer SCSEP grants. Each grant covers a

³ Among those eligible, priority access to SCSEP services must be given to veterans and the qualified spouses of veterans. In addition, program operators are instructed to give special consideration to individuals who are age 65 or older, have a disability, have limited English proficiency or low literacy skills, reside in a rural area, have poor employment prospects, have failed to find employment after using services provided through the American Job Center network, or are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

⁴ The OAA Amendments of 2006 instituted a new rule governing the length of time participants may receive SCSEP services. Individual participation is limited to 48 months and average duration of participation for all participants under a single grantee is limited to 27 months. Grantees may request ETA approval of extensions to the participation limits for individuals with particular characteristics, as well as extensions of the average duration under extenuating circumstances.

specific number of participant positions in a specific service area, computed on a “cost per authorized position” formula. In Program Year 2011, SCSEP was funded at approximately \$450 million, which was intended to cover a total of 46,103 authorized participant positions. This is estimated to be sufficient to cover less than one percent of eligible participants.

The SCSEP Evaluation

ETA contracted with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) and Mathematica Policy Research (Mathematica) to conduct a process and outcomes study of SCSEP. To learn about local-project performance, program outcomes, and the views of program participants, SPR and Mathematica analyzed two sets of quantitative data: (1) individual-level data from the SCSEP Performance and Results Quarterly Progress Report (SPARQ) system for Program Years 2009 and 2010, and (2) a customer-satisfaction survey administered by ETA during Program Year 2010 for a sample of program participants who were active in the SCSEP program at some point during Program Year 2009. To examine program implementation, SPR conducted in-person and telephone interviews with 17 national grantees and 4 state grantees during the fall of 2011 and then made case study site visits to 29 local programs between November of 2011 and February of 2012 (24 sub-recipients of national grants and 5 sub-recipients of state grants). Finally, to learn more about participants’ views of the program, SPR conducted informal interviews and focus-group sessions with participants at all 29 case-study sites.

Program Participants

When they apply to the SCSEP program, older workers are in financial need; they want assistance preparing for and finding employment. They usually are unaware of the types of jobs that may be available in their communities and have only limited experience with up-to-date job search techniques. Participants are an extremely diverse group in terms of education level, age, previous work history, specific employment barriers, and eligibility for retirement income, Social Security, or other public benefits. Moreover, they vary in whether they want or need full-time or part-time employment.

Analysis of the SPARQ data on participants served revealed the following key findings (explored in more detail in Chapter III):

- SCSEP succeeded in its mission to serve low-income older adults. Eighty-eight percent of participants were below the poverty level. The mean age of program participants was 64 years of age; the median was 62 years of age.
- Many participants faced barriers to employment. Fifteen percent had a disability. Twenty percent of participants had low literacy skills, and 10 percent had limited English proficiency. Additionally, 31 percent lived in rural areas. A number of participants had more than one barrier to employment.

- Although all grantees and sub-recipients served low-income older adults, there was substantial variation in the client populations served by individual grantees and sub-recipients, particularly in the percentages of participants who are over 75 years old, have less than a high school diploma, or are disabled.

Additionally, site visits to local programs underscored that the recent recession has resulted in a changing participant population. Increasingly, project operators have been enrolling individuals under 65 years of age who are turning to SCSEP as other efforts to find reemployment prove unsuccessful. This shift in the participant population has been a challenge for some SCSEP projects, as most of the SCSEP community service assignments are in relatively low-skilled work, regardless of the occupational classification. Data from participant focus groups suggest that while participants are usually quite satisfied with their community service assignments, some of those with higher levels of education and work experience would be better served if projects could ensure that the skills they are learning at their community service assignments were appropriate to mid- or higher-level occupations.

Program Structure and Operations

Of the 29 programs the study team visited, 15 are directly operated by national grantees, and four are operated by local affiliates of a national grantee. The rest are equally divided between programs housed in local public agencies (American Job Centers, Area Agencies on Aging, or other entities such as community colleges) and those run by local community-based organizations. For about half of the local project operators, the SCSEP project is their primary or sole program responsibility; for the remaining organizations, SCSEP is one among a number of different programs provided to local residents. Chapter IV discusses project organization and staffing in detail; key findings are detailed below.

The recent recession and reductions in program funding pose a challenge to SCSEP project operations. The local SCSEP project operators we visited have encountered operational challenges stemming from major funding volatility and the severe economic downturn. To deal with a recent reduction in funding, programs have had to freeze new enrollments, lay off or reduce the hours of regular employees, reduce the number of paid hours for community service assignments, accelerate efforts to place existing participants into unsubsidized employment, and cut back on additional skills training outside the community service assignment. Moreover, amidst the poor economic conditions, project operators are finding it more difficult to place participants in unsubsidized employment. Yet, at the same time that participants are taking

longer to find employment, project operators are being encouraged by many grantees to shorten the average length of time that participants remain in the program.⁵

Most SCSEP projects rely heavily on participant staff members. Participant staff members—participants who are assigned to SCSEP as their community service assignments—comprise the bulk of the staff at 17 of the 29 sites. Projects often use them to provide key participant services such as case management and job development. The heavy use of participant staff members generates several challenges: the more-frequent staff turnover is disruptive; the reliance on participant staff members to provide services generates a disincentive to move these participants into unsubsidized employment; and participant staff members working as case managers commonly lack formal training.

There is room for improvement in local projects' level of coordination with the workforce investment system. At local projects where good connections exist with American Job Centers, the Centers offer the potential for expanded and improved services to older workers. Our case study observations indicate that providing services tailored to meet the needs of SCSEP participants within American Job Centers increases the frequency with which SCSEP participants use the core services offered by American Job Centers and improves their ability to find jobs. Looking at the performance of the case study sites, we found that projects that achieved higher rates of entered employment were more likely than other projects to (1) house some or all staff at a American Job Center and/or (2) arrange for a significant proportion of all SCSEP participants to use resources at American Job Centers for job search training or job search support.

Nevertheless, many of the local projects visited by the study team expressed frustration over the nature of their relationship with American Job Centers. Both SCSEP staff members and participants noted that the “light touch” services available at the core service level do not provide as much one-on-one, individualized attention as older workers are often wanting or needing, which can result in older workers feeling unwelcome at the centers. Likewise, SCSEP staff members perceive that American Job Centers are reluctant to enroll older workers in more intensive services. Their perception is that this reluctance stems from a conflict between a WIA focus on placing participants into full-time employment and many older workers' preference for finding part-time employment. Moreover, although many SCSEP project operators cite American Job Centers as a key source of referrals to SCSEP, they also perceive that SCSEP is

⁵ Although the mandatory participation time limit established in the 2006 Amendments to the Older Americans Act is 48 months, several national grantees encourage their local program operators to help participants find unsubsidized jobs within six months or less.

the default referral for all older workers by many American Job Center staff, regardless of whether the individual is an appropriate candidate for SCSEP or not.

Because the SCSEP qualitative evaluation design did not call for interviews with American Job Center staff in every site, we cannot report on how these staff members perceive SCSEP participants overall. In sites where we did talk with Job Center staff, individuals did not seem hostile to older workers as much as overwhelmed by customer demand and unable to respond to any customers seeking individualized job search assistance. SCSEP staff and participants may be interpreting the American Job Center emphasis on self-service for customers receiving core services as hostility to older workers.

Local projects enjoy strong and mutually beneficial relationships with host agencies. By providing no-cost labor to host agencies, SCSEP enables struggling public and non-profit agencies to continue offering their services in a time of both greater public need and reduced funding. At the same time, local SCSEP projects are able to stay within their limited budgets for training by using host agencies as the primary platform for skills training. These mutual benefits are the basis of a strong partnership. Additionally, participants see their host-agency placements as valuable ways to either gain work experience or fill in resume gaps. Another feature of the host agency relationship is that nearly all local SCSEP projects emphasize placing participants into unsubsidized jobs in their host agencies. In nearly half the projects visited, host agencies account for the majority of placements of SCSEP participants into unsubsidized jobs.

Services

SCSEP project managers face a demanding set of responsibilities related to providing services to participants. Managers and staff members must carefully review and document participant income and individual barriers to employment to ensure that applicants meet eligibility requirements and that the project is prioritizing services to those most in need. They must also assess participant suitability for the program. First, staff members must ensure that participants are interested in unsubsidized employment. Second, they must determine that participants are in need of additional training to be job ready and yet are not burdened with so many barriers (including challenges to employment not included in the official statutory barriers) that they need to address their other pre-employment needs before being able to participate in SCSEP program activities. Once participants are enrolled, the local project operators must provide initial and ongoing assessment and service planning and active case management; arrange for and provide continuous oversight of work experience and skill enhancement through the community service assignment and other training opportunities; arrange for participants to receive needed social services, and provide placement and job-search assistance. Local projects also face the challenge of operating the program at a time when budget cutbacks leave little funding for staffed services;

project operators have therefore needed to be exceedingly cost-conscious in designing and providing participant services.

Chapter V of this report explores the variations in intake, assessment, service planning, training and job placement that were observed across local projects. Specific findings of interest on participant services include the following:

Most projects offer very limited training outside of host agency placements. The reductions in the SCSEP budget during Program Year 2011 have restricted the amount of training that occurs outside of the community service assignment. Not only did most sites have to cut back the funds available for other training because of the reduction in the overall level of funding, but also it was harder to schedule training for participants within their reduced weekly schedules of paid participant hours. Skills training was eliminated in most projects during Program Year 2011 because of its cost, though a small number of participants receive occupational skills training funded by other programs (including very limited co-enrollment in WIA training), usually in connection with a potential placement. Sites with higher rates of entered employment are more likely than other projects to offer basic skills training to participants, either directly or by arranging basic skills training through another training provider.

Local projects emphasize job training rather than supportive services. SCSEP projects usually arrange for supportive services, such as transportation and housing, from other agencies, rather than providing them directly. While most projects document needs for supportive services during the service planning process and refer their participants to other agencies for those services, there is usually limited staff capacity for tracking referrals and determining whether participants are actually receiving the services they need. Customer satisfaction data revealed that participants are much less happy about the program's ability to offer supportive services than they are about other aspects of SCSEP's operation, suggesting that participants would like projects to pay more attention to their supportive service needs.

Local projects vary in the intensity and structure of the job search assistance they offer. Local projects display three models for supporting participants in the transition to unsubsidized employment. Some projects emphasize direct staff job development and referrals to positions developed by project staff members. Other projects emphasize more individualized, but largely *ad hoc* support of participant job-search efforts. A third group of projects support participants' self-directed job search efforts with structured group activities, such as job-search training workshops and job clubs. We found that projects with higher rates of entered employment were more likely than other projects to provide job search instruction directly. For many programs, staffing reductions in light of reduced funding have limited the extent to which SCSEP staff members can offer direct

one-on-one job search support. However, SCSEP participants are not enthusiastic about the movement towards group-based support of self-directed job search efforts: a number of focus group respondents expressed a wish that SCSEP provide more individualized assistance by referring participants to available jobs.

Managing Performance

Currently, there are six core measures of program performance for which grantees are held accountable, as well as three additional measures that are tracked but used more for information than for accountability purposes⁶. Ahead of each program year, ETA negotiates expected levels of performance on the core measures with each grantee. Grantees are held accountable for these negotiated performance goals and get to decide how they will work with their sub-recipients to achieve these goals. The core performance measures for SCSEP are intended to help grantees and local projects balance attention to different objectives: (1) providing high levels of community service; (2) reaching as many participants as possible; (3) serving as many participants with employment barriers as possible; and (4) achieving appropriate rates of employment—given participants’ barriers—in quality jobs.

In recent years, ETA regulations have greatly increased the emphasis on helping SCSEP participants move from their community-service positions to unsubsidized employment. At the same time, the program continues to emphasize serving the “most-in-need” among the older worker population. Because these two priorities are perceived to be in tension with each other—those “most in need” are by definition those who have the most difficulty finding unsubsidized employment—grantees and local project managers continue to express frustration about how to carry out both mandates simultaneously. Chapter VI of this report explores performance management practices at local SCSEP projects.

Local project operators identified several key factors that may impede their efforts to meet their performance goals. First, the statutory definitions of employment barriers do not specify some of the characteristics that can make individuals particularly difficult to place into employment (e.g., ex-offender status, history of substance abuse, or mental health conditions), and some performance measures require documentation of participant circumstances or outcomes that can

⁶ The six core measures are aggregate hours of community service employment, entry into unsubsidized employment, retention in unsubsidized employment for six months, average earnings, the number of eligible individuals served, and the number of most-in-need individuals served. The three additional measures are retention in unsubsidized employment for one year; satisfaction of participants, employers, and host agencies with their program experiences and the services provided; and entry into volunteer work.

be difficult to obtain. Additionally, the lack of available job openings and limited public transportation in many regions can make it extremely difficult to help participants transition to unsubsidized employment. Some participants are also reluctant to transition to unsubsidized employment, or may have trouble doing so because they have multiple employment barriers. Finally, most projects rely on participant staff members who are not experienced in case management or workforce development and turn over more frequently due to the durational limits on participation.

To improve project performance on the core measures, project managers describe using the following strategies:

- Train participant staff—particularly around the issue of program performance—and provide a supportive, encouraging environment for all participants.
- Beyond screening for basic eligibility, make sure that each participant is appropriate for the program—and that acute social service needs are being addressed before program entry.
- Conduct comprehensive assessments and develop detailed training plans that set specific training goals, make host agency assignments that match participants' goals, and monitor host agency and participant progress in furthering IEP goals.
- Arrange a broad range of training activities for participants outside the community service assignment, including training in computer skills and other topics such as financial literacy and healthy living.
- Use job clubs to provide proactive job-search assistance and support participants in looking for employment.

Project managers also emphasized that the SCSEP program creates additional benefits not adequately captured by the current core performance measures. In addition to improving participants' social and emotional well-being, perceived benefits to program participants include improvements in physical health and improvements in economic security as a result of wages earned through the community service assignment. Moreover, at a time when public and non-profit agency budgets are shrinking, SCSEP participants are also making meaningful contributions to the community by increasing the capacity of host agencies to address community needs.

Outcomes

Analysis of SPARQ data from Program Years 2009 and 2010 revealed a strong relationship between participant characteristics and employment outcomes. Chapter VII of this report presents outcomes for SCSEP participants in greater detail. Overall, forty-six percent of SCSEP exiters available for employment entered unsubsidized employment. However, the employment rate was lower for some groups of participants, including participants with a disability, older

workers, and participants with lower levels of education. Our regression models found strong relationships between most participant characteristics and the probability of entering unsubsidized employment. Participants were less likely to enter unsubsidized employment if they lived in counties with high unemployment rates, and the likelihood of entering unsubsidized employment declined with age.

Additionally, behind the overall job placement rate of 46 percent, there was substantial variation across projects. Ten percent of sub-recipients had placement rates below 18 percent, while the top 10 percent of sub-recipients had placement rates that exceeded 69 percent.

Our other data sources indicated that the program offers significant social and emotional benefits for participants. Data from the annual ETA customer satisfaction survey of SCSEP participants conducted in 2010 revealed that the average level of customer satisfaction for SCSEP is significantly higher than it is for other federal or local government programs, including all social assistance programs, and is also higher than the average score in the health care and social assistance sector. Participants are also very satisfied with their community service assignments and host agencies, and high retention rates at the jobs obtained after they exit SCSEP. This indicates that participants benefit from stable post-program employment. During focus groups and conversations with participants at host agencies, one common theme that emerged was that participants were grateful for the encouragement they received from staff members and the renewed self-confidence they felt because of participating in the program. Participants also benefit from the social connections that they are able to make while enrolled in the program.

Program Challenges and Recommendations for Program Improvement

Local project managers struggle with how to prioritize the different core performance measures established for SCSEP. They also expressed concern about how to further the program's "quality of life" objectives for which there are no available performance measures. In particular, project managers asked for increased guidance on how to resolve potential tensions between serving most-in-need older workers and emphasizing employment outcomes as a primary performance measure. In addition to trying to balance the contradictions between competing SCSEP program goals, local projects face several additional challenges imposed, at least in part, by factors external to the program.

- Older workers with higher levels of education and work experience need a different kind of community service assignment than the typical SCSEP participant.
- During periods of high unemployment, SCSEP projects find it harder to place as many participants into unsubsidized jobs.

- Dramatic shifts in SCSEP funding levels posed serious operational challenges to local project operators during Program Year 2011, including pressures to cut back on additional skill training outside the community service assignment and accelerate efforts to place existing participants into unsubsidized employment.

Budget cutbacks in the public and non-profit sectors have reduced the capacity of host agencies to hire SCSEP participants. SCSEP projects find it difficult to draw on the resources of American Job Centers to support participants in finding jobs. The following changes, implemented at the grantee or local project level, may help to raise the quality of the services provided to SCSEP participant staff and other SCSEP participants:

- To respond to the problems associated with the extensive use of participant staff, projects could do the following:
 - Provide formal training to prepare the participant staff members who provide case management, job development, and/or job search support services to SCSEP participants.
 - Develop a schedule for recruiting new participant staff members on a regular basis and help existing participant staff members find unsubsidized jobs that build on the skills they have gained by working as SCSEP staff members.
- To improve their ability to address the needs of dislocated workers, projects could invest staff time and energy to develop community service assignments and supplementary training that will develop skills for SCSEP participants who come to the program with higher levels of formal education and work experience.
- To improve the services available to all older workers, including SCSEP participants, projects could develop closer relationships with American Job Center managers and pool energy and resources to develop job search training workshops and job clubs that will better meet the needs of older workers.

Because local program managers said that they perceive a tension between different core performance measures and do not have any guidelines for furthering additional “quality of life” goals for participants, ETA and national and state grantees may want to help clarify program policies and improve the guidance provided to local project operators in the following ways:

- Reaffirm and clarify how to prioritize the different SCSEP program objectives.
- Provide additional guidance on how to use the employment-related core performance measures to guide program design and operations, without minimizing the importance of other program objectives.
- Help local projects identify appropriate trade-offs between helping participants obtain unsubsidized employment and helping them plan for their long-term financial stability and eventual retirement.
- Encourage local projects to provide participants with detailed information that will enable them to make informed choices about the various sources of support

available to them (e.g., Social Security benefits, financial assistance for low-income individuals, social services in the local community) and to make informed decisions about their employment goals.

Finally, because of the perceived difficulties in coordinating SCSEP and WIA/American Job Center resources on behalf of older workers, ETA may want to focus attention and make specific investments to improve the responsiveness of the services available to older workers within American Job Centers. We believe it is essential for the SCSEP program and American Job Centers to pool their expertise and resources to improve services for all older workers for several reasons. The first is the fact that the SCSEP program does not have the capacity to serve more than a tiny percentage of the older workers with employment barriers who are currently unemployed and having difficulty finding reemployment in a tough labor market. The second reason for pooling the expertise and resources of American Job Center staffs and SCSEP staffs is that American Job Centers need help in developing effective strategies to support older job seekers. Although it is not clear where funding to support coordinated efforts by SCSEP and WIA will come from in the current budget environment, the need for more effective services for older workers is compelling.

Conclusion

Local SCSEP projects are providing much-needed services that increase the emotional well-being of older workers, offer much-needed staffing for host agencies, and place nearly half of its exiters who are available for work into unsubsidized employment. Through our analysis of SPARQ, customer satisfaction, and site-visit data, we identified the following set of practices as those most likely to be effective in increasing the level of unsubsidized employment outcomes in the current economic climate: (1) arrange for skills training in addition to the community service assignment; (2) provide job search training and assistance directly; and (3) increase access to American Job Center services by either co-locating staff members at American Job Centers or specifically arranging for participants to use core services. The evaluation has also suggested that employment outcomes reflect only one aspect of the program's objectives, which also include increasing the overall quality of life of low-income elders who are having difficulty meeting their financial needs. Thus, to realize the program's multiple goals, local projects should draw on the potential of SCSEP services to help participants realize their potential for unsubsidized employment, while also promoting other factors important for a high quality of life.

SECTION ONE

BACKGROUND AND STUDY DESIGN

This section provides background on the history and structure of the SCSEP program, the goals of the evaluation, the research questions, and the methods used to address these questions. Chapter I provides a description of the growing importance of older workers within the U.S. labor force, gives information on the history and structure of the SCSEP program, and describes how the program has evolved in recent years. Chapter II summarizes the goals of the evaluation, presents key research questions, and describes the methods used to address these questions.

I. STUDY CONTEXT: OVERVIEW OF SCSEP

As the only federal employment and training program targeted specifically to older Americans, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provides subsidized minimum-wage, part-time community service jobs to low-income persons age 55 or older who have poor employment prospects. Over its 46-year history, SCSEP has served unemployed older workers in both urban and rural areas who possess serious employment barriers—such as low levels of formal education, physical and mental disabilities, limited English language and literacy skills, and obsolete skill sets—and who may also face discrimination in the job market due to the negative stereotypes of older workers held by some employers. SCSEP aims to (1) foster and promote part-time training opportunities in community service activities, (2) promote individual economic self-sufficiency, and (3) increase the number of older persons who enter unsubsidized employment in the public and private sectors.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA) funded Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) and its subcontractor, Mathematica Policy Research (Mathematica), to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of SCSEP. The evaluation had two parts: a quantitative study that analyzed existing administrative data and customer satisfaction survey data for Program Years 2009 and 2010, and a process study based on interviews with national SCSEP grantees and case-study site visits to 29 local projects during Program Year 2011. This report summarizes the results from both studies. It presents findings on the organization of the program, the participants served, the outcomes achieved, and the challenges faced by local projects, as well as information about the organizational factors and service features that influence SCSEP program success, as indicated by a wide range of outcome measures.

Program History and Goals

Initiated in 1965 as part of the Johnson administration’s “War on Poverty,” the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) was incorporated under Title IX of the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973, and in 1978 shifted to Title V of the OAA. SCSEP has operated under this legislation ever since.

Since the establishment of the SCSEP program, demographic and economic changes within the U.S. have changed the status of older workers within the workforce in important ways. As the

overall U.S. population ages and the number of new workers entering the labor force declines, aging workers are making up an increasing proportion of the workforce. During the 30-year period from 1977 to 2007, the employment of older workers (age 65 and over) doubled. While employment for workers age 16 and over increased 59 percent, older workers' employment increased by 101 percent (from 3 percent to 4 percent of the total U.S. civilian labor force). During this same 30-year period, there was also a marked shift in the gender proportions of the employed older worker population: the increase in the number of employed women age 65 and over was almost twice the increase observed for employed men in the same age group.

The aging of the workforce is expected to continue. Employment projections for the period 2006 to 2016 suggest that the number of workers ages 55 to 64 will rise by 36.5 percent. Even more staggering, the number of workers in the oldest age categories, ages 65 and over, is expected to escalate by more than 80 percent.⁷ By 2020, it is estimated that workers 55 and over will make up 25 percent of the U.S. civilian labor force, and workers 65 and over will make up over 7 percent of the total labor force.⁸

These statistics and projections make it clear that older workers are becoming a more essential part of the U.S. workforce. At the same time, however, individual older workers are also facing increasingly difficult challenges when they lose their jobs. Historically, older workers as a group have had lower rates of unemployment than younger workers, and have been perceived as needing less assistance with reemployment than other groups. However, many older workers have been particularly vulnerable to job dislocations over the last decade, as rapid economic globalization has eliminated millions of jobs in manufacturing and other traditional fields of employment.⁹ Older workers are also becoming a growing share of the long-term and very long-term unemployed, a trend that started before the recent recession and has steadily advanced. In 2007, about 24 percent of older jobless workers (age 50 and up) had been out of work for six months or more, compared to all other age groups who had lower rates of long-term unemployment. In 2011, the proportion of older jobless workers out of work for six months or

⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "BLS Spotlight on Statistics: Older Workers," July 2008.

⁸ Toossi, Mitra, "Employment Outlook: 2010 – 2020," in *Monthly Labor Review*, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2012.

⁹ Van Horn, Carl E., Kathy Krepcio, and Neil Ridley, "Public and Private Strategies for Assisting Older Workers," in *Older and Out of Work: Jobs and Social Insurance for a Changing Economy*, ed. Randall W. Eberts and Richard A. Hobbie, (Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research) 205-224.

more had jumped to about 54 percent. Moreover, in 2011, older jobless workers had the highest likelihood (about 42 percent) of any age group to be unemployed for one year or longer.¹⁰

Despite these challenges, older workers now express a desire to remain in the workforce longer than their counterparts in previous generations. In a survey of American workers, researchers at the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University found that three quarters of the respondents expect that they will be involved in full- or part-time work in their 60s and 70s, either out of financial necessity or out of a desire to continue working.¹¹

Amendments to the OAA in 2000 and 2006 have responded to these new demographic and economic realities by emphasizing the training function of SCSEP's community service assignments—to prepare older workers to transition to unsubsidized jobs at a competitive wage in the public or private sector. More specifically, as stated in the 2006 amendments, SCSEP aims to

- foster and promote part-time training opportunities in community service activities for eligible persons who are 55 years of age or older and who have poor employment prospects;
- foster individual economic self-sufficiency; and
- increase the number of older persons who enter unsubsidized employment in the public and private sectors.¹²

The OAA Amendments in 2000 and 2006 also clarified which groups have priority access to SCSEP services and what considerations should influence the selection of SCSEP participants from among those eligible for services. To be eligible for SCSEP, an individual must be age 55 or older, unemployed, and have a total family income no more than 125 percent of the federal poverty level. Among those eligible, priority access to SCSEP services must be given to veterans and the qualified spouses of veterans. In addition, program operators are instructed to give special consideration to individuals who are age 65 or older, have a disability, have limited English proficiency or low literacy skills, reside in a rural area, have poor employment prospects, have failed to find employment after using services provided through the One-Stop delivery system, or are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

¹⁰ McKenna, Claire, "Economy in Focus: Long Road Ahead for Older Unemployed Workers," *National Employment Law Project*, March 9, 2012.

¹¹ Reynolds, Scott, Neil Ridley, and Carl Van Horn, "A Work-Filled Retirement: Workers' Changing Views on Employment and Leisure," John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University, 2005.

¹² 20 CFR Part 641

Further, the OAA Amendments of 2006 instituted a new rule governing the length of time participants may receive SCSEP services. Under the 2006 amendments, individuals are limited to 48 months of program participation, although the grantee organizations administering SCSEP programs may request permission to extend the allowable period of participation for individuals with qualifying circumstances.¹³ The clock for the implementation of the 48-month durational limit started on July 1, 2007 (participants' prior time in the program did not count). Thus, the first participants to reach this durational limit did so on July 1, 2011. Moreover, the amendments established that the average duration of participation for all the participants served by a single grantee cannot exceed 27 months, although a grantee may request to extend this average participation cap to 36 months under extenuating circumstances.¹⁴ The 27-month average durational limit first applied on October 1, 2009.

Finally, in 2010 ETA released the Final Rule outlining the agency's regulations for SCSEP based on the 2006 OAA Amendments. In the 2010 Final Rule, ETA clarifies that while all SCSEP enrollees must have an initial goal of unsubsidized employment, it may become clear through future reassessments that unsubsidized employment is no longer a realistic goal for some participants. In such cases, ETA directs SCSEP to help participants achieve the goal of self-sufficiency through other means, such as transitioning to other services or programs. Consequently, the goals of the SCSEP program remain broad enough to encompass community service, service to those most in need, economic self-sufficiency, and employment-related objectives.

Funding Stream and Required Coordination

SCSEP is currently administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA). ETA reserves a portion of the total SCSEP allocation for pilot, demonstration, and evaluation projects, grants to U.S. territories, and to national grantees who serve American Indian and Pacific Island/Asian American individuals. After this portion of funding is reserved, 78 percent of the remaining funds are awarded to national grantees¹⁵ and 22 percent are awarded to individual states. Historically, the contracts with the existing national

¹³ Qualifying circumstances include the following: frail or age 75 or older; severely disabled; lives in an area with persistent unemployment and is an individual with severely limited employment prospects; and meets the eligibility requirements related to age but does not receive Social Security benefits.

¹⁴ Extenuating circumstances may involve high rates of unemployment or poverty in the areas served by a grantee, significant proportions of participants with one or more barriers to employment, or changes in federal, state, or local minimum wage requirements.

¹⁵ Entities eligible to compete for national grants include non-profit organizations, federal public agencies, and tribal organizations that are capable of operating a multi-state program.

grantees were renewed periodically, without an open competition. In 2002, ETA instituted an open competition for the national grantee portion of the SCSEP funding as a way to select the most qualified applicants for grant awards while at the same time allowing organizations that had never before received SCSEP grants an opportunity to compete.¹⁶ For the second open competition, held in 2006, ETA consolidated the geographic areas to be covered by each national grantee in order to increase program efficiency.¹⁷ The third open competition for national grantees is currently underway during the spring of 2012, concurrent with the writing of this report. At present, 18 national grantees and 56 state/territorial grantees administer SCSEP grants. Each grant covers a specific number of participant positions in a specific service area, computed on a “cost per authorized position” formula. In Program Year 2011, SCSEP was funded at approximately \$450 million, which was intended to cover a total of 46,103 authorized participant positions.¹⁸ The available program funding is estimated to be sufficient to cover less than 1% of eligible participants.¹⁹

Given that SCSEP operates across the country through a web of often overlapping geographic areas served by national and state grantees, OAA regulations require each state grantee to prepare an equitable distribution plan and to submit this plan to ETA at the beginning of each fiscal year. The goal of the equitable distribution plan is to ensure that all eligible persons have reasonably equal geographical access to SCSEP positions based on the latest U.S. Census data. To improve the equity of the overall distribution of SCSEP positions, states work with the national grantees to move positions from over-served to under-served areas. Further, to foster coordination among grantees and to facilitate the involvement of external stakeholders in accomplishing SCSEP’s goals, OAA regulations require each state to submit a plan that outlines

¹⁶ The 2002 grant competition increased the total number of grantees and realigned funding among existing grantees.

¹⁷ The 2006 competition reduced the amount of overlap among areas served by national grantees.

¹⁸ Authorized participant positions are calculated in part based on paying participants at the federal minimum wage for time spent in community service assignments (and other applicable activities). Because regulations require grantees to pay participants at the highest applicable wage (federal, state, or local), some grantees operate with a modified number of participant positions according to how the state’s minimum wage compares to the federal minimum wage in the grantee’s service area. For example, a California grantee’s modified position count would be lower than the authorized position count because the state minimum wage is higher than the federal minimum wage.

¹⁹ Sum, Andrew and Ishwar Khatiwada, “Identifying the National Pool of Older Workers Eligible for Senior Community Service Employment Programs and Their Current and Projected Unmet Service Needs,” Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Boston Massachusetts, August 2008, downloaded from <http://www.seniorserviceamerica.org/site/downloads/reports-publications-analyses/identifying-the-national-pool-2008-08.pdf> on September 15, 2012.

a strategy for the statewide provision of SCSEP every four years.²⁰ In developing the plan, states are directed to seek input from state and national grantees, representatives of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system, a variety of community organizations, affected communities and individuals, and any other interested parties.

In addition to establishing regulations that obligate coordination among national and state grantees, the OAA Amendments of 2000 and 2006 call for increased coordination between SCSEP and WIA. These amendments build on the WIA legislation of 1998 that established SCSEP as a required partner of the workforce investment system. Under WIA, a network of local One-Stop Career Centers provides employment and training services to adults and dislocated workers through three service levels of increasing intensity—core, intensive, and training services. SCSEP grantees must arrange for participants to have access to the core services (typically Employment Service job matching, job-search workshops, and a resource room) offered under WIA through local One-Stop centers. Moreover, SCSEP grantees must make arrangements to provide individuals (those eligible and ineligible for SCSEP) with referrals to intensive and training services offered under WIA and to other activities and programs offered through the local One-Stop centers. These arrangements are specified in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Local Workforce Investment Board (the governing entities for local workforce areas) and One-Stop partners, including SCSEP.

Service Delivery Arrangements

National and state grantees are responsible for designating local project operators to provide direct services to SCSEP participants. Currently, direct services are delivered at the local level in one or more of the following ways: (1) through local projects directly operated by the grantee (using employees under the direct supervision of the grantee and on the grantee payroll), (2) through local organizations that are formally affiliated with the national grantee, or (3) through sub-grantees or sub-contractors. For state grantees, the governor designates a state agency as the organization to administer SCSEP funds (e.g., the state office on aging or the state department of social services). The state agency, in turn, usually sub-contracts with regional or local entities—such as area agencies on aging or other public or non-profit entities (including, in some cases, a national grantee)—to operate SCSEP at the local level.

As discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, there is significant variation in the scale of local project operations. For example, during Program Years 2009 and 2010, about 40 percent of local project operators managed small programs (defined as 50 or fewer participant positions) while 23

²⁰ The state plan may be submitted as an independent document or be combined with the Workforce Investment Act Unified Plan.

percent managed large programs (defined as more than 150 participant positions). In that same period, 51 percent of local project operators served an urban population (more than 75 percent urban participants) while 21 percent served a predominantly rural population (no more than 25 percent urban participants). Similarly, project operators administered SCSEP services in widely varying geographic service areas ranging from a single city to an entire state.

In coordination with the state and national grantees, local project operators (sub-recipients) make many of the day-to-day decisions about how to deliver services to SCSEP participants.

However, OAA regulations hold the grantees solely responsible for compliance with all program requirements, regardless of their sub-recipient structure. While grantees and sub-recipients have flexibility in operating local programs, OAA regulations help shape SCSEP design decisions and services in important ways. These are discussed below.

Recruitment. Through recruitment and selection methods, project operators must ensure that the maximum number of eligible individuals have an opportunity to participate in the program. While project operators are free to develop varying recruitment methods, OAA regulations stipulate that the One-Stop delivery system be used as one source for recruitment. Individuals interested in the program submit applications to project operators who determine their eligibility status. The primary criteria for SCSEP eligibility are being at least 55 years old, unemployed, and with a household income at or below 125% of the federal poverty level. Additional eligibility requirements include being interested in unsubsidized employment and not yet job ready (i.e., needing education or training assistance beyond job search assistance). If there are more eligible applicants than available SCSEP positions, project operators are strongly encouraged to give preference to individuals who meet one or more of the priority-of-service criteria as well as to minority and Native American individuals and individuals with the greatest economic need.

Orientation, Assessment, and Service Planning. Once eligible individuals are selected into SCSEP, project operators are required to provide them with a program orientation, an individual assessment, and an Individual Employment Plan (IEP). The program orientation provides information on the specific goals and objectives of the local program, the available training opportunities and other services offered through the program, and the participant's rights and responsibilities. Project operators may choose the assessment tools used to conduct the individual assessment, but as a whole, the chosen tools should address participants' employment history, skills and talents, interests and occupational preferences, training needs, barriers to employment, and potential for performing community service activities and transitioning to unsubsidized employment. Using the assessment results, project operators, working together with participants, create an IEP. The initial IEP outlines a service strategy specific to each individual participant and must include an employment goal, objectives to achieve the goal, and

a timeline in which to accomplish the objectives. Project operators are expected to update assessments and IEPs at least two times per year. As part of this reassessment process, if it becomes clear that obtaining unsubsidized employment is no longer a realistic goal, the IEP must specify other approaches to be used to help the participant achieve self-sufficiency, including transition to other services or programs.

Community Service Assignments. As the essential component of participants' service packages under SCSEP, project operators place participants in community service assignments with host agencies who can help prepare participants for unsubsidized employment. Project operators recruit and maintain a roster of host agencies, which can include public agencies or 501(c)(3) private, nonprofit organizations that have the capacity to provide participants with work sites for training and ongoing supervision. The community service assignments at host agencies must be part-time, temporary positions paid with grant funds that offer mutual benefits for both host agencies and participants—participants obtain work experience and job skills while host agencies receive assistance in providing services to the community. Participants must be matched to community service assignments based on the training objectives listed in their IEPs. While SCSEP program regulations do not limit the length of time participants may spend training at their host agencies, guidelines from ETA encourage project operators to rotate participants among host agencies (or to new assignments within the same agency) to facilitate additional skill development. However, a decision to rotate a participant to a new host agency must be the result of an individualized determination that rotation is in the best interest of the participant.

Additional Skills Training and Supportive Services. To supplement the community service assignments, project operators must arrange for additional skill training and supportive services as identified in participants' individual service plans. Additional skill training that further prepares participants for unsubsidized employment may be provided either before or during a community service assignment. Skill training can focus on enhancing participants' basic skills or furnishing participants with specialized skills for a particular job or industry. It can also consist of on-the-job assignments that allow participants to acquire skills for specific public or private employers that cannot be attained through regular community service assignments. Participants may receive their skill training through seminars, classroom instruction, online instruction, or on-the-job experiences; these forms of training can be provided by the program operator or by other entities, including but not limited to other workforce development programs, community colleges, and vocational schools.

Further, project operators should either directly provide or make referrals for supportive services that allow participants to successfully participate in SCSEP. Supportive services may include (but are not limited to) assistance with paying for transportation and work uniforms, provision of

health education and medical care, help with finding housing, and follow-up services. While project operators are allowed to pay for training and supportive services within certain guidelines, they are encouraged to leverage community resources to the extent possible.

Paying Participants and Ensuring a Safe Work Environment. Project operators are also tasked with payroll duties and responsibility for participants' safety. Participants are entitled to wages for time spent in orientation, community service assignments, and training. They are paid the highest federal, state, or local applicable minimum wage, or the prevailing rate of pay for persons employed in similar public occupations by the same employer. Project operators receive and review timesheets and issue paychecks to participants. (In several instances, national grantees perform the payroll function at the national office level, using information provided by the local project staff.) Further, project operators must oversee participant benefits, such as the offer of an annual physical examination and the provision of sick leave as necessary.

Additionally, project operators have to ensure that participants have safe and healthy working conditions at their community service assignment worksites.

Job Placement Assistance. Finally, project operators are expected to assist a participant in obtaining unsubsidized employment if his or her service plan indicates this goal (as mentioned above, some participants who are deemed not likely to obtain unsubsidized employment are assisted with the goal of economic self-sufficiency through transitions to other programs or services). To deliver job placement assistance, project operators must either directly provide employment counseling or make arrangements for participants to receive this counseling through community partners, such as the One-Stop delivery system. Employment counseling should include identification of suitable unsubsidized employment opportunities and can also include job search assistance, job clubs, or other similar activities. Moreover, project operators should encourage host agencies to help participants in their transition to unsubsidized employment. One important way that a host agency can do this is to hire current participants who meet the qualifications for available job openings.

Expenditure Requirements

OAA regulations govern how grant funds may be used to provide the SCSEP services discussed above. These regulations apply only to the recipients of SCSEP grant funds—that is, the national and state grantees—and do not directly apply to how each local project operator spends the portion of funding allotted to it by the national or state grantee. Specifically, the regulations stipulate that at least 75 percent of each grantee's funds must be expended on participant wages and benefits. Further, administrative costs are capped at 13.5 percent of the grant total, although a grantee may request an increase of up to 15 percent. The remaining 11.5 percent of grant funds may be used for costs associated with recruitment, assessment, additional training, supportive

services, job search assistance, and other similar activities. In line with the increased emphasis on the training function of SCSEP's community service assignments, the 2006 OAA amendments also allow a grantee to request that up to 10 percent of the funds it would expend on participant wages and benefits be redirected toward training and supportive service costs.

Performance Goals and Reporting

To gauge national and state grantees' progress toward meeting the goals of SCSEP, ETA has created a performance accountability system. The OAA amendments of 2006 established new indicators of program performance that increased the program's emphasis on placing participants into unsubsidized employment, building on performance indicators that had been established for the first time in the 2000 amendments. The amendments identify six core indicators of performance and two additional indicators of performance. Three of the six core indicators are among the Common Measures applied to most other federally-funded employment and training programs and adopted for all WIA programs overseen by ETA since 2005. The six core indicators for SCSEP are

- aggregate hours of community service employment;
- entry into unsubsidized employment (Common Measure);
- retention in unsubsidized employment for six months (Common Measure);
- average earnings (Common Measure);
- the number of eligible individuals served; and
- the number of most-in-need individuals served.²¹

The additional indicators are

- retention in unsubsidized employment for one year; and
- the degree of satisfaction with their experiences reported by participants, employers, and host agencies.

In early 2012, ETA released regulations adding a new indicator to the performance measurement system. The new additional indicator, titled "exit to volunteer work," was added to provide additional information and emphasis on the community service goal of SCSEP.

While the core performance indicators for SCSEP are subject to goal-setting, negotiation, and corrective action, the additional indicators are used for informational purposes only. Ahead of

²¹ The most-in-need criteria overlap substantially with the priority-of-service criteria. Relative to the latter, the age-65-or-older criterion is dropped and the following additional criteria are added: frail or age 75 or older; severely disabled; lives in an area with persistent unemployment and is an individual with severely limited employment prospects; and meets the eligibility requirements related to age but does not receive Social Security benefits.

each new program year, ETA proposes an expected level of performance for each core indicator for each grantee, taking into consideration the following: any statutory performance requirements; the need to promote continuous improvement in each grantee and the overall program; the grantee's past performance; and any relevant adjustment factors (such as high rates of unemployment or poverty in the grantee's service area or changes in minimum wage requirements). A grantee may then request revisions to the proposed performance levels based on data that support the requested changes. Once both parties agree on the performance levels, grant funds may be awarded.

To monitor SCSEP grantees' performance, ETA provides grantees with a reporting and case management system to collect data and uses the data to determine whether grantees are meeting their performance targets. The data collection system required for use by all grantees is the SCSEP Performance and Results Quarterly Progress System (SPARQ). Although both the core performance indicators and the additional performance indicators are collected in SPARQ, only the core indicators are used to determine whether grantees have met their expected levels of performance. To make this determination, ETA summarizes a grantee's performance by averaging the percentage of the goal achieved on each of the individual core indicators. If a grantee's average score is less than 80 percent, it will have failed to meet its performance goals. Failure to meet performance goals triggers ETA to provide technical assistance and to require that a grantee submit a corrective action plan detailing the steps they will take to meet the expected performance levels in the next program year. If a national grantee fails to achieve expected levels of performance for four consecutive years, it is not allowed to compete in the subsequent grant competition (although it may compete in later competitions). If a state grantee fails to achieve expected levels of performance for three consecutive years, the state must hold a competition to award its funding allotment to a new grantee for at least one program year.

Program Guidance and Oversight

As discussed above, SCSEP is administered by ETA at the U.S. Department of Labor. Within ETA, SCSEP is overseen by the Office of Workforce Investment, Division of National Programs, Tools, and Technical Assistance. Representatives from ETA's national office and six regional offices work together to provide policy guidance and technical assistance to national and state SCSEP grantees as well as to monitor the administration of the program and the performance of grantees. ETA has developed several forums through which grantees receive guidance and technical assistance on a regular basis. For example, ETA hosts a yearly conference and a monthly conference call specifically for SCSEP grantees. ETA also releases Training and Employment Guidance Letters to grantees as new issues affecting the program require further clarification. In addition, grantees have access to regional ETA meetings and ETA-sponsored webinars and publications, some of which are specific to SCSEP while others

are more general or targeted to other programs. Further, ETA monitors grantees' compliance with the limitations on SCSEP expenditures and their performance levels relative to the expected performance levels. To accomplish this task, ETA requires grantees to submit updated financial data at the end of each quarter of the program year. Additionally, ETA produces quarterly progress reports on performance, which are drawn from the participant records that grantees maintain in the SPARQ database.

In turn, national and state grantees are responsible for guiding and overseeing local projects, whether the operators are direct employees of the grantee, affiliates of the grantee, or sub-grantees or sub-contractors. As part of this oversight responsibility, grantees are responsible for making sure that local project staff adhere to federal SCSEP policies and procedures, that sub-recipients do not overspend their budgets, that sub-recipients collect required data, and that outcomes for participants served at the local level enable the grantees to meet their negotiated performance goals. Grantees also provide technical assistance and guidance to sub-recipients on SCSEP services and service delivery practices. As described in Chapters IV and V of this report, there is substantial variation among grantees in how they shape the design and delivery of SCSEP services at the sub-recipient level.

Recent Funding Challenges

In recent years, local SCSEP project operators have encountered dramatic shifts in SCSEP funding levels. Between FY 2007 and FY 2010 the regular formula allocation for the program rose from \$432 million in FY 2007 to \$600 million in FY 2010. Additional funding flowed into the program in FY 2009 and FY 2010, in the form of \$119 million in special funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, to increase access to the program for unemployed older workers during the recession and a special, one-time allocation of \$225 million, again with the intent of helping more unemployed older workers gain access to the program. However, after experiencing this substantial increase in available funding during Program Years 2009 and 2010, SCSEP funding for Program Year 2011 was reduced 45 percent, dropping from the \$825 million funding level in FY 2010 (the regular program allocation combined with the special allocation) to \$450 million for FY 2011. The FY 2012 budget maintained SCSEP funding at \$450 million.

As described throughout this report, the funding volatility in recent years has forced project operators to make major adjustments within short periods of time. SCSEP received a major infusion of dollars during PY 2009 to support older workers at the beginning of the recession. This required project operators to gear up for increased recruitment and enrollment and expand their capacity to serve more participants. By PY 2011, although unemployment remained high, project operators were required to substantially scale back their operations. As explained further

in Chapter 4 of this report, many project operators were faced with over-enrollment at the beginning of Program Year 2011 and were grappling to adjust to reduced funding levels. Such adjustments included freezing new enrollments, accelerating efforts to place existing participants into unsubsidized employment, and cutting back on additional skill training outside the community service assignment.

Organization of the Remainder of this Report

The remainder of the report is organized into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the SCSEP program and the current study. Within Section One, the current chapter describes the legislative and administrative context of the SCSEP program, and Chapter II presents the study objectives and describes the research methods.

Drawing on both the quantitative and qualitative findings, Section Two describes in detail the key features of the SCSEP program and how local projects vary in implementing the program from local area to local area. Chapter III describes the older workers who are receiving SCSEP services; Chapter IV discusses variations in the organization, administration, and delivery of participant services at the grantee and local project levels; Chapter V describes how participants flow through the program and what services they receive; and Chapter VI describes the strategies used by local projects to manage program performance.

Section Three of the report describes program outcomes and reviews the organizational factors and service features that are associated with successful outcomes. Chapter VII describes SCSEP program outcomes using a quantitative analysis of SPARQ administrative data for Program Years 2009 and 2010. Chapter VIII presents the participant perspective on program success, drawing on the 2010 customer satisfaction survey and site-visit interviews and focus groups with program participants. Chapter IX synthesizes study findings about SCSEP program accomplishments, discusses opportunities for improvement, and sets forth the strategies and practices that appear most promising for developing the full potential of the program in the future.

II. STUDY OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

This evaluation was designed to provide information about the key features of the SCSEP program at the sub-recipient (local project) level, with a focus on how local projects vary in their program designs, service philosophies, staffing arrangements, the services they deliver to program participants, and the characteristics of their participants. In addition, the evaluation has looked for connections between these local program features and the outcomes documented in the SCSEP program's Performance and Results Quarterly Reporting System (SPARQ).

One important goal of the evaluation is to understand how local program managers are balancing the program's multiple objectives—including providing participants with community service opportunities, addressing their immediate needs for financial support, building their occupational skills, and helping participants find unsubsidized jobs. Another goal is to help program administrators responsible for guiding the SCSEP program understand what program design features and practices are associated with successful employment outcomes achieved by individuals who complete the program, and what types of participants are currently most successful in moving into unsubsidized employment at the conclusion of their program experience. An important use of the evaluation, should the program move, as proposed, from the U.S. Department of Labor to the Administration on Aging in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, would be to document the key features of the program for the federal agency newly responsible for SCSEP administration.²²

The primary interest is to explore what program designs, structural features, and operational practices are associated with successful outcomes at the program level²³ and to identify sound service designs and approaches that will support effective practices and program improvement efforts in the coming years.

²² For the second year in a row, the Obama Administration's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2013 proposes to move the administration of the SCSEP program to the Administration on Aging within the Department of Health and Human Services.

²³ *Process and Outcomes Study of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP): Design Plan and Work Plan*, Social Policy Research and Mathematica Policy Research, September 12, 2011.

Guided by the above goals, the evaluation is designed to help audiences interested in the future of the program at all levels balance the program’s multiple goals, match services to the needs of participants, and establish more nuanced expectations about the outcomes that are achievable and desirable for older workers based on their individual characteristics and local contexts.

Conceptual Framework

The logic model presented in Exhibit II-1 provides a conceptual framework for the study. It identifies the factors that we hypothesize are important influences on how local SCSEP programs operate and what services they provide and it describes the desired outcomes for the older workers who participate in the program. Informed by this conceptual framework, this study has asked questions about how different organizational practices and service design and delivery models vary in their effectiveness in furthering desired program outcomes.

Contextual Factors

The left-hand side of Exhibit II-1 illustrates the contextual factors that influence the operation of local SCSEP programs and the services they provided. These contextual factors are of three distinct types, and so they occupy three different boxes in the logic model:

- **National SCSEP program legislative goals, regulations, and funding.** These national-level factors have significant impacts on SCSEP program operations at the local level. Examples of key influences on the program include the statutory specification of core performance indicators and goals and the 48-month limit on program participant for individuals, as well as detailed program regulations.
- **Policies and procedures of the state and national grantees.** The administrative policies, procedures, and practices of grantees—both those that operate SCSEP programs in local areas and those that subcontract with other organizations to operate local projects—play a major role in shaping local projects. Although this study was not designed to focus on grantee practices, we recognize that grantee policies and practices influence local program operations in important ways.
- **Local conditions in the local areas served by the programs.** These factors encompass labor market conditions, employer attitudes about hiring older workers, and the characteristics of the older workers interested in participating in the programs. SCSEP programs in urban areas, for example, faced different challenges than those in rural areas, and the size of the local service area influenced local program strategies and organizational features.

Features of Local SCSEP Programs

The next box in the logic model shown in Exhibit II-1 describes some of the key design and management choices facing local SCSEP program operators. Local program operators make different choices about how to organize program staffing, how to recruit and screen SCSEP

participants, how to recruit and manage host agencies, and how to shape the training content of the community service experiences provided by host agencies. Variations exist, as well, in how local SCSEP programs develop linkages with other community agencies and how they link SCSEP participants to the services available from local One-Stop Career Centers.

Services Provided to SCSEP Participants

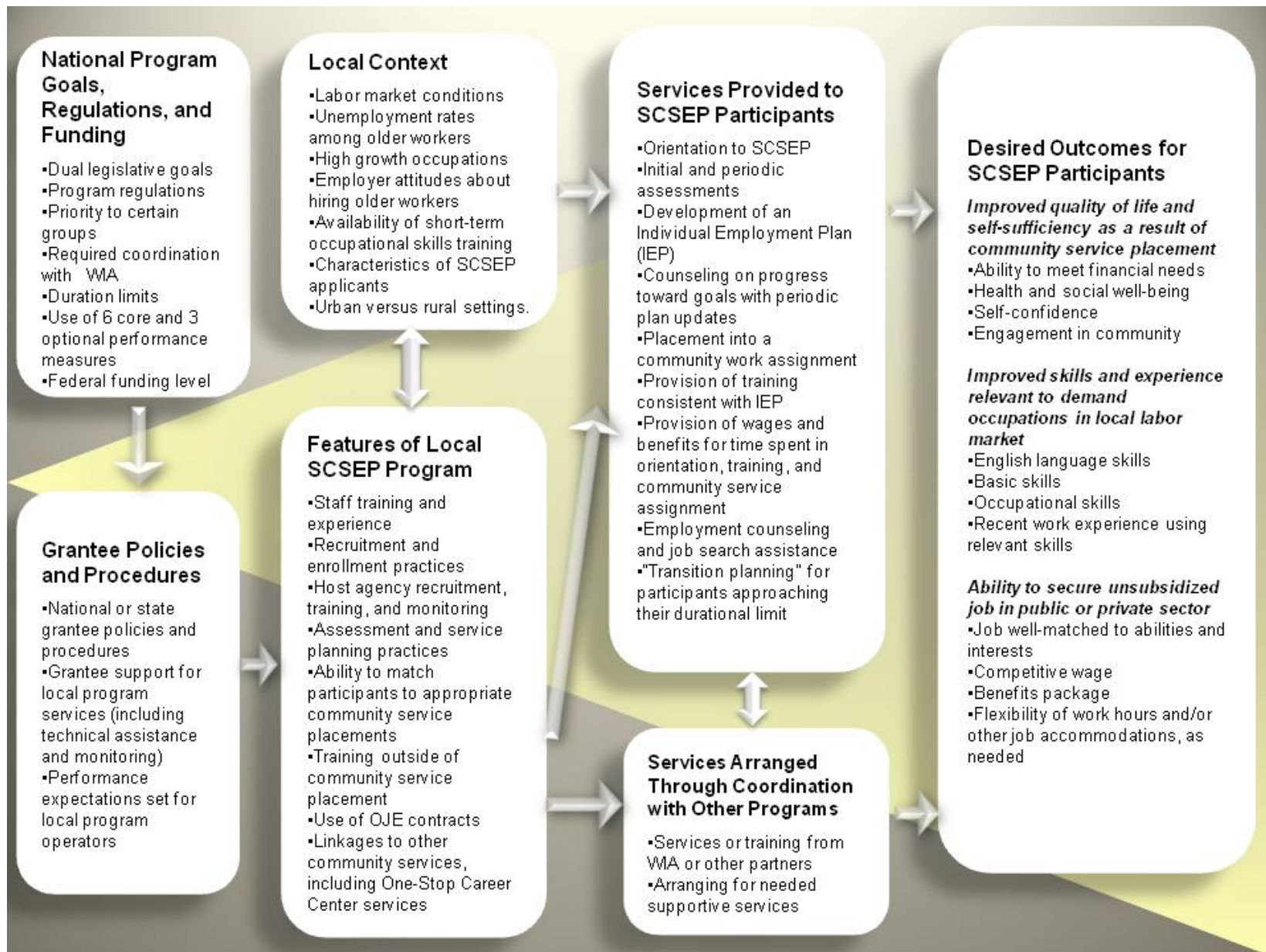
As detailed in Exhibit II-1, local program operators provide a number of different services to SCSEP participants, all organized around the core SCSEP service, which is to provide training in a community-service work setting with hourly wages paid by the SCSEP program at the local minimum or prevailing wage. SCSEP services fall into three different clusters: (1) service planning and case management provided by SCSEP program staff; (2) “structured skill development” provided through a combination of a community service assignment and wrap-around training activities; and (3) provision of job search skills training and job search or placement assistance to help participants transition to unsubsidized employment. We have organized our findings around these clusters in this report. Local program staff members also have the important responsibility of linking participants to other needed services, including services or training from WIA or other One-Stop Career Center partners and community services specific to the financial, health, or other needs of individual participants.

Desired Outcomes

The desired outcomes for SCSEP participants, described on the right-hand side of Exhibit II-1, include the following:

- *An improved quality of life and economic self-sufficiency.* Those exiting the program should be able to meet financial needs, to experience physical and social wellbeing, and to exhibit increased self-confidence and community engagement.
- *Improved skills and experience relevant to demand occupations in local labor market.* These include basic skills, English language skills, occupational skills, and recent work experience using skills in demand in the workplace.
- *An unsubsidized job in public or private sector at program exit.* This job should be well matched to the participant’s abilities and interest, offer a competitive wage and benefits package, and offer flexible work hours or other accommodations needed by the older worker.

**Exhibit II-1:
SCSEP Program Logic Model**



Research Questions

This study draws on multiple research methods, described below, to address a series of questions relevant to the effectiveness of local SCSEP project organizational practices, service designs, and service delivery procedures.

- Who does the SCSEP program serve?
- How much variation in the characteristics of program participants exists among local projects?
- What services do participants receive from the SCSEP program?
- What are the important variations among local SCSEP projects in the services received and the average duration of stay in the program?
- What are the key variations in the organizational practices and service designs used by local SCSEP projects?
- What can we learn about “promising practices” from observing the variations in local project designs and service delivery?
- How important are the national and state grantees in influencing variations among projects at the local level?

A second level of questions asks about variations in the success of local projects as measured by participant feedback as well as by entered-employment and employment-retention measures captured in the SPARQ data system:

- What do SCSEP participants say about their SCSEP program experiences?
- What do they perceive as the most valuable aspects of the program?
- How satisfied are participants with their program experiences?
- How does success (as measured by both customer satisfaction and rate of entering employment) vary among SCSEP program participants and exiters?
- To what extent do participants exiting the program enter unsubsidized employment?
- To what extent do participants who exit the program into unsubsidized employment report earnings during the second or third quarter after leaving the program?

A third level of research questions asks about the association between successful project outcomes and various program characteristics:

- What are the characteristics of local projects that place the highest proportion of participants into unsubsidized employment?
- What are the characteristics of local projects whose participants are most satisfied with their experiences in the SCSEP program?

- What are the characteristics of projects that are most successful with participants with specific barriers to employment (e.g., participants under 65, participants over 70, participants with physical disabilities, non-English speakers)?

Overview of Research Methods

The SCSEP process and outcomes study has drawn on both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore what program designs, structural features, and operational practices are associated with successful local SCSEP sites. We have woven together these two methods by using information from the quantitative analysis of outcomes to help shape the collection and analysis of qualitative data on SCSEP structure and operations at the grantee and local levels. In turn, we have used our understanding of how the program operates at the local level to interpret quantitative outcomes and suggest areas for future analysis.

Quantitative Analysis of SCSEP Outcomes

The quantitative analysis of SCSEP outcomes includes two main parts: (1) a description of participants and their experiences in the program, and (2) a description of post-SCSEP employment outcomes and customer satisfaction outcomes and an analysis of the factors related to successful outcomes.

Data Sources

The primary data source for the quantitative analysis is the SPARQ data system for Program Years 2009 and 2010.²⁴ The SPARQ datasets for Program Years 2009 and 2010 comprise the most recent full years of SCSEP program data available for analysis. These data are collected at the individual participant level. Quarterly summaries of SPARQ data aggregated to the grantee and sub-recipient level provide the national SCSEP program office within ETA with an indication of how well grantees and their sub-recipients are meeting their mandated performance goals. However, for the quantitative analyses for this study, we are using the individual-level data as collected and recorded in participant records.

A second source of data for the quantitative outcome study is a customer satisfaction survey administered by ETA during Program Year 2011 for a sample of program participants who were active in the SCSEP program sometime during the 12-month period between October 1, 2009 and September 30, 2010. (At the time of the survey, some of the respondents were still active in the program and some had already exited from the program.) Using the SPARQ and customer

²⁴ To describe variations in local economic conditions, local geographic size, and the concentration of participants within geographic service areas, we have supplemented the data available in the SPARQ database with data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and other sources. Detailed descriptions of the variables included in the quantitative analyses are provided in Chapter 3.

satisfaction data, we have been able to determine how variations in outcomes are associated with differences in participant characteristics, local economic conditions, and local program size and geographic composition. We have also been able to describe how outcomes vary across different types of grantees and subgrantees. The SPARQ data have further allowed us to assess the importance of several variations in the services received by individual participants; examples of these variations include whether an individual participates in on-the-job experience (OJE) training or whether a participant has a government or non-profit community service assignment (CSA).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Using SPARQ data and the customer satisfaction survey data, the quantitative analysis provides an overall picture of the SCSEP program for Program Year 2009 and Program Year 2010, as well as totals for both years combined. For the descriptive analysis of participant experiences while in the program, we have included all individuals who participated in SCSEP during the respective program year. The quantitative analysis has considered, across all grantees and subgrantees, who the program serves, what types of CSAs and training are provided to participants, the average length of time participants stay in the program, customer satisfaction with the program, and employment outcomes after participants leave the program. The analysis also looked at variation across grantees, subgrantees, and types of subgrantees on these variables.

In addition to describing participants, services, and outcomes, the quantitative study has performed multivariate regression analysis of the outcome data on the performance measure “entered employment” for all “included exiters”²⁵ in Program Years 2009 and 2010. In the regression analysis of post-SCSEP employment outcomes, we have linked the data for each individual participant to the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for the individual’s county of residence.

This aspect of the study attempts to elucidate three particular issues of interest:

- the relationship between key participant characteristics (as indicated in particular by measures of employment barriers) and post-SCSEP employment outcomes;
- the relationship between the type of community service assignment or on-the-job experience (OJE) assignment and post-SCSEP employment outcomes; and
- the relationship between program characteristics, such as program scale, and post-SCSEP employment outcomes.

²⁵ This group includes all exiters included in the computation of the entered employment performance standard (e.g. individuals whose reason for leaving the program did not preclude an entered employment outcome). Individuals exiting the program for reasons that prevent them from seeking post-program employment—such as ill health, institutionalization, or the need to care full-time for a disabled family member—are not included in the calculation of the entered employment performance standard.

A final set of multivariate regression analyses dealt with customer satisfaction measures collected as part of an annual participant survey of a sample of SCSEP participants who were active in the program during Program Year 2009. Particular issues of interest for this analysis included the following:

- the relationships among several different dimensions of customer satisfaction;
- the relationship between different participant characteristics and levels of customer satisfaction;
- the relationship of type of community service assignment (with a public or non-profit agency) and OJE type to levels of customer satisfaction;
- the relationship between program scale and geographic decentralization and levels of customer satisfaction; and
- the relationship between successful employment outcomes and levels of customer satisfaction.

Chapter III provides more detail on the specific quantitative models used in these analyses.

Process Study

As part of the process study, the research team carried out two rounds of data collection. The first round included national and state grantee interviews and the second round included site visits to 29 local projects.

National and State Grantee Interviews

The research team interviewed key informants at 17 of the 18 national grantees between September and December 2011.²⁶ We also conducted interviews with the state SCSEP program directors in the four states in which we visited state-funded local projects, as described below. These interviews covered information about state and national grantee program philosophy, policies, and procedures and how these influence the management, design, and delivery of services to SCSEP participants at the local level. The topic guide used for the national grantee interviews is included in Appendix A to this report. Each national grantee interview lasted between one and two hours. We conducted in-person interviews with individuals at eight of the national grantees. The remaining nine interviews were conducted by telephone. The interviews with the four state grantees lasted approximately one hour each and focused more narrowly on the relationship between the state SCSEP program director and the local SCSEP programs operated within the state.

²⁶ The eighteenth national grantee never responded to our invitation to set up an interview. This was a small grantee that operated SCSEP services in a single local area in a single state.

Write-ups summarizing the key findings from the grantee interviews have been used in several different ways in the process study. First, these write-ups provided useful background information for the staff members who completed the case studies of local SCSEP programs. Second, they allowed us to compare the relative influence of grantee-level policies and procedures versus decisions made at the local site level. Third, we used the write-ups to compare the perspectives of the grantees and those of the local program operator on specific issues, which allowed us to examine the extent to which grantees and local program operators have similar understandings about SCSEP program goals, priorities, and required procedures.

Case Studies of Local SCSEP Programs

Selection of Case Study Sites. The sites selected for the study include 24 local projects that are funded by the national grantees plus five local projects designated to operate local projects by state grantees, for a total of 29 local case study sites. The 24 initial case study sites were drawn from a pool based on an initial analysis of program outcomes, documented in the *Design Plan and Work Plan for the SCSEP Process and Outcomes Study*, which was submitted to ETA on September 12, 2011.²⁷ The five state-funded supplementary sites were in the same states as sites we had already selected for the national grantee sample.

Sites were selected for further study based, in part, on whether they were among the highest or lowest performing projects in terms of placing participants into unsubsidized employment, as recorded in the SPARQ data for Program Year 2009. The site selection process ensured that the selected sites included:

- sites administered by a number of different national grantees;
- local projects of varying sizes and varying levels of urban/rural balance²⁸; and
- sites representing each of the six U.S. Department of Labor regions.

Exhibit II-2 presents the case study sites organized by region. The map in Exhibit II-3 shows the areas served by each site. (The numbers on the map correspond to the project numbers in Exhibit II-2.)

Exhibit II-4 shows the different grantees represented by the 29 case study sites. The sample includes local sites funded by 13 of the 18 national grantees, in addition to sites funded by four different state grantees. Of the 29 local projects, eleven are operated directly by a national

²⁷ During this first outcome analysis, the study team ranked 217 local SCSEP programs administered by the 18 national grantees on their performance on the entered employment rate for Program Year 2009.²⁷

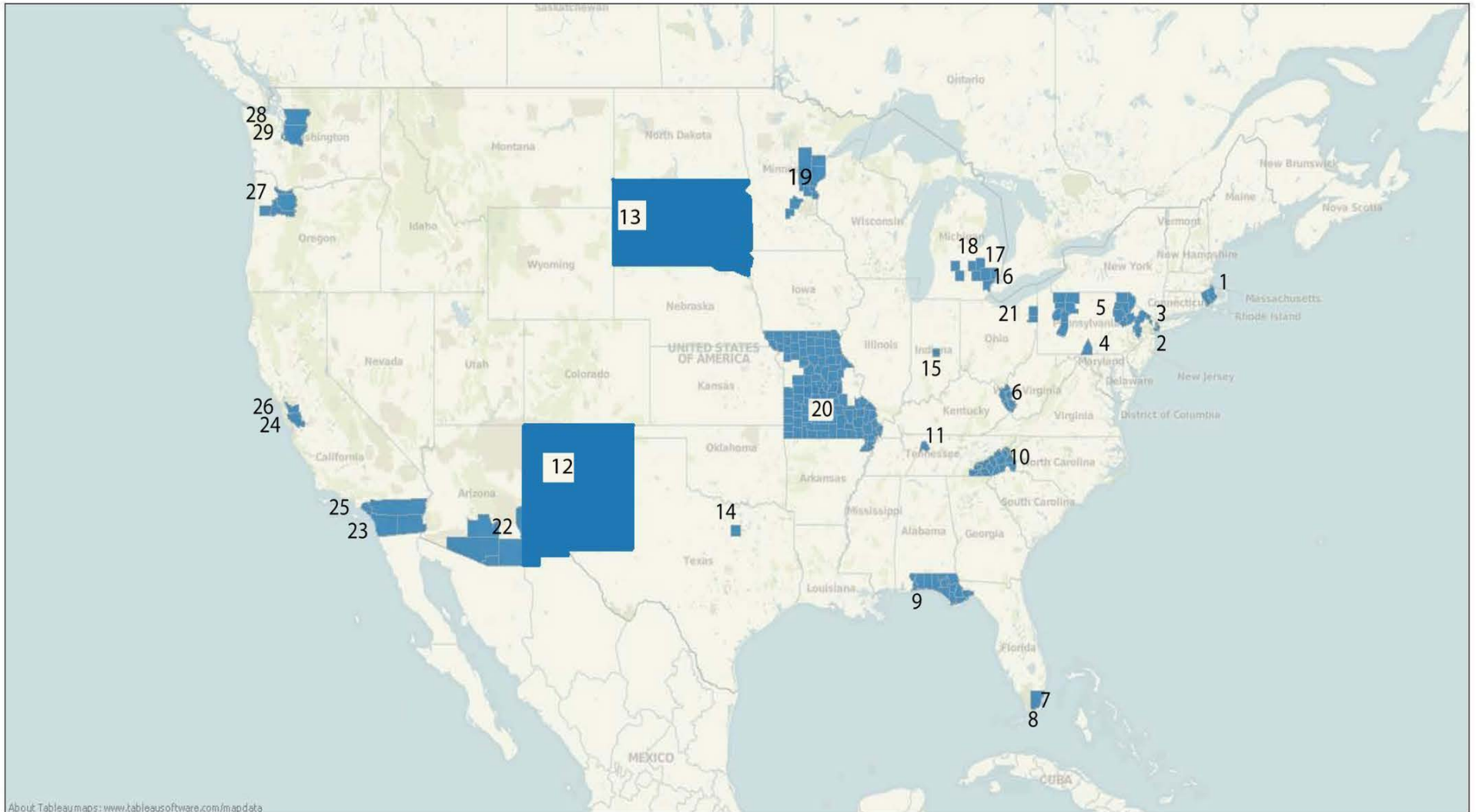
²⁸ The extent of rural character of a site was measured as the percentage of program participants at that site who resided in a county outside a metropolitan area, as recorded in the Program Year 2009 SPARQ database.

grantee, four are operated by local affiliates of a national grantee and 14 are operated by organizations that are independent non-profit or public entities. Exhibit II-5 shows that the 29 case study sites exhibit wide variation both in the geographic size of the local area served and in the percentage of participants who reside in non-metropolitan counties.

**Exhibit II-2:
Case Study Sites By Region**

DOL Region I	
1	Citizens for Citizens, Fall River, MA
2	AARP Foundation, Bronx (NYC), NY
3	Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc., Queens (NYC), NY
DOL Region II	
4	Pathstone, Inc., Kennett Square, PA
5	Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Area Agency on Aging, Wilkes-Barre, PA
6	Southwestern Community Action Council of West Virginia, Huntington, WV
DOL Region III	
7	Unidad of Miami Beach, Miami Beach, FL
8	AARP Foundation, Miami, FL
9	National Caucus & Center on Black Aged, Inc., Milton, FL
10	State of Franklin Health Council, Inc., Bryson City, NC
11	Nashville Workforce Resource Center, Nashville, TN
DOL Region IV	
12	National Indian Council on Aging, Albuquerque, NM
13	Experience Works, Rapid City, SD
14	SER Jobs for Progress National, Fort Worth, TX
DOL Region V	
15	Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana, Indianapolis, IN
16	Detroit Area Agency on Aging, Detroit, MI
17	Detroit Urban League, Detroit, MI
18	AARP Foundation, Flint, MI
19	Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services, Monticello, MN
20	Experience Works, Buffalo, MO
21	Mature Services, Youngstown, OH
DOL Region VI	
22	Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores, Tucson, AZ
23	Employment and Community Options (under contract with San Diego County Area Agency on Aging), San Diego, CA
24	Silicon Valley Council on Aging, San Jose, CA
25	SER Jobs for Progress Local Affiliate, Oceanside, CA
26	City of Oakland, Department of Human Services, Oakland, CA
27	Easter Seals Oregon, Portland, OR
28	AARP Foundation, Seattle, WA
29	Edmonds Community College, Lynnwood, WA

**Exhibit II-3:
Local SCSEP Projects Visited During the Process Study**



Key: The numbered process study sites above correspond to the numbered list in Exhibit II-2. The shaded area shows the geographic area served by each local project.

**Exhibit II-4:
Case Study Site by Grantee**

AARP Foundation
AARP Foundation, Bronx (NYC), NY ^a AARP Foundation, Miami, FL ^a AARP Foundation, Flint, MI ^a AARP Foundation, Seattle, WA ^a
Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores
Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores, Tucson, AZ ^a
Easter Seals
Easter Seals Oregon, Portland, OR ^b
Experience Works
Experience Works, Rapid City, SD ^a Experience Works, Buffalo, MO ^a
Goodwill Industries International
Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana, Indianapolis, IN ^b
Mature Services
Mature Services, Youngstown, OH ^a
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc., Queens (NYC), NY
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging
National Caucus & Center on Black Aged, Inc., Milton, FL ^a
National Council on Aging Inc.
Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Area Agency on Aging, Wilkes-Barre, PA Pathstone, Inc., Kennett Square, PA Southwestern Community Action Council of West Virginia, Huntington, WV Nashville Workforce Resource Center , Nashville, TN
National Indian Council on Aging
National Indian Council on Aging, Albuquerque, NM ^a
National Urban League
Detroit Urban League, Detroit, MI ^b
Senior Service America Inc
Citizens for Citizens, Fall River, MA State of Franklin Health Council, Inc., Bryson City, NC Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services, Monticello, MN City of Oakland, Department of Human Services, Oakland, CA
SER Jobs for Progress
SER Jobs for Progress National, Fort Worth, TX ^a SER Jobs for Progress Local Affiliate, Oceanside, CA ^b
State Grantees
Florida: Unidad of Miami Beach, Miami Beach, FL
Michigan: Detroit Area Agency on Aging, Detroit, MI
California: Employment and Community Options (under contract with San Diego County Area Agency on Aging), San Diego, CA
California: Silicon Valley Council on Aging, San Jose, CA
Washington: Edmonds Community College, Lynnwood, WA

^a Local projects operated by a national grantee

^b Local projects operated by a local affiliate of a national grantee

**Exhibit II-5:
Case Study Sites by Size of Service Area and Percent Rural Participants**

Local Program Operator	Percent Rural^a	# Counties Served	Annual Participant Positions^b
AARP Foundation, Bronx (NYC), NY	0%	5	265
AARP Foundation, Miami, FL	0%	1	162
City of Oakland, Department of Human Services, Oakland, CA	0%	1	222
Edmonds Community College, Lynnwood, WA	0%	1	10
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc., Queens (NYC), NY	0%	5	103
SER Jobs for Progress National, Fort Worth, TX	0%	1	284
Unidad of Miami Beach, Miami Beach, FL	0%	1	154
AARP Foundation, Seattle, WA	1%	8	194
Detroit Area Agency on Aging, Detroit, MI	1%	1	140
Employment and Community Options (under contract with San Diego County Area Agency on Aging), San Diego, CA	1%	1	81
Silicon Valley Council on Aging, San Jose, CA	1%	1	53
Mature Services, Youngstown, OH	2%	2	191
Easter Seals Oregon, Portland, OR	3%	4	242
AARP Foundation, Flint, MI	6%	5	140
Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana, Indianapolis, IN	6%	8	318
Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Area Agency on Aging, Wilkes-Barre, PA	7%	2	126
Detroit Urban League, Detroit, MI	8%	3	347
SER Jobs for Progress Local Affiliate, Oceanside, CA	13%	1	927
Southwestern Community Action Council of West Virginia, Huntington, WV	17%	5	110
Citizens for Citizens, Fall River, MA	26%	2	129
Nashville Workforce Resource Center , Nashville, TN	26%	15	236
National Caucus & Center on Black Aged, Inc., Milton, FL	32%	13	279
Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores, Tucson, AZ	34%	5	203
National Indian Council on Aging, Albuquerque, NM	49%	33	68
Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services, Monticello, MN	60%	9	130
Pathstone, Inc., Kennett Square, PA	63%	17	283
Experience Works, Rapid City, SD	73%	66	376
Experience Works, Buffalo, MO	74%	106	982
State of Franklin Health Council, Inc., Bryson City, NC	91%	15	220

^a Percent participants living in a rural county, Program Years 2009 and 2010, SPARQ data

^b Average modified number of funded positions, PY 2009 and PY2010 (adjusted to take into account variations in state minimum wage).

Case Study Data Collection. For each case study program, the research team conducted on-site visits that lasted two to three days.²⁹ Each local case study was organized around four key activities: (1) detailed interviews with the local SCSEP program manager as well as direct service delivery staff members, (2) visits to three host agencies currently providing community service assignments to SCSEP participants, (3) a focus group with current or recently exited participants, and (4) an interview with an employer that had hired a SCSEP participant as a permanent employee.³⁰ Appendix B contains the detailed topic guides for each of these data collection activities.

During the visits to each site, we asked project managers and staff about program-level policies and operational practices. We talked with host agency staff members about their experiences working with current and former SCSEP participants. We also talked with individual participants in several different settings, including informal discussions when we visited host agencies, and planned participant focus groups. We asked the individuals to tell us about their program experiences, including their immediate needs when they approached the SCSEP program for assistance, how well their experiences during the program met their needs, and (for participants who had left the program), how they had fared after leaving the program. During focus groups, we asked participants and former participants to make suggestions about how the SCSEP program could be improved to better meet their needs.

Analysis of Case Study Data. After completing each case study site visit, the site visitors summarized the information collected across data sources for that site in a narrative that followed a standardized outline (the case study write-up outline is included in Appendix C). The members of the study team performing cross-site analysis used qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) to review and identify patterns across the case study sites. We have organized the key findings from the cross-site analysis of the process study data into several different topics: (1) project organization, staffing, and coordination linkages; (2) service design and delivery; (3) how projects manage their performance outcomes; and (4) how participants view the program.

²⁹ Two-person teams conducted some site visits. In these instances, the two site visitors jointly conducted the staff interviews on the first day, and then divided up the visits to the host agencies.

³⁰ We expected that the employers we interviewed would include a mix of public sector agencies, non-profit organizations, and for-profit business enterprises. In practice, for the employer interviews, most of the local SCSEP program operators referred us to host agencies that had hired SCSEP participants after they had completed community service assignments with that agency. Thus, the interviews with employers were largely subsumed under or merged with the host agency interviews.

SECTION TWO

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCSEP PARTICIPANTS AND KEY FEATURES OF LOCAL PROJECTS

Section Two describes in detail the key features of the SCSEP program and how projects vary in their implementation of these features from local area to local area. Chapter III describes the older workers who are receiving SCSEP services; Chapter IV discusses variations in the organization, administration, and delivery of participant services at the grantee and local project levels; Chapter V describes how participants flow through the program and what services they receive; and Chapter VI describes the strategies used by local projects to manage program performance.

III. SCSEP PARTICIPANTS AND PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION BY GRANTEE AND SUB-RECIPIENT

In this chapter, we examine the characteristics of SCSEP participants and their patterns of participation, based on our analysis of the participant-level records in the SPARQ database. We first describe the demographic characteristics of all SCSEP participants served nationally during Program Years 2009 and 2010.³¹ Drawing on the SPARQ data, we also present information on the employment barriers documented in participant records. Next, we describe the characteristics of grant recipients and sub-recipients and discuss the different populations they serve. Finally, we describe the community service assignments and training services received by SCSEP participants, and the typical length of time participants remain in the program.

Characteristics of SCSEP Participants

More than 140,000 participants were active in the SCSEP program during Program Years 2009 and 2010.³² To understand the characteristics of these participants, we examined the data collected about them in the SPARQ database (detailed information about the SPARQ data and the analysis sample is presented in Appendix E). Since we include the full universe of SCSEP participants in our analysis, we did not perform hypothesis testing to look at differences between groups. This analysis is descriptive; the comparisons discussed below are the ones that seem worth highlighting and are most closely connected to the qualitative analysis.

³¹ We selected Program Years 2009 and 2010 for the quantitative outcome analysis because these were the most recent years for which complete administrative data was available. Although not “typical” years in terms of funding levels—because of the additional funds available to the program from American Recovery and Readjustment Act (ARRA) and regular program funds—these years provide the most up-to-date view of SCSEP participants and outcomes.

³² During roughly the same 2-year time period, a total of 420,854 individuals over 55 years of age exited from the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Individuals over 55 made up slightly more than 12 percent of the WIA exiters during this period. (<http://www.doleta.gov/performance/Results/pdf/PY2009Trends2010.pdf> and <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/Results/pdf/py2010Trends2011.pdf>, accessed May 8, 2012)

Since our analysis indicated that participant characteristics were very similar in Program Years 2009 and 2010, our discussion will focus on the aggregate across both years. We report separate analysis by program year in the tables in Appendix F.

Demographic Characteristics

The SCSEP program served a diverse group of individuals during Program Years 2009 and 2010. Almost two-thirds of program participants were female, as shown in Exhibit III-1. Twelve percent were Hispanic, 32 percent were African-American, and 50 percent of participants were White. Compared to WIA participants age 55 and older, SCSEP participants were more likely to be racial or ethnic minorities. In 2007, two-thirds of older WIA participants were non-Hispanic whites. Ten percent were Hispanic and 19 percent were African-American (non-Hispanic).³³

Most SCSEP participants had completed high school, and more than one-third (39 percent) had received education beyond high school. Eighty-eight percent of participants had family income at or below the poverty level. The average participant was 64 years old, and 9 percent of participants were age 75 and older (Exhibit III-1). These data indicate that SCSEP succeeded in its mission to serve low-income older adults.

Since our analysis of employment outcomes in Chapter VII is limited to SCSEP participants who exited from the program between Quarter 4 of Program Year 2008 and Quarter 3 of Program Year 2010, we present the characteristics of this population of “included exiters” alongside the characteristics of participants overall in Exhibit III-1. We refer to those that exited during this time period as exiters in Program Years 2009 and 2010 because their key employment outcome of being employed in the quarter after exit is observed in Program Years 2009 and 2010. Included exiters are those who exited during the time period and are included in the performance measures because they are considered eligible for unsubsidized employment placements. So participants who exit the program because of ill health, institutionalization, or the need to care full-time for a family member are excluded. Participants who exit the program and reenroll or reenter within 90 days are also excluded.

Overall, program participants and included exiters were similar (Exhibit III-1). Included exiters were less likely to be 75 or older (6 percent of included exiters versus 9 percent of participants). This difference is not surprising, since more of the oldest participants may exit due to ill health. Included exiters were also slightly more educated, with 42 percent of included exiters having education beyond high school compared to 39 percent of all participants.

³³ Zhang, Ting (2009). “Workforce Investment Act Training for Older Workers: Towards a Better Understanding of Older Worker Needs during the Economic Recovery.” http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/ETAOP_2011-10.pdf

**Exhibit III-1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Included Exiters**

	Percent of Participants in Program Years 2009 and 2010	Percent of Included Exiters in Program Years 2009 and 2010
Female	64.2	61.6
Hispanic	11.6	11.6
African-American, Non-Hispanic	31.7	30.8
White, Non-Hispanic	49.6	50.6
Other Race/Ethnicity	7.1	7.0
Less than a high school diploma/GED	21.8	19.1
Education beyond a high school diploma	39.1	42.3
Family income at or below poverty	87.7	88.4
Age 64 and below	61.5	68.6
Age 75 and older	9.4	6.3
Average Age	64.0	62.8
Median Age	62.0	61.0
Number of participants or included exiters	140,878	54,385

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

Barriers to Employment

Many SCSEP participants faced significant barriers to employment. SCSEP program rules encourage sub-recipients to give priority in service delivery to senior citizens with certain barriers to employment. In particular, sub-recipients are encouraged to give priority to individuals age 65 or older, as well as to individuals with any of the following specified barriers to employment: homeless or at risk of homelessness,³⁴ rural, limited English proficiency, low literacy skills, veteran (or eligible spouse), disabled, failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I, and low employment prospects.³⁵ As shown in Exhibit

³⁴ The priority of service area combines being homeless with being at risk of being homeless. We consider these variables separately in all the tables, since analysis conducted for the site selection task suggested these two factors may have different relationships to employment outcomes. Being at risk of homelessness may also be a somewhat subjective judgment that is not consistently recorded across sub-recipients.

³⁵ *Low employment prospects* refers to the likelihood that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program due to the lack of a substantial employment history, basic skills, English language proficiency, a high school diploma or equivalent, or to having other significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: having a disability, being homeless, or residing in a socially and economically isolated area where employment opportunities are limited.

III-2, 98 percent of all SCSEP participants in Program Years 2009 and 2010 met at least one of these criteria. The most common barrier to employment for SCSEP participants in Program Years 2009 and 2010 was low employment prospects, which was noted in 88 percent of participants (Exhibit III-2). While the barrier of low employment prospects is difficult to interpret, the participants faced many other more clearly defined barriers. One-third of participants were identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness. Fifteen percent had disabilities. Twenty percent of participants had low literacy skills, and 10 percent had limited English proficiency. Additionally, more than 30 percent lived in rural areas where job opportunities may have been limited.

In addition to directing sub-recipients to give priority to participants with specific employment barriers, SCSEP makes it possible for grantees to serve certain hard-to-employ participants for an extended period. The program has a mandated 48-month durational limit for participation, but program amendments list serious barriers to regular employment that will qualify participants to be considered for a waiver of the 48-month limit.³⁶ Each grantee determines which criteria it will use when making mandatory duration waiver requests for individual participants. Some grantees have decided not to request any individual waivers; others have requested permission to use only one or two of the seven possible waiver criteria. Limited English proficiency and low literacy skills, included in the priority-of-service areas, also may be used to qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit. The additional factors that may be used to qualify a participant for a waiver of the 48-month durational limit on program participation include: severe disability; age 75 or over; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; and severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment.³⁷ As shown in Exhibit III-2, 47 percent of all participants during 2009 and 2010 were documented as meeting at least one of these waiver criteria.

³⁶ Because the “clock” for measuring participant duration did not begin until July 1, 2007, the 48-month durational limit first took effect for SCSEP participants on July 1, 2011.

³⁷ Although these data elements are intended to be recorded each year for all participants, there is inconsistency in the recorded data across Program Years 2009 and 2010. This may be because project staff did not realize they had to renew the waiver factors by updating documentation at least once a year. Therefore, findings based on the four waiver variables which are not also priority-of-service criteria must be interpreted with caution.

**Exhibit III-2
Barriers to Employment included in
SCSEP Indicator of “Service to Most-in-Need”**

	Priority-of-Service Criteria^a	Waiver of Durational Limit Criteria	Percent of Participants with Barrier, Program Years 2009 and 2010
Age 75 or older	--	X	9.4
Frail	--	X	1.2
Disabled	X	--	14.7
Severe disability	--	X	2.5
Limited English proficiency (LEP)	X	X	9.8
Low literacy skills	X	X	19.6
Living in rural area	X	--	30.5
Veteran (or eligible spouses)	X	--	13.6
Low employment prospects	X	--	87.7
Severely limited employment prospects in areas of persistent unemployment	--	X	22.7
Failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I	X	--	15.6
Homeless or at risk of homelessness	X	--	34.2
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security Title II	--	X	2.2
% in priority-of-service category	--	--	97.6
% who would qualify for waiver of individual time limit	--	--	47.2
Average number of barriers to employment	--	--	2.5
Number of participants	--	--	140,878

^a While being aged 65 years or older is considered a “priority-of-service” criterion for SPARQ, it is not included among the barriers to employment DOL uses in the calculation of the service to most-in-need indicator.

One of the core performance measures used by SCSEP to evaluate grantee program performance is “service to most-in-need.” “Most-in-need” participants are defined as those classified in either a priority-of-service area or having a condition that qualifies them for a durational waiver limit, or both. Exhibit III-2 shows the full list of SCSEP barriers to employment that are used to calculate the performance measure of service to those most-in-need. The core performance measure of “service to most-in-need” is the average number of such barriers participants have.³⁸ Like other performance measures, the performance goal for level of service to most-in-need participants is negotiated and measured at the grantee level.

³⁸ Limited English proficiency and low literacy skills may only be counted as one barrier for the service to most-in-need performance measure, even if a participant meets both conditions.

In Program Years 2009 and 2010, participants had an average of 2.5 barriers (Exhibit III-2). Although they may be counted as distinct barriers to employment, some of the priority-of-service criteria appear very similar to the durational limit waiver barriers. For example, disability (priority-of-service area) and severe disability (durational-limit waiver criterion), and low-employment prospects (priority-of-service area) and severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment (durational-limit waiver criterion) are similar but not exactly identical.³⁹ Despite their apparent similarities, the correlations between criteria are generally low. The only correlation above 0.25 observed among the barriers is between low literacy skills and limited English proficiency (Table F-3 in Appendix F).

We believe that the lack of relationship between these seemingly similar characteristics may reflect program reporting rules and practices. Data on the priority-of-service criteria must be recorded at the time an individual is enrolled in SCSEP and may not be updated after that point in time, whereas durational-limit waiver criteria may be updated any time program staff learn new information about the participant. While SCSEP programs are expected to update information relevant to the durational waiver criteria for each participant every year, in reality this information will affect participant eligibility only if the participant is within three months of reaching the durational limit and the grantee uses that factor in its policy for extending participants' durational limits.⁴⁰ Not all grantees allow the durational limit to be waived, regardless of the barriers a participant may face. Thus, it is likely that these barriers are not consistently updated for participants who are not approaching the durational limit or by grantees that do not entertain waivers.⁴¹ For this reason, findings regarding the four waiver variables that are not also priority-of-service criteria or based on age must be interpreted with caution.

³⁹ Severely limited employment prospects means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, English-language proficiency, and/or a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An area of persistent unemployment means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

⁴⁰ If a sub-recipient fails to record updated information on the waiver criteria, however, the grantee will not be able to count these as barriers in its service to most-in-need performance measure.

⁴¹ If the data are not updated, the grantee receives a warning in SPARQ that the data were not updated and receives no credit for the most-in-need measure.

Characteristics of Grantees and Sub-Recipients

During Program Years 2009 and 2010, the SCSEP program included 18 national grantees and 56 state grantees.⁴² The number of participants served by each grantee varied greatly, from less than 50 participants in one of the state grantees to more than 20,000 participants in one of the national grantees. As described in Chapter I, some national grantees directly operate the local projects, some contract with local affiliates of the national grantees, and some national grantees and most state grantees award subgrants to local public or nonprofit organizations with whom they are not organizationally related. Grantees that directly operate local projects determine the boundaries of the sub-recipient units; these units may reflect regional administrative units that encompass several local project offices. In reporting findings from the quantitative analysis of SPARQ data, we refer to all local project operators as “sub-recipients,” which is the term applied to local projects by the SPARQ reporting system. State grantees administered an average of six sub-recipients each and national grantees administered an average of 17 sub-recipients each.

Variations in Size and Urbanicity

In Exhibit III-3, we present a range of key sub-recipient characteristics by national and state grantees. We have chosen these variables because they reflect important dimensions of variation in program structure and they are available in our data.

In Program Year 2009, there were 618 sub-recipients, of which 316 were sub-recipients of states and 303 were sub-recipients of national grantees.⁴³ However, as noted in Chapter 1, state grantees receive only 22 percent of SCSEP funds and national grantees receive 78 percent. Because most of the funds flow through the national grantees, the national sub-recipients receive, on average, larger amounts of funding to support larger number of participants than the state sub-recipients. Only 9 percent of national sub-recipients are classified as small, compared to 69 percent of state sub-recipients (Exhibit III-3). We classified sub-recipients as small or large based on their number of funded community service positions, and considered sub-recipients to be small if they had 50 or fewer funded community service positions in Program Year 2009, medium if they had between 51 and 150, and large if they had more than 150 slots in Program Year 2009.⁴⁴

⁴² The category of state grantees includes territorial grantees.

⁴³ One sub-recipient was affiliated with both a state and national grantee. Therefore, the number of state and national sub-recipients sums to more than the total number of sub-recipients.

⁴⁴ We chose to use the number of funded community service assignments rather than the number of participants served during the program year as a measure of sub-recipient size because the number of participants a sub-

Exhibit III-3
Characteristics of SCSEP Sub-recipients by Grantee Type, Program Year 2009

	National Grantees	State Grantees	Total
Total Sub-recipients	303	316	618
Participants Served	88,548	22,934	111,482
Sub-recipient Size^a			
% Small	9	69	39
% Medium	50	26	38
% Large	42	5	23
Urbanicity^b			
% Urban	58	44	51
% Mixed	32	25	29
% Rural	10	30	21
Average Exit Rate^c			
	69.4	68.3	68.9

Source: SPARQ data (Program Year 2009)

^a Sub-recipients are classified as small if they had 50 or fewer funded community service positions in Program Year 2009, medium if they had between 51 and 150, and large if they had more than 150 slots in Program Year 2009.

^b Sub-recipients are classified as urban if over 75 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas, mixed if between 25 and 75 percent live in metropolitan areas, rural if less than 25 percent live in metropolitan areas.

^c The exit rate is the share of a sub-recipient's active participants who left that sub-recipient each year.

Overall, slightly over half of all SCSEP sub-recipients are categorized as urban. National sub-recipients were more likely to be urban than state sub-recipients; 58 percent of national sub-recipients were classified as urban, compared to 44 percent of state sub-recipients so classified in Program Year 2009 (Exhibit III-3). We consider sub-recipients urban if over 75 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas by the Census Bureau in Program Year 2009, rural if less than 25 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas in Program Year 2009, and “mixed” otherwise.⁴⁵ In general, small

recipient serves is influenced by the mean length of stay, which varies by sub-recipient. We combine regular and ARRA-funded slots when classifying programs as small, medium, or large.

⁴⁵ Two sub-recipients were active only in Program Year 2010. For these we used the information from Program Year 2010 to classify them.

sub-recipients less often served urban areas compared to medium or large sub-recipients (Exhibit III-4).

**Exhibit III-4
Sub-recipient Size and Urbanicity
Sub-recipient Size^a**

Urbanicity^b	Small (50 or fewer slots)	Medium (51 to 150 slots)	Large (more than 150 slots)
% Urban	38	63	52
% Mixed	26	27	37
% Rural	36	11	11

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

Program Year 2009 data used for sub-recipients except for those that began operating in Program Year 2010.

^a Sub-recipients are classified as small if they had 50 or fewer funded community service positions in Program Year 2009, medium if they had between 51 and 150, and large if they had more than 150 slots in Program Year 2009.

^b Sub-recipients are classified as urban if over 75 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas, mixed if between 25 and 75 percent live in metropolitan areas, rural if less than 25 percent live in metropolitan areas.

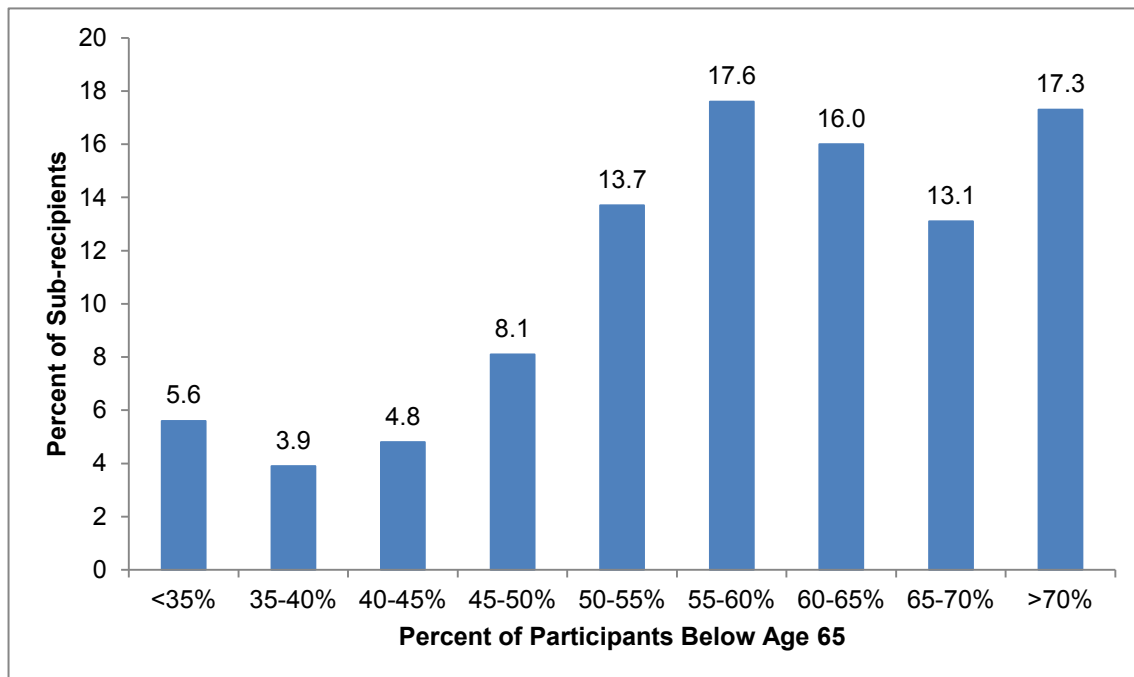
Variations in Participant Characteristics across Sub-recipients and Grantees

Although all grantees and sub-recipients served low-income older adults, there was substantial variation in the client populations served by individual grantees and sub-recipients. In general, the variation across sub-recipients is greater than across grantees, which is expected since the sub-recipients are smaller units and therefore more extreme variation is possible. Since this study was designed to assess how local project organizations and service delivery practices are associated with participant outcomes, we focus our discussion on variations across sub-recipients. (Tables showing the variation across grantees are available in Appendix F.)

The demographic composition of participants varied across sub-recipients. While at least ten percent of sub-recipients served no Black or African American participants, 10 percent of sub-recipients served participant populations where at least 74 percent of participants were Black or African American (Appendix Table F-4). Variation also occurred for other participant characteristics, including gender, age, education, and the barriers to employment. Differences in the characteristics of their participants suggest that sub-recipients may face different challenges in meeting their participants' needs.

Of particular interest are the variations across sub-recipients in the age distribution of participants. As shown in Exhibit III-5, participants below age 65 are the dominant group served by the majority of sub-recipients. However in over one-fifth of the sub-recipients, 55-to-64-year-olds are outnumbered, sometimes dramatically, by participants over age 65. Exhibit III-6 portrays the distribution of participants 75 years of age or older served by sub-recipients. Although participants over 75 make up only a small percentage of all participants served in most projects, nearly 20 percent of sub-recipients serve relatively large proportions of participants from this older age group.⁴⁶

**Exhibit III-5
Percent of Sub-recipients Serving Participants Below Age 65**

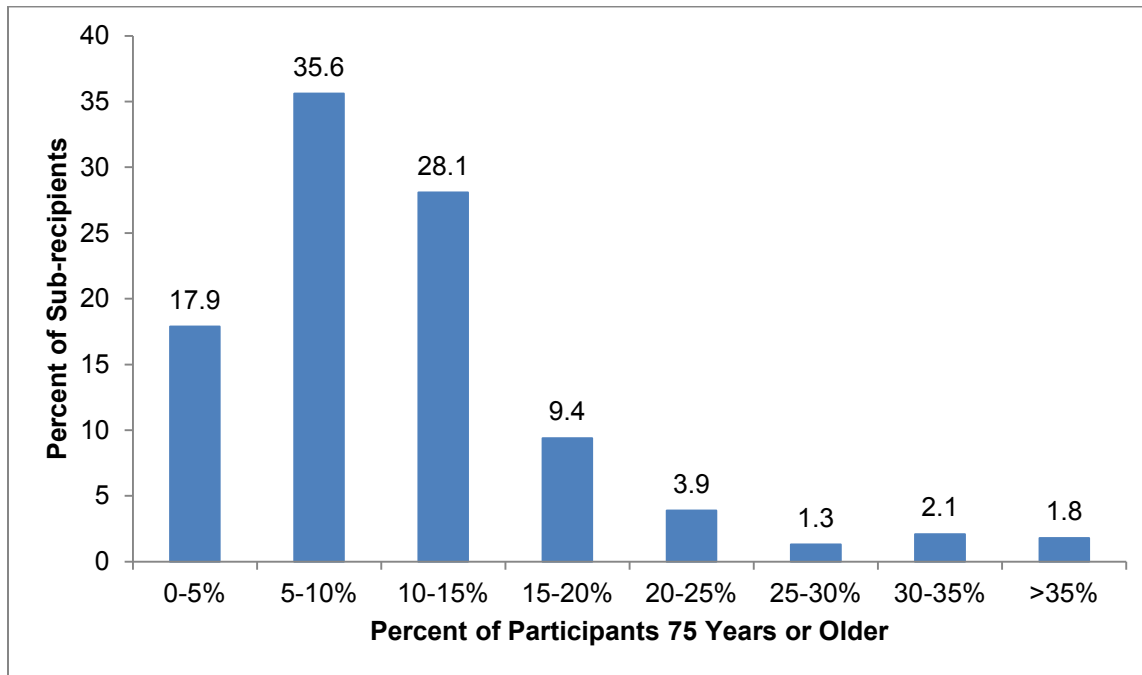


Source: SPARQ data (Program Year 2009 and 2010)

Percent of sub-recipients out of 618 sub-recipients total.

⁴⁶ One of the sites selected for the process study visits was a particular outlier in this respect; over 40 percent of its participants were over 75 years of age.

**Exhibit III-6
Percent of Sub-recipients Serving Participants Age 75 and Older**



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
Percent of sub-recipients out of 618 sub-recipients total.

Some of the differences in participant demographics were correlated with the sub-recipient type. A sub-recipient's type is determined by its association with a state or a national grantee, its size, and the urbanicity of its location. Although many participant characteristics were similar across sub-recipient type, there were several domains that differed. For example, there was some variation in race and educational attainment, particularly between urban and rural sub-recipients. Thirty-five percent of participants served by urban sub-recipients were White non-Hispanic, compared to 68 percent of those served by rural sub-recipients. Whereas 41 percent of participants served by urban sub-recipients had education beyond high school, only 33 percent of those served by rural sub-recipients had education beyond high school (Exhibit III-7).

Despite serving a larger proportion of participants with higher educational attainment, urban sub-recipients served a higher proportion of participants with low literacy skills than did rural sub-recipients (26 percent compared to 16 percent). This finding suggests that urban participants may have been a more heterogeneous group than rural participants, with a wider range of needs. Notably, participants at urban sub-recipients were also more like to be co-enrolled in other programs at the time of intake compared to participants at rural sub-recipients (37 percent versus 27 percent, respectively). Additionally, being at risk of homelessness was much lower among sub-recipients affiliated with state grantees and small sub-recipients, although the incidence of homelessness itself was similar among all types of sub-recipient (Exhibit III-7).

Exhibit III-7
Demographic Characteristics of Participants by Type of Sub-recipient:
Percentage of Total Participants

	Type		Size			Urbanicity		
	State	National	Large	Medium	Small	Urban	Rural	Mixed
White, Non-Hispanic	51.2	49.2	49.1	48.0	60.2	34.6	67.5	65.5
Education beyond a high school diploma	39.5	38.9	38.3	40.2	39.4	40.6	33.0	38.7
Low literacy skills	15.1	20.8	19.3	22.5	9.2	25.5	15.7	12.4
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	37.4	31.3	33.2	29.7	40.0	37.3	26.9	27.4
Homeless	4.7	5.5	5.7	5.2	3.7	6.3	2.7	4.8
At risk of homelessness	16.4	32.1	30.1	30.6	12.2	31.1	18.8	28.5
Number of participants	29,732	112,349	81,263	49,213	11,664	73,457	15,676	52,452

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

Program Participation Patterns

In this section we present information from the analysis of SPARQ data on the community service assignments and training services received by SCSEP participants, and the typical length of time participants remain in the program.

Variations in Community Service Assignment and Training Hours Across Grantees and Sub-recipients

As described in Chapter I, SCSEP participants receive paid community service assignments at not-for-profits and government agencies.⁴⁷ In Program Years 2009 and 2010, approximately two-thirds of assignments were with not-for-profit agencies and one-third of assignments were with government agencies. It is also possible for a participant who has completed at least two weeks of a community service assignment to be assigned by the local project to OJE training. OJE may be provided either as a stand-alone activity or at the same time as an ongoing community service assignment. OJE was not very common during PYs 2009 and 2010, with less than 2 percent of placements including OJE training (Exhibit III-8).

⁴⁷ The SPARQ data contains a small number of cases, less than one percent of host agencies, that were labeled as for-profit, although such placements are not allowed under SCSEP rules. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, the host type for such community service assignments were coded as missing.

Across the program, participants spent an average of 236 hours per quarter (approximately 18 hours per week) at their host agencies and received an average of 13 hours of training per quarter from the sub-recipient programs in which they were enrolled (Exhibit III-8).⁴⁸ For average quarterly hours of training, the standard deviation was 34 hours, demonstrating that participants' experiences with training varied widely.⁴⁹ According to Older Worker Bulletin 04-04, training hours can include a wide range of activities external to the community service assignment, including skills training, classroom instruction, lectures, seminars, individual instruction, training through other employment & training programs and/or colleges, and on-the-job experience.⁵⁰ It may also include time spent by the participant attending any required activities that the local program has arranged for all participants, such as job search training sessions or employer presentations.

Exhibit III-8
Community Service Assignments, Training,
and On-the-Job Experience:
Overall and Sub-recipient Averages by Type of Sub-recipient

	CSAs in PY 2009 and 2010	Type		Size			Urbanicity		
		State	National	Large	Medium	Small	Urban	Rural	Mixed
Average quarterly hours of CSA	235.9	243.6	236.1	236.2	240.2	243.6	239.3	245.0	240.4
Standard deviation	62.7	25.1	16.9	18.0	19.4	26.4	20.8	23.7	25.1
Average quarterly hours training	12.8	19.0	37.1	30.0	30.5	21.7	36.5	15.4	15.1
Standard deviation	34.0	37.1	40.5	45.4	28.3	44.0	39.6	39.3	34.5
% CSAs with OJE training	1.3	4.5	1.3	1.0	1.7	5.2	1.9	6.4	2.3
Total number of CSAs	142,583	29,593	112,714	83,518	47,264	11,525	73,441	16,207	52,659

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

⁴⁸ Only those participants who were active in one community service assignment for the full duration of the quarter are included in estimates of average quarterly hours of community service assignment and training. All community service assignments, regardless of duration, are included in estimates of the percent of community service assignments that are with government agencies and not-for-profits, and include OJE training.

⁴⁹ Based on what we learned during the process study, it appears that many local projects require all participants to attend monthly or quarterly meetings that are counted as training hours. A much smaller proportion of all participants participate in skills training classes outside of their community service assignment.

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, *Older Worker Bulletin 04-04*, April 12, 2004, downloaded from http://www.doleta.gov/seniors/Other_docs/04-04.pdf on May 5, 2012.

Participants' average quarterly hours of community service are influenced in large part by the relationship between the number of participants enrolled in a sub-recipient program and the sub-recipient's level of funding. As described in Chapter IV, it was common during Program Year 2011 for programs that were overenrolled to have to reduce the number of hours participants work at their community service assignments in order to cover all participants' wages. Despite the fact that sub-recipients and participants may have little control in determining the quarterly hours of community service, this measure provides basic information about the number of hours for which participants are being paid, a key component of the SCSEP program.

During Program Years 2009 and 2010, the average amount of time participants spent at community service assignments did not vary by the sub-recipient type (Exhibit III-8). The intensity of training and the frequency with which OJE is utilized were, however, quite different. For example, both national sub-recipients and urban sub-recipients provided more hours of training each quarter (over 36 hours on average) than state sub-recipients (which averaged 19 hours of training) or those with a rural designation (where an average of 15 hours was provided). In addition, large and medium sub-recipients provided eight more hours of training per quarter than did small sub-recipients.

While national, large, and urban sub-recipients tended to provide more hours of training, state, small, and rural sub-recipients more often provided OJE training. State, small, and rural sub-recipients provided OJE training as part of at least 5 percent of community service assignments, while national, large, and urban sub-recipients all offered OJE as part of less than two percent of placements (Exhibit III-8). However the documentation of OJE in the CSA data is not thought to be reliable because there are so few actual OJE assignments and it appears that grantees interpret the reporting requirements differently, so the data are not consistent across grantees.⁵¹

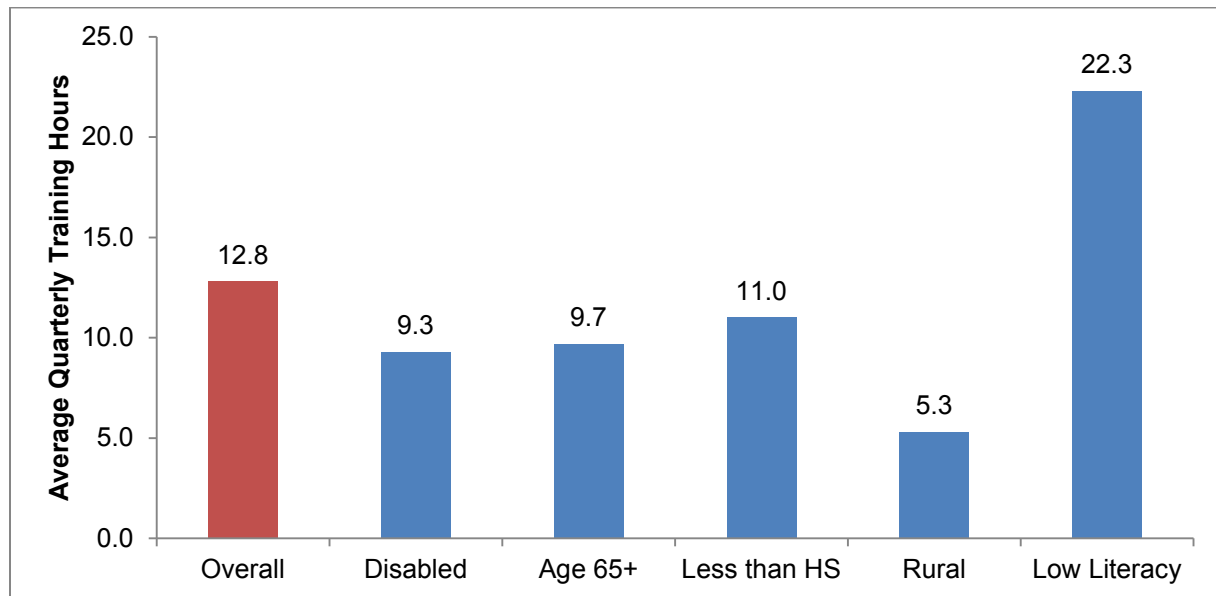
Variations in Training Hours Among Participants

We also examined the amount of training that participants with selected characteristics received (Exhibit III-9). We focused specifically on those who are disabled, 65 years or older, did not receive a high school diploma or GED, reside in a rural area, or have low literacy skills. These characteristics were selected for several reasons, including the fact that they are relatively more objective than some of the other barriers, such as low employment prospects. There is considerable variation across sub-recipients in the proportion of participants recorded as having each of these characteristics. Additionally, these characteristics represent a range of challenges that many SCSEP participants face when trying to participate in the program or secure employment. Each characteristic, excluding low educational attainment, is a priority-of-service

⁵¹ Based on personal communication with Bennett Pudlin of Charter Oak Group.

criterion, suggesting that participants with such characteristics may have a high level of need, requiring additional training or assistance from program staff members to achieve favorable outcomes.

Exhibit III-9
Average Quarterly Training Hours by Selected Participant Characteristics^a



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

^a Calculated by CSA for quarters in which a participant was active for the entirety of the quarter. Percentage of CSAs based on 142,583 CSAs total.

Exhibit III-9 indicates that participants with low literacy skills received considerably more hours of training than was typically provided. Those who are disabled, 65 and older, have low educational attainment, or reside in rural areas received less training than was typically provided. Those who resided in rural areas received the least amount of training. As discussed in Chapter V, findings from our site visits suggest that programs in rural areas encounter more difficulties bringing participants together for training due to the lack of reliable transportation. We note, however, that *median* training hours are notably lower than *mean* training hours, ranging from zero hours among rural participants to 2.3 hours among participants with low literacy skills. The amount of training received by participants with low literacy skills remains highest when considering median hours, but at 2.3 hours it is very similar to the median level of training that is typically received, which is only slightly lower at two hours per quarter.

Length of Time in Program

It is important to examine the length of time participants remain enrolled in the SCSEP program because this variable has a bearing on the program's success in achieving its mission and its overall cost-effectiveness. Analyzing the length of the average enrollment spell for participants,

however, is complicated by two factors: participants can have multiple spells of SCSEP enrollment,⁵² and current participants have not completed their current enrollment spells.

Fifteen percent of participants in the SPARQ database for Program Years 2009 and 2010 had more than one enrollment spell.⁵³ To explore the impact of multiple enrollment spells on the average length of participation, we calculated two duration measures: total program duration and current or last spell duration. Although some participants have multiple enrollment spells, as described above, we found that the average current spell duration was very similar to the average total duration (17 months compared to 19 months, Exhibit III-10).

To explore the impact of participants who had not completed their current participation spell, we examined the program duration for participants who exited the SCSEP program during Program Year 2009 or 2010. While these individuals may still re-enroll in SCSEP, their current spell durations are finished, compared to active participants who have not yet completed their current spell. For exiters during Program Years 2009 and 2010, the average length of their last enrollment spell was 14 months, compared to 17 months for all participants (Exhibit III-10). The shorter length of enrollment among exiters may be indicative of a temporal shift in program duration, with current participants remaining in the program longer than those who had previously been enrolled.⁵⁴

Exhibit III-10 further examines the durations for exiters. On average, exiters excluded from the performance measures were enrolled in the program for longer than participants included in the performance measures; the median length of enrollment was, however, similar between exiters included and excluded from the performance measures. Those who exited the program and obtained unsubsidized employment were enrolled for shorter periods of time, on average, than those included exiters who did not enter unsubsidized employment.

⁵² Participants who exit are eligible to re-enter the program as long as their total period of enrollment has not exceeded the 48-month limit.

⁵³ The infusion of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to the SCSEP program in Program Year 2009 led to the movement of some participants from regularly funded slots to ARRA-funded slots, which resulted in the recording of more than the usual number of stops and restarts in the SPARQ system.

⁵⁴ One might expect the greater incidence of “long-stayers” within the current participant pool to end after the effective date of the 48-month durational limit on July 1, 2011. However, interviews at more than one process study site revealed that a number of projects were still coping with long-stayers who had been with the program since before the change-in-duration policy. These long-stayers are and will continue to exit based on the 48-month durational limit, but only if they are not given time extensions as permitted under the current regulations.

**Exhibit III-10
Spell Durations**

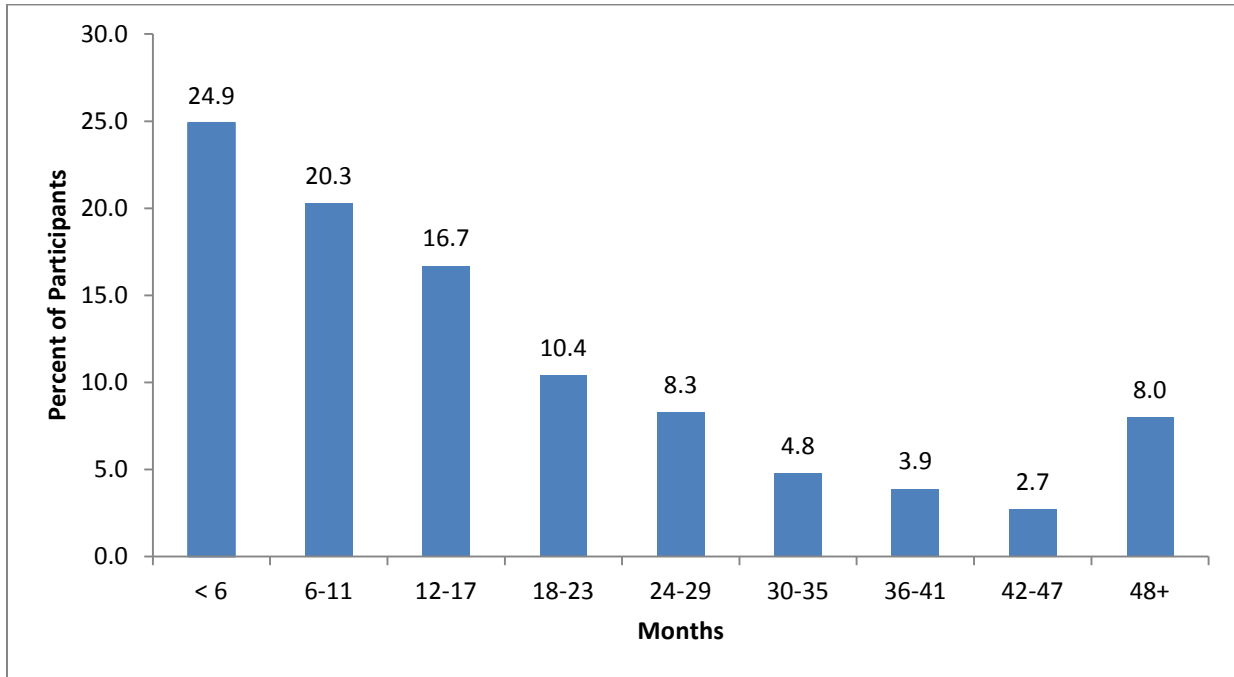
	Average Months	Median Months	Number of participants or exiters
Total Program Duration, Participants in Program Years 2009 and 2010	19.4	13.4	140,878
Current Enrollment Spell, Participants in Program Years 2009 and 2010	16.8	10.9	140,878
Duration of Most Recent Enrollment Spell			
All Exiters in Program Years 2009 and 2010	14.0	7.6	76,935
All Included Exiters in Program Years 2009 and 2010	12.7	7.1	54,385
Included Exiters with Unsubsidized Employment	10.2	6.0	25,550
Included Exiters without Unsubsidized Employment	13.6	7.7	28,835

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

Exhibit III-10 shows that the median spell duration for each group is several months shorter than that group’s average duration. This means that the average durations are skewed by participants with long stays. Notably, half of the individuals who exited into unsubsidized employment spent six months or less in the program.

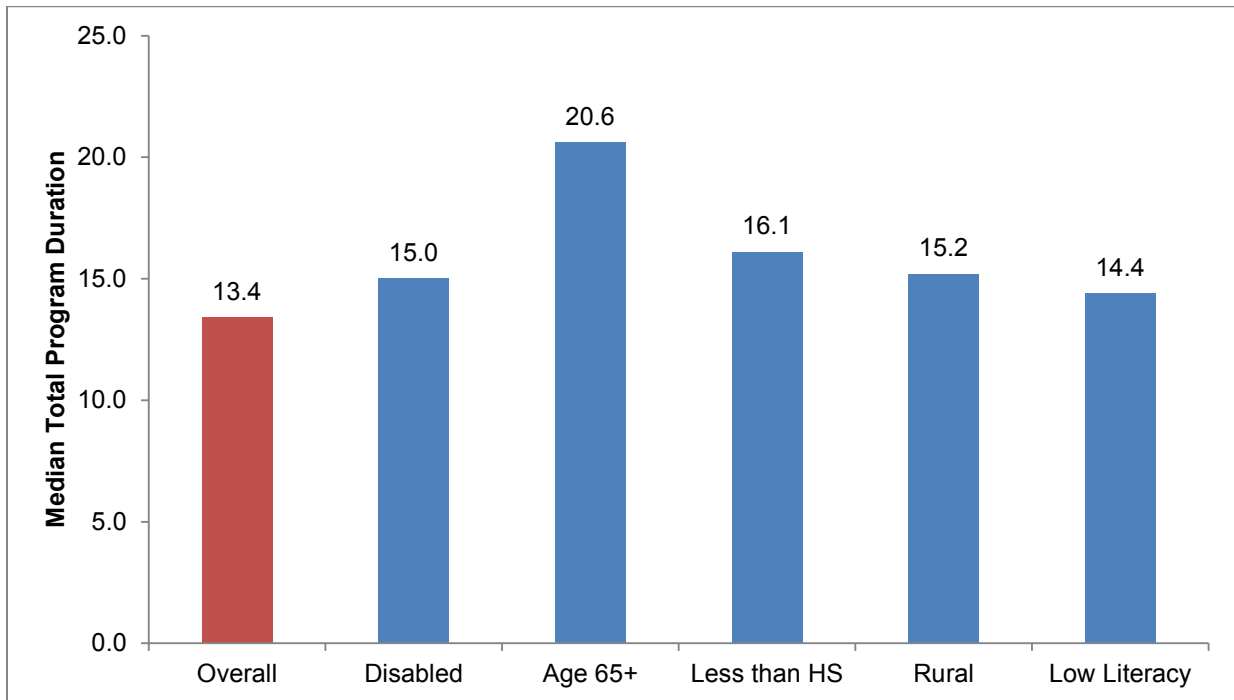
Exhibit III-11 also shows that the average program duration is skewed by a subset of participants with very long stays in the program. While a quarter of participants were enrolled for 6 months or less, 8 percent of participants were enrolled for 48 months or longer. Participants with certain barriers to employment remained in the program longer than average (Exhibit III-12). Such participants may have had more difficulty finding employment, may have been less motivated to find employment, or may have chosen to remain in SCSEP longer because they felt they had more to gain from training and community service assignments. Those who were 65 and older remained in the program the longest, surpassing the median duration by more than seven months.

**Exhibit III-11
Distribution of Total Program Duration for Participants**



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
Percent of participants out of 140,878 participants total.

**Exhibit III-12
Median Total Program Duration by Select Participant Characteristics**



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
Percent of participants out of 140,878 participants total.

Program Exits

As described above, SCSEP participants can exit the program for many reasons. It is important to analyze participants' reasons for exiting the program because ETA does not hold SCSEP grantees accountable for the employment outcomes of participants who are not able to enter unsubsidized employment due to personal reasons such as ill health..

During Program Years 2009 and 2010, twenty-nine percent of SCSEP exiters had reasons for program exit that excluded them from inclusion in the employment performance measures. The most common reasons for “excluded exits” were health or medical problems (80 percent of excluded exits) and family care (12 percent of excluded exits). Other reasons for program exit were death and institutionalization.

SCSEP participants with excluded exits look relatively similar to the participants with included exits with only a few notable differences (Exhibit III-13). As would be expected, participants age 75 and older were more likely to be excluded from the performance measures (14 percent of excluded exiters were 75 or older, compared to 6 percent of included exiters). Excluded exiters were also less educated (36 percent with education beyond high school compared to 42 percent of included exiters).

**Exhibit III-13
Demographic Characteristics of Excluded and Included Exiters,
Program Years 2009 and 2010**

	Percent of Included Exiters			Percent of Excluded Exiters
	All	With Unsubsidized Employment	Without Unsubsidized Employment	
Female	61.6	63.0	60.4	65.1
Hispanic	11.6	12.4	10.9	11.1
African-American, Non-Hispanic	30.8	27.5	33.8	29.5
White, Non-Hispanic	50.6	54.1	47.4	53.2
Other Race/Ethnicity	7.0	6.0	7.9	6.1
Less than a high school diploma/GED	19.1	16.2	21.6	24.5
Education beyond a high school diploma	42.3	44.8	40.0	36.1
Family income at or below poverty	88.4	88.3	88.5	88.2

	Percent of Included Exiters			Percent of Excluded Exiters
	All	With Unsubsidized Employment	Without Unsubsidized Employment	
Age 75 and older	6.3	3.4	8.8	13.5
Average Age	62.8	61.7	63.8	65.2
Number of exiters	54,385	25,550	28,835	22,550

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

Key Findings on Participants and Participation Patterns

Analysis of the SPARQ data provides the following key findings in the areas of participants served, services received, and program participation patterns:

- SCSEP succeeded in its mission to serve low-income older adults. Eighty-eight percent of participants were below the poverty level, and the average participant was 64 years old.
- Many participants faced barriers to employment. Fifteen percent had a disability. Twenty percent of participants had low literacy skills, and 10 percent had limited English proficiency. Additionally, 31 percent lived in rural areas.
- Although all grantees and sub-recipients served low-income older adults, there was substantial variation in the client populations served by individual grantees and sub-recipients, particularly in the percentages of participants who are over 75 years of age, have less than a high school diploma, or are disabled.
- Two-thirds of community service assignments were hosted by non-profits and the rest were hosted by government agencies.
- The average community service assignment involved 236 hours of work experience per quarter at the host agency. The average participant received 13 hours per quarter of training.
- The average total program duration for participants in Program Years 2009 and 2010 was 19 months. 25 percent of participants were enrolled for less than 6 months, while 8 percent were enrolled for over 4 years.
- Participants with barriers to employment had longer periods of enrollment.

IV. LOCAL PROJECT STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

In this chapter, we explore variations in the structure and organization of local projects drawn from the process study site visits to 29 local projects. In the context of addressing three basic topic areas—project organization and staffing, partner relationships and coordination, and support and technical assistance from national and state grantees—we describe key variations among local projects, highlight organizational issues that are of concern to local project operators, and identify organizational and management practices that appear to promote effective project operations or enhance the quality of the services provided to SCSEP participants.

Types of Organizations that Operate Local Projects

As shown in Exhibit II-4, 11 of the 29 local SCSEP projects included in the process study are directly operated by national grantees (by staff who are on the national grantee payroll). The remaining 18 local projects are administered by national or state grantees through contracts with sub-recipients. Four are operated by local affiliates of a national grantee; the remaining 14 are operated by non-profit or public agencies not formally affiliated with the state or national grantee. Among the non-affiliated agencies operating local SCSEP projects are local public agencies (American Job Centers, Area Agencies on Aging, or other entities such as community colleges) and local community-based organizations. For about half of the local project operators, the SCSEP project is their primary or sole program responsibility; for the remaining organizations, SCSEP is one among of a number of different programs provided to local residents. One sub-recipient, for example, is a community action agency that operates a number of different social service programs out of its local office, including a food pantry, a Head Start program, family planning services, and an energy assistance program. This agency also operates several senior programs in addition to SCSEP, including a foster grandparents program and a volunteer program for retired seniors.

As discussed further in later parts of this chapter, the organizational type of the local program operator and the range of agency relationships available to its project director and staff members have significant bearing on how the local SCSEP project provides services in its community. For example, projects hosted by or co-located with American Job Centers tend to have better coordination with the local workforce system than other projects. Similarly, projects hosted by

community agencies that operate multiple social programs are able to draw on a strong service network for referrals, supportive services, and host agency placements.

The general policies of the organization operating a local SCSEP project can also be an important influence in shaping the operational policies and procedures for SCSEP that are followed at a local site. For example, at one sub-recipient housed within a city Department of Human Services, the SCSEP project must conform to city government policies that mandate priority recruitment and enrollment of ex-offenders.

Staffing

Local SCSEP projects use a variety of staffing structures and hiring practices to operate the program. All of the programs we visited were headed by a local project director or SCSEP program manager. (In some cases, this person also had other responsibilities, either managing non-SCSEP programs within the same organization, or managing SCSEP projects at other sites as an employee of the national grantee). Additional staff members may include case managers, job developers, and employees with administrative roles such as receptionist or bookkeeper. At all of the sites we visited, at least some of the staff roles are occupied by “participant staff,” SCSEP participants who are placed at the local SCSEP project as their community service assignment.⁵⁵

Key Staffing Themes

Conversations about staffing at local SCSEP projects revealed three key staffing themes: (1) maintaining staffs whose members are able to build effective and trusting relationships with participants, (2) dealing with the staffing consequences of budget reductions, and (3) balancing the proportions and responsibilities of regular unsubsidized employees versus participant staff. Findings related to the first and second of these inter-related themes are presented and discussed below; because the third theme raises many issues for local projects, and because these are dealt with in different ways, it is discussed below under its own heading.

Staffing to Optimize Staff Members’ Relationships with Participants

Staff members emphasize the importance of maintaining a “family atmosphere” at local projects. Regular unsubsidized project employees often include older individuals, who are perceived as being especially good at establishing rapport with SCSEP participants and appreciating the

⁵⁵ Although participants working as staff members for the SCSEP project may be counted in the performance measure for the total participants served, the hours they spend as participant staff may not be counted toward the total hours of community service performance measure.

difficulties they are facing. One project director explained, “You have to be of an age like this to understand [participants] and what they want, how they think, how they work.” At another project, all of the full-time staff members are not only seniors but also former SCSEP participants, which the program coordinator views as a particular advantage. At the programs where the staff does not include mature workers, program staff-member respondents indicated that they were well aware of the importance of building trust with participants, and to do so they relied on commonalities other than age. For example, the relatively youthful program staff members at one project work and live in the same community as participants, which makes it easier for them to develop trusting relationships with participants. As one staff member put it, “we see them in the grocery store.” At another project, most program staff members come from Korean or Chinese backgrounds and speak one of the languages commonly spoken by participants. The local project director—who is younger than the SCSEP participants—notes that to follow cultural norms around respect for elders she often tells participants “I am not your boss; I am here to help you.”

Dealing with the Staffing Consequences of Budget Reductions

Budget cutbacks have caused projects to lay off or reduce the hours of regular unsubsidized employees. Cutbacks have also interrupted the ability of the projects to assign new participants to participant staff positions, because of the enrollment freeze in effect at the time of our visits. In many cases, consolidation of staff positions has forced case managers to take on larger caseloads. For example, one local SCSEP project operator had to close satellite offices in outlying areas and reduce its hours of operation due to the budget cuts. As a result, staff members working in the outlying counties now have to work out of their homes or cars, rather than out of a project office. Two other local projects reported that they have had to find additional funding sources to keep their staff members employed full time. At one of these sites, this meant reducing the amount of hours that the staff members in question could devote to SCSEP. At the other site, the agency operating the SCSEP project managed to leverage another funding stream to help pay for a full-time SCSEP manager. Additionally, several of the local projects we visited were part of larger agencies that have also experienced funding cutbacks due to the recession. For example, at a local SCSEP project housed within a city department, the SCSEP project office must close during monthly mandatory furlough days for all non-emergency city services.

Issues Surrounding the Use of Participant Staff Members

Many projects depend on participant staff members for direct service delivery. Participant staff members occupy a unique position in the SCSEP service delivery structure: customers of SCSEP themselves, they are also essential to the operation of the program. All of the SCSEP programs the research team visited place some participants into project staff positions, though some rely

more heavily on participant staff members than others. While local SCSEP projects have used participant staff for many years, some are relying even more heavily on participant staff since the budget cutback at the beginning of Program Year 2011.

Sites differ considerably in the particular duties they assign to participant staff members as part of their community service at the local SCSEP project. Below we discuss the different roles that participant staff members play in different local projects.

- **Managing the participant caseload.** At the majority of sites (17 out of 29 local projects visited), programs allow participant staff members to handle intake (including IEP development), job development, and case management functions.
- **Assisting with program operations.** For the 12 local projects that do not use participant staff for the customer-focused duties detailed above, participant staff members help with administrative and clerical duties, working as payroll assistants, janitors, receptionists, and executive assistants. Four of these sites explicitly reserve more sophisticated functions for regular unsubsidized employees. Having participant staff assigned to administrative functions that would otherwise be carried out by regular unsubsidized employees enables local projects to focus their limited salary budgets on credentialed staff who can provide skilled case management and job development services.
- **Expanding program reach.** Six programs use participant staff members to operate the program in outlying parts of the service area. To fill participant staff positions, therefore, these programs look for participants who live in or can easily commute to these rural counties.
- **Creating a pipeline for future program staff.** At 10 sites, the permanent staff includes former participant staff members who have been hired into unsubsidized employment as SCSEP staff members. One site refers to its participant staff members as “trainees” and tries to hire them on as case managers as soon as they achieve competence.

At 17 sites, participant staff members make up the majority of program staff; in some cases the only regular unsubsidized employee is a program manager who supervises participant staff. The most striking example of this arrangement was a site at which a single regular unsubsidized employee supervises 25 participant staff members throughout the service area. At another site, the executive director of the agency that operates the SCSEP project (who oversees SCSEP but does not bill any of her time to the program) explained, “without participant staff, we would have no program.” By contrast, one local project director reported that while she currently has three participant staff members working as employment specialists, her goal is to not use participant staff at all, because it sends a “double message” to the participants, encouraging them to stay in the program rather than actively seek permanent employment. This director, however, is not typical in her feelings about participant staff members. Most of the programs we visited regard participant staff members as important parts of the program. National grantees appear to

influence the extent to which local programs rely on participant staff members versus regular unsubsidized employees. Local sites that are funded by certain grantees (e.g., AARP, National Council on the Aging, SER Jobs for Progress) appear to provide services to SCSEP participants primarily via participant staff members. These practices were confirmed by the national grantees: for example, AARP's national office explained that a program director is the only regular employee at all but a few large sites (which also have an assistant director as a paid employee)

Despite the fact that so many programs use participant staff members in professional-level capacities, most programs do not have formal criteria for the specific type of education and work experience participant staff members should have, though they do use informal criteria for selecting these participants. At most sites, participants tend to be recruited for a participant staff position because they are better educated or have more work experience than other participants and are generally the most desirable candidates. At one site, the project director noted that “our program needs come first, so we try to pick the best.” Project managers generally say they look for participant staff members who have experience with computers and are motivated, friendly, and reliable. Additional criteria used at one or more projects to screen participants for staff positions include the following: being able to make a six-month commitment, being proficient in a language other than English, and having access to a car. One project director also tries to have at least one male and one female case manager on staff because many participants are more comfortable working with someone of the same gender.

In recognition of the responsibilities they give to many participant staff members, 18 local projects pay participants working as SCSEP staff members at a higher rate than they pay participants with other assignments, though sometimes this higher rate applies only to participant staff members who have case management-type functions. Additionally, ten sites allow participant staff members to work more hours per week than other participants. (In some cases, participant staff members have always been able to work more hours than other participants; in other cases, this policy was adopted when other participants had their weekly hours reduced and participant staff members needed to be able to work more hours to keep the SCSEP program functioning.)

Although obvious benefits derive from using participants to staff SCSEP projects (it saves programs money, provides participants with valuable work experience, and makes SCSEP staffs more sensitive to the needs of older workers) several concerns about participant staffing emerged from the site visits.

- **Turnover of participant staff members is problematic for local project operators.** Because participant staff members are subject to the durational limits of the SCSEP program and may be transferred to other community service

assignments or obtain unsubsidized employment before they are “timed out,” sites that rely heavily on participant staffing must regularly replace experienced staff members with new SCSEP participants who need to be trained. One striking example of this conundrum was a site at which the project director is the only regular unsubsidized employee and all four of the participant staff members at the time of our visit were new, as the previous cohort of participant staff members had all reached the durational limit around the same time. Projects that rely heavily on participants for staffing also experienced difficulty staffing their projects during PY 2011, due to enrollment freezes established in response to the then recent budget cutback. At one project, prior to funding cuts, SCSEP had a sufficient number of participant staff members to manage participants and host agencies in rural areas; however, this project had lost several participant staff members in the rural counties due to durational limits and could not replace these positions with new workers because of the enrollment freeze.

- **There is a disincentive for projects to encourage participant staff to transition to unsubsidized employment.** Because participant staff positions are so critical to SCSEP operations at many of the case study sites, permanent staff members may be less likely to encourage these participants to seek out unsubsidized employment, even if such a transition might be in the best interests of the participant. In one site we visited, the local project manager was trying to get the national grantee to let her retain participant staff members in their positions for an extra year because staff turnover was so disruptive to project operations. In contrast, other projects encourage participant staff to transition to unsubsidized employment. For example, one project director tried to limit the tenure of participant staff members as a way of encouraging them to find unsubsidized jobs. “I move them through the program,” she said, “and practice what I preach.”
- **In some cases, local SCSEP projects resolve the contradiction between the desire to retain participant staff members and the goal of having them move to unsubsidized employment by hiring participant staff members into permanent positions.** At ten sites, the permanent staff includes former participant staff members who have been hired into unsubsidized employment as regular SCSEP employees. One SCSEP project tries to hire participant staff members into regular jobs as case managers as soon as they achieve competence. According to a respondent at that site, this practice “shows our belief in the mission of the program—finding unsubsidized employment for participants.” However, because most local SCSEP projects do not have the funding to hire full-time staff, this transition is not always feasible.
- **Projects usually do not have well-developed training plans for participant staff members.** As discussed previously, many programs use participant staff members for case management roles. However, most of these projects do not provide these participants with formal case management training. Participant staff members who are assigned to case management or job developer roles often do not have relevant education or experience and are expected to begin operating in their positions without formal on-the-job training. One exception is a local

project where participant staff members have a three-month on-the-job training period during which they shadow and then are mentored by an experienced case manager. Similarly, another site provides an experienced mentor for participant staff members in case management roles. “Unless there is someone to mentor them,” reported a staff member at that site, “we won’t take them on—having someone to help them, especially when they are just starting, is so important.”

Example of Participant Staff Training

Pathstone, Inc., which operates the local SCSEP project in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, administered by the National Council on Aging, places a strong emphasis on training its participant staff members. The project director explained: “We try to teach them about job development when they come into initial training and then we kind of see who has the potential to go out and talk to employers since...not everyone can do that. Some people would rather do the paperwork and slowly over time they realize who wants to do what piece.” Initially, participant staff members participate in an orientation at the corporate offices of the agency that runs the local SCSEP project to learn about the different programs the agency operates and how they interconnect with SCSEP. Participant staff members then participate in a three-day training at the project site.

Coordination with Community Partners

During the process study site visits, we collected extensive data on relationships with American Job Centers, Area Agencies on Aging, other non-profit social service organizations, and other SCSEP program operators in the region.

American Job Centers

As required by the Older Americans Act (OAA), SCSEP projects have developed strong organizational relationships with local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and One-Stop Career Center operators. Across the 29 case study sites, these organizational linkages have resulted in a number of different functions being coordinated between SCSEP projects and American Job Center partners. In all sites, SCSEP participants must register for services at American Job Centers. In all sites, American Job Center staff members refer appropriate older workers to SCSEP projects. In seven of the case study sites, some or all SCSEP staff members are co-located in American Job Centers. In 17 sites, SCSEP participants are strongly encouraged or required to participate in job-search services available from the One-Stop system. In many sites, some SCSEP participants are matched to community service assignments at American Job Centers. Despite these structures for coordination with the One-Stop system, many of the projects we visited expressed disappointment about the nature or quality of their relationship

with the One-Stop system. Below, we discuss issues that have arisen in each of the facets of the relationship.

SCSEP project managers perceive American Job Centers as being reluctant to serve older workers. Respondents at many SCSEP projects report their belief that American Job Center staff simply “don’t feel like it is their job” to serve older workers. According to these respondents, American Job Center staff members perceive SCSEP as “the program that serves older workers,” so they feel less responsible for serving older workers than they would in the absence of the SCSEP program. One SCSEP project manager said that even though, on paper, the American Job Centers “are there to serve everyone... [American Job Center] staff look at seniors as [SCSEP’s]... people.” Although SCSEP programs benefit from this perception among American Job Center staff members in the form of referrals—at least 18 sites characterized American Job Centers as a key source of referrals—a number of SCSEP project staff members we talked with expressed their dissatisfaction with this arrangement. They feel that the common practice of shuttling all individuals over 55 to SCSEP not only results in the referral of ineligible applicants to SCSEP, but also may discourage One-Stop staff members from fully evaluating older workers and enrolling them in intensive services. One project director complained that many workers between 50 and 55 years of age in need of services are being turned away from American Job Centers and falling through the cracks because “[the American Job Center] doesn’t really want to serve them” and they are not yet eligible for SCSEP.⁵⁶

American Job Centers have a mixed record as host agencies for SCSEP participants. Over half of the sites the research team visited place participants in American Job Centers for their community service assignments. However, these posts are not generally positions that offer an opportunity to learn specific new skills—they usually involve basic administrative tasks or greeting the general public. Positive counter-examples were observed in four sites, however. For example, one SCSEP participant assigned to a community service position at an American Job Center does front-line work with older job seekers, including showing participants how to work with computers. At another site, one participant works out of a small American Job Center in an outlying area in a position which is “first and foremost to act as a mentor and counselor for

⁵⁶ Although the belief that the American Job Centers do not want to serve older workers is widely held among SCSEP project managers and staff members, we did not have the opportunity to interview American Job Center staff members in the local sites, to obtain their perspective. We suspect that this belief on the part of SCSEP program staff members is due, in part, to the fact that they do not understand that most American Job Centers do not have the capacity to provide individualized job search services to any customers and depend instead on self-service online tools and group workshops. American Job Center staff may also hold stereotypes about SCSEP participants that interfere with their provision of intensive services to these older workers. For example, American Job Center staff may believe, incorrectly, that most SCSEP participants are not serious about finding employment.

One-Stop customers.” In a broader practice, one local SCSEP project has arranged with the American Job Center for SCSEP participants to be assigned to community service jobs within the One-Stop resource rooms, where they assist all older workers with job searching, computer skills, and resume writing.

Several SCSEP project operators reported that American Job Centers were not as willing as other host agencies to hire SCSEP participants into unsubsidized jobs. One project director lamented that the American Job Centers serving as host agencies had overlooked SCSEP participant staff members for potential job opportunities; he said that in some cases, SCSEP participants were not even considered for job postings that came through the American Job Center. Another respondent concurred, saying, “[American Job Center managers]...are not even interviewing the participants for a job.... They tell the participant they don’t qualify.” These findings indicate that placing participants in One-Stop Career Centers for community service assignments, while it might be considered an indicator of coordination with the workforce development system, does not necessarily provide a career ladder for participants, nor does it always help promote better access to One-Stop services for seniors.

SCSEP participants do not always perceive American Job Centers as welcoming. All projects require SCSEP participants to sign up for services at the American Job Center or to register for their state’s online job bank for job search services within the first several weeks of SCSEP participation. As described in more detail later in this chapter, projects also encourage all participants to take advantage of the core job search services available at One-Stop centers. The extent to which SCSEP participants actually take advantage of these services appears to vary from site to site. However, participants sometimes feel unwelcome using the One-Stop system for job searching and training. Part of the problem may be that many SCSEP participants are only looking for part-time work and are thus not perceived as “serious job seekers” by American Job Center staff. SCSEP project staff also noted that the “light touch” services and contact available from One-Stop system is frequently not enough for SCSEP participants, who require closer contact and more one-on-one attention. Furthermore, three local SCSEP projects that serve a high proportion of non-English-speaking participants report that the One-Stop system is also not a useful job search resource for their clients because they do not offer translation services and staff members do not speak the participants’ language. As one SCSEP staffer reported, overall, at the job search stage, One-Stop staff members are “not too willing to talk to the seniors,” and either tell seniors they can’t help them or they “treat them so badly that the seniors don’t want to go there for services... [This behavior is] sad to see when seniors are already at a disadvantage [in seeking employment].”

Despite these issues, there is one aspect of SCSEP programs’ relationship with One-Stops that appears to be perceived uniformly positively: co-location. Half of the local SCSEP projects

visited have either co-located their projects within American Job Centers or have arranged for some staff members (usually participant staff members) to be out-stationed in American Job Centers. Co-location is generally viewed as a positive feature that strengthens the relationship between the two programs, makes SCSEP participants more comfortable about using the One-Stop Centers for core job search services, and even helps One-Stop staff members become more accepting of older workers. A SCSEP site which serves older workers in over 100 counties in the state houses some of its employment specialists within American Job Centers; these employment specialists strongly encourage participants to attend the job search workshops offered by the Centers. At another site, SCSEP deliberately houses both its employment specialists and job developers within American Job Centers, so that participants will have increased access to information about job openings, and can more readily take advantage of other available resources, such as job search assistance and trainings.

Organizations Serving Seniors

Local SCSEP programs also strengthen their programs by developing and maintaining relationships with organizations serving the elderly, including Area Agencies on Aging. Many local projects facilitate these relationships through co-location: they are located in facilities or on campuses that also house agencies serving seniors. Six of the local programs the research team visited are housed in or administered by an Area Agency on Aging or other aging services entity. Another project is located on the same social services campus as its local Area Agency on Aging. In an eighth local site, the county senior center provides free office space for SCSEP.

Having strong relationships with senior-serving agencies enables SCSEP staff members to make effective referrals of participants to the local aging system for supportive services, such as nutrition counseling, transportation, chronic disease management, legal aid, and computer classes. Though Area Agencies on Aging do sometimes refer participants to SCSEP, the more frequent referral relationship is for SCSEP to refer its participants to Area Agencies on Aging for supportive services. Local project staff members explained that Area Agencies on Aging tend to serve a more vulnerable and enfeebled population than does SCSEP, so there is generally limited demand for SCSEP services among the population served by these agencies.

Examples of Strong Service Linkages with Social Service Agencies

In Detroit, Michigan, the Area Agency on Aging, which operates SCSEP as a State of Michigan sub-recipient, also has a special grant through Bank of America to be an “economic security service center,” where low-income older adults can go for personal financial check-ups, as well as referrals for low-income housing, free legal assistance, financial counseling, and help with property foreclosures.

In San Diego, California, the Area Agency on Aging also sponsors a course on healthy living that SCSEP participants are required to attend as part of their external training.

Another benefit of having strong linkages with senior-serving agencies is an increased ability to place SCSEP participants into community service assignments that involve services to the elderly. In at least 14 of the 29 programs the research team visited, SCSEP participants are placed as aides or administrative assistants in Area Agencies on Aging or senior centers for their community service assignments. Service assignments in agencies that serve elders are generally viewed as providing positive training experiences for SCSEP participants. A host agency supervisor at an adult day program noted that experience in health care—particularly in programs serving elders—prepares SCSEP participants for new careers in a growth industry. In addition, placements into senior-serving host agencies often result in linking SCSEP participants to services available from the host agency. At one local project, senior centers serving as host agencies tend to offer participants a range of job-related benefits, including fitness and recreation classes, income tax assistance, blood pressure screening, and information sessions on senior nutrition and Medicare. Some senior centers provide individualized support to SCSEP participants, such as giving them rides home if they are not feeling well.

Although most project managers we talked with strongly valued their linkages with agencies serving older individuals, this was not universally the case. Several local projects noted that with budget cuts on both sides of the partnership, they simply do not have the time or resources to pursue close working relationships with the aging system, particularly in regions where the Area Agency on Aging is not in close proximity to the SCSEP site.

Other SCSEP Programs

Local programs generally do not coordinate much with other SCSEP operators in their areas, largely because the geographic service areas of different projects no longer overlap as much as they have in past years. In regions where there is overlap, if one of the SCSEP programs is perceived as having expertise in serving a particular type of participant, another local project may refer participants to the more appropriate SCSEP provider. For example, one project refers

applicants with disabilities to a local Goodwill SCSEP project better qualified to meet their unique needs. Similarly, another site refers monolingual Chinese speakers to a nearby SCSEP project operated by National Asian Pacific Council on Aging. Local projects operated by national grantees have occasional contact with the state SCSEP director within the state in which they are operating to discuss equitable allocation of SCSEP slots across grantees operating in the state. Conversations with local program operators indicate that contact with other SCSEP projects has diminished as a result of the recent budget cuts, because projects do not have the staffing or time for regular meetings and generally do not have open slots available for referrals of SCSEP participants from other projects.

Other Participant-Serving Agencies

SCSEP programs coordinate with other local non-profit and social service agencies in three main capacities. First, SCSEP programs refer participants to other social service programs for supportive services that can provide clothing, energy assistance, emergency shelter, and food assistance. For example, at a site where a large proportion of participants are disabled, SCSEP works with the state rehabilitation agency to provide hearing aids and computer upgrades as workplace accommodations so that participants can carry out their community service assignments.

Example of Strong Referral Relationships with Other Community Agencies

The NCOA sub-recipient projects we visited (in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Kennett Square, Pennsylvania; Huntington, West Virginia; and Nashville, Tennessee) are implementing the Economic Security Initiative, which has a goal of increasing the financial stability of SCSEP participants. As part of this initiative, SCSEP case managers help connect SCSEP participants to agencies that offer services in such areas as health, finances, law, housing, aging services, public benefits, and consumer protection. The goal is to network with other agencies in the community so staff members can provide participants with “warm referrals” rather than “cold” ones. Although SCSEP has always provided participants with referrals to community resources, the program manager in Nashville noted that the Economic Security Initiative provides more hands-on support to participants for connecting with resources. She explained that this program has helped provide SCSEP services in a challenging economic environment, because “if we can’t find participants jobs, we can at least make sure people have their basic needs met and a safety net to rely on. Plus, we need to make sure participants have their basic needs met first before they can really focus on training and

employment.” While most of the Economic Security Initiative clients at her site are current SCSEP participants, some are individuals who have applied for the program but cannot enroll due to the enrollment freeze; the initiative enables SCSEP to provide at least some support these individuals until it can begin enrolling new participants again.

Second, local SCSEP projects receive referrals from local social service organizations and in some cases actively recruit participants through these organizations. One example of the latter is a project that recruits participants for the SCSEP program through a network of local non-profit organizations that stay connected through regular meetings of the local “Resource Unlimited Network.” At another site, a food pantry manager in a rural county (who is a former SCSEP participant herself) often encourages older individuals using the food pantry to apply to the SCSEP project. One local project has strong partnerships with the state’s vocational rehabilitation and veterans affairs programs, which has resulted in cross-referrals of individuals between these programs.

A third way local SCSEP projects coordinate with other social service agencies is by using these agencies as host agencies for community service assignments. Many of these relationships are helped by the fact that the SCSEP project is either run by the same umbrella organization as the other programs or is located in the same building or campus. One project we visited is located in a large county social service campus called the Resource Connection where many of the other organizations have agreed to serve as host agencies for SCSEP participants. At another site, SCSEP is just one of many programs offered by the Area Agency on Aging, so the other programs (such as Meals on Wheels) also serve as host agencies for SCSEP. Additionally, many of the same agencies that refer to SCSEP or that SCSEP refers to are also host agencies. For example, a transit access program both hosts participants in community service assignments and is used by other participants to travel to and from their host agencies.

Host Agency Partnerships

During Program Years 2009 and 2010, local projects often had to recruit new host agencies to accommodate the expanded caseload funded under ARRA. During Program Year 2011, many local projects reported that they do not need to recruit new host agencies because they have strong coordination linkages with other agencies and already have an extensive roster of partner agencies in the community. In fact, because of the enrollment freeze that was in place in most of the local projects when we visited, most projects have put host agencies on a waiting list to get new SCSEP participants placed at their organizations. Non-profit and government agencies are particularly eager to sponsor SCSEP participants due to their difficult economic situations. As one SCSEP project director explained, “Many local programs are strapped for cash; filling the

roles with SCSEP participants has been the only way to provide services. It's all interrelated. [SCSEP] is such ... [an important] resource [for host agencies]." Another SCSEP project director reported that he receives calls from potential host agencies from all over the state (and refers interested callers to the local SCSEP project operator).⁵⁷

When a SCSEP project does recruit a new host agency, it is usually because a specific participant's IEP requires a community service assignment with a new type of agency. For example, one participant was interested in pursuing a career in addiction counseling, so SCSEP staff found a treatment center that was quite pleased to have "somebody to lighten the caseload [of existing staff]." Some projects prioritize recruiting and retaining host agencies that can commit to hiring participants into unsubsidized employment. Several local projects are always on the lookout for new host agencies that can competently serve certain populations, such as participants with limited English proficiency or persons with disabilities.

Because local projects depend so heavily on host agencies to provide safe and learning-rich community service environments for SCSEP participants, they devote considerable attention to orienting new host agencies to the goals and procedures of the SCSEP program. After host agencies have agreed to participate in the program, project managers develop written agreements that specify the host agency's responsibilities and conduct regular monitoring visits to the host agency to ensure that the community service assignment is meeting the needs of both the participant and the host agency. In addition to ensuring that host agency staff members understand the philosophy and goals of the program and have been oriented to standardized procedures such as timesheet submission, SCSEP projects also work to ensure that participants have a safe working environment (for example, adequate heating and cooling as necessary given the climate, and restrictions on lifting and operating heavy machinery for older workers). Most projects have developed written agreements that host agencies sign, specifying that they agree to abide by SCSEP policies and procedures. Some projects also require all host agencies to attend an annual meeting to review policies and share best practices.

Once an agency has an active participant placement, local SCSEP project staff members conduct periodic monitoring visits, ranging from once every two to three weeks to just once a year. Projects often use a standardized monitoring tool to conduct these visits. During monitoring visits, which some programs conduct unannounced, SCSEP staff review whether the placement is improving a participant's skills and make sure the host agency is requiring only appropriate duties. For example, one project director checks to see that participants are not responsible for

⁵⁷ The SCSEP program requires host agencies to use SCSEP participants only to add additional staff positions, not to fill positions that are already in the agency's budget. If the overall budget of a non-profit declines, it is not clear whether it is allowable to use SCSEP participants to fill existing positions that would otherwise be cut.

opening and closing the building. Several sites mentioned that they take care to ensure that host agencies are not violating the maintenance-of-effort clause by substituting participants for regular unsubsidized employees. In some instances, findings from a monitoring visit have been used as grounds to sever a host agency relationship. SCSEP participants at one site, for example, were transferred to another host agency after a monitoring visit revealed that they were working in an unheated building in the winter.

Overall, SCSEP projects exercise discretion in selecting and monitoring host agency placements, setting the tone for a productive relationship with these partners. Shifts in program philosophy have led some local projects to change their practices in selecting and monitoring host agencies. Just as projects have had to reeducate participants on the importance of seeking unsubsidized employment, they have also had to educate both new and existing host agencies on the importance of providing the participants with skills that will help them be competitive in the labor market. As one project director explained, “We tell them this is not a cheap labor program, and if you can’t hire them [after a community service assignment ends], you’re [responsible for] preparing them to be hired by somebody else.”

Policy Guidance, Oversight, and Support from National and State Grantees

Because our data collection with national and state grantees was limited to a single interview with each national grantee and a sample of state grantees early in the data collection period, we were not able to explore in detail the different ways that grantees add value to the SCSEP program. Grantees play an important role in communicating with ETA about federal policy requirements for the SCSEP program and communicating overall program goals and philosophy to local program operators. They have been important in determining the emphasis placed on employment and other outcomes of the SCSEP program at the local project level and in shaping local project expectations about how quickly SCSEP participants should move through the program. They also work closely with local program operators to develop innovative program designs. In speaking with the national and state grantees, we focused on the varying degrees of support, oversight, and training local SCSEP projects receive from their national (or state) grantees.

One primary concern for grantees is to make the SCSEP policies and procedures handed down from the federal level available to project operators, which they do through program manuals or online postings. Another concern for grantees is to ensure that project operators understand and adhere to the program’s regulations. Although managers at most local projects reported that they have substantial autonomy in designing many aspects of their local project operations, grantee policies may dictate or influence certain aspects of project operations. For example, grantee

policies determine whether the project may exempt certain individuals from the 48-month duration limit or how long participants should remain at a community service assignment, on average. Local projects rely on their national and state grantees to clarify questions about official SCSEP policies and advocate on their behalf. As one project director phrased it, “the role of [the national grantee] is to go back to DOL and advocate so we don’t have to get directly involved with DOL and can focus on program implementation.” Most programs use a manual provided by their national grantee to inform their staffs about local policy and procedures. One project director said that her grantee’s manual was “the most descriptive and structured manual I’ve ever seen, and we follow it like it’s the Bible.” In another project operated by a local affiliate of a national grantee, the local project developed its own procedural guide, but made calls to the national office to request examples and best practices from other affiliates. In addition to the procedures manual, most local projects use standardized forms developed by their national grantee for intake, drafting IEPs, and creating other documentation.

Grantees provide guidance to local project operators through annual meetings, regular conference calls⁵⁸ with all of their local sites (which often provide an opportunity to share best practices) and individual phone check-ins. To hold project operators accountable for program expenditures, data collection, and performance, grantees make site visits to project operators at least annually and regularly monitor program budgets and the SPARQ management information system. One grantee also assists its local projects in fiscal management by providing a payroll-by-payroll report to calculate the number of participants and the number of hours paid so that local projects can accurately forecast their expenditures and compare them to the available funds in their budgets. If it appears that a local project is not on track to stay within its budget, the national grantee will call the local project to learn more and discuss strategies for addressing the situation. While this approach has been quite successful for budgeting—one local project director proudly noted that “one year we under-spent the budget by only 99 cents”—staff members at some local projects perceived the national grantee’s close involvement in fiscal monitoring as micro-managing its local enrollment practices and second-guessing its “boots on the ground” knowledge of the program.

Grantees also provide a wide variety of training and support to local projects. Senior Service America grantees have access to a web-based technical assistance resource, referred to as “the cloud,” for answers to frequently asked questions. Experience Works, AARP, Mature Services, and National Council on Aging all provide online training and job search software (see Chapter V for more details). Additionally, some grantees deliver periodic trainings as needed for

⁵⁸ Grantees largely cited monthly calls, though bi-monthly and weekly calls were also mentioned to a lesser extent.

particular subject matters (such as a green jobs curriculum), updates on changes to the program’s legislation, or refreshers on existing program regulations.

National grantees may also provide staff training. Some grantees help train new program staff members by performing quarterly reviews during the first year of employment or by offering an online “SCSEP 101” module. Experience Works employs a “train-the-trainer” model with state and local projects, in which the national office trains and disseminates information to state-level staff members, who then train and disseminate this information to field staff members via in-person trainings and webinars. Easter Seals supports one staff member at each affiliate to be trained and certified as a workforce development specialist. Similarly, National Council on Aging (NCOA) sub-recipients meet with the national grantee for one week every year to receive training in service provision and host agency recruitment.

Example of Guidance Provided by a National Grantee

Participant staff members in the SCSEP project in Seattle, Washington, receive training via six modules provided by the national grantee, AARP, on how to effectively market SCSEP to potential employers and host agencies. The program director feels that “the training is effective in making [participant staff] more comfortable and confident when contacting employers directly.”

Technical assistance and guidance provided by the national and state grantees received mixed reviews. Most local projects praise the responsiveness and flexibility of their national grantees, and appreciate the opportunity to hear, through conference calls and annual meetings, about other programs’ service strategies and practices. One local project director said that the “peer-to-peer support is excellent” and another reported that her national grantee had been very helpful, noting that “anything I’ve asked for, they’ve delivered.” However, local directors from a few projects are unsatisfied with the technical assistance provided by their grantees; one local project lamented that the grantee’s help desk is not helpful because “you get a different person each time you call” and it is difficult to get a question answered. Another local project regarded its grantee’s technical assistance as “micro-management.”

Local projects’ face-to-face communication with national grantees appears to vary considerably in frequency and intensity. At one site where the local project is co-located with the national grantee and at another where the national grantee’s headquarters is in a nearby city, in-person contact with national grantee staff members is much more frequent than at other local projects, where in-person contact is limited to monitoring visits and annual conferences. AARP, for example, now only holds national in-person meetings once a year; the meetings were formerly held biannually but have been reduced due to the budget cut, and local project staff lamented this

loss of in-person contact. Goodwill is also offering fewer national gatherings due to limited funds, instead providing on-site targeted technical assistance informed by case file reviews at local projects.

State grantees appeared to provide less guidance to and have less frequent interaction with their local sites than did national grantees. Local projects administered by state grantees appear to interact with their state SCSEP directors relatively infrequently. One local project’s staff members felt that SCSEP “is out on its own” because contact with the state grantee is so minimal; another state-run local project noted that the state grantee is “very hands-off,” as most coordination is done via email and on an as-needed basis. (The relative lack of involvement by state grantees, however, does not appear to affect the customer experience. As discussed in Chapter VIII, there were no significant differences in satisfaction levels between participants served by projects operated by national grantees versus state grantees).

Example of a Close Relationship between a State Grantee and a Local Project

State grantees generally had very limited relationships and communication with the local projects they supervise. However, the SCSEP project operated by the Detroit Area Agency on Aging described a positive and well-coordinated relationship with its state grantee—the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging. The state SCSEP coordinator provides a high level of support to the local project. Local staff members noted that she gives them “a lot of flexibility to operate the program as we see fit,” has an “open-door policy,” and is always willing to “help us address any concerns we have about the program or a customer.” The state SCSEP Coordinator added that her department believes “local communities know best how to serve their people and should be given the flexibility and support to do so.” She holds regular monthly meetings with local SCSEP projects, but because she works with all of the local staff members in other capacities, they frequently talk outside of official SCSEP scheduled conversations. When monitoring shows a need for improvement, the state SCSEP Coordinator will develop a corrective action plan for the local program and hold a conference call to review the plan. She also discusses any issues that arise during quarterly meetings with local programs. For example, they recently discussed the challenge that the current labor market in Michigan poses to customers reaching the durational limit. Thus, the state grantee provides responsive and essential guidance to the sub-recipients that provide SCSEP services throughout the state.

Most projects reported having a fair amount of leeway to structure and operate SCSEP at the local level, provided they conformed to certain grantee requirements and met their performance goals. One local project director explained, “We have an assigned service area and as long as we stay within that service area, we have a lot of flexibility.... As long as you’re not breaking any rules, you’re free to do whatever you need to, to come up with an idea to make it happen, really.”

Another noted that while her national grantee provides the basic structure for program administration, local projects have to “make it their own to make it work.” In the former manufacturing stronghold where her program operates, for example, project staff members customize participant training opportunities based on the idea that “you’re not dealing with a situation; you’re dealing with a mindset [among participants] that they have done their due or that there are no jobs.”

Several local projects expressed frustration at the amount of paperwork required to comply with grantee requirements, and one local project director noted that a number of host agencies in the area have given up participating in the SCSEP program because of the high level of paperwork associated with the program. Many local projects also expressed frustration that performance goals are set at the grantee level and may not be feasible to achieve in a local context, particularly in rural areas and in areas with very high unemployment. (Strategies projects use to manage performance are discussed in more detail in Chapter VI.)

Key Findings on Local Project Structure and Organization

Findings on Staffing

- The strong representation of older workers among both regular unsubsidized employees and participant staffs enables most SCSEP projects to create an atmosphere where seniors trust that they are receiving services and guidance from people who understand their perspective and experience.
- Most of the SCSEP sites visited rely heavily on participant staff members, often using them to provide key participant services such as case management and job development. Participant staff members comprise the bulk of the staff at 17 of the 29 sites visited.
- The heavy use of participant staff members generates several challenges for projects: the more-frequent staff turnover is disruptive; the reliance on participant staff members to provide services generates a disincentive to move these participants into unsubsidized employment; and participant staff members working as case managers commonly lack formal training.
- The recent national budget cut for SCSEP has caused many local programs to reduce the number of regular unsubsidized employees, reduce the work hours of regular employees, and shift responsibilities to participant staff members.

Findings on Partner Relationships

- American Job Centers are the primary source of customer referrals for most of the programs visited. Local projects also coordinate with the workforce investment system by embedding SCSEP staff in One-Stops and placing participants in One-Stops for community service assignments.

- Despite these linkages, the One-Stop system is not always perceived as welcoming by older workers. SCSEP staff felt that many One-Stop staff members do not consider it their responsibility to assist older workers, and it is a common practice at One-Stops to refer all older workers to SCSEP even if they might not qualify for SCSEP participation.
- SCSEP projects have developed strong linkages with their local aging systems and other non-profit organizations in their communities. Through these linkages, they receive referrals of individuals interested in SCSEP services, refer SCSEP participants to other agencies for needed supportive services, and recruit host agencies to sponsor participants in community service training positions.
- Most local projects do not need to actively recruit host agencies. They work mainly with long-established community partners and reach out to new organizations only as needed to meet specific participant requirements. Because of the economic climate, host agencies particularly value the staff support SCSEP participants can offer.
- SCSEP projects provide both initial orientation and ongoing monitoring to host agency partners to ensure that program procedures are followed, that working environments are safe, and that placements are appropriate and have meaningful training content.

Findings on Policy Guidance, Oversight and Support from National and State Grantees

- Grantees play an important role in communicating with ETA about federal policy requirements for the SCSEP program and communicating overall program goals and philosophy to local program operators.
- Grantees play an important role in shaping local project expectations about how quickly participants should move through the program and how to balance the emphasis on employment versus other program outcomes.
- Grantees provide technical assistance to local operators and work closely with local program operators to develop innovative program designs. Most local projects value this assistance and oversight—and appreciate the flexibility they are afforded to run their programs within the proscribed regulations.
- State grantees appear to have less contact with their local projects than national grantees.

V. PARTICIPANT SERVICES

Local projects provide a number of different services to SCSEP participants, as detailed in the SCSEP program logic model in Exhibit II-1. SCSEP services are organized around a required central service, which is providing training in a community service assignment with hourly wages paid by the SCSEP program at the minimum or prevailing wage. The goal of this chapter is to describe the similarities and differences in how projects provide services to SCSEP participants, and to highlight project practices that are worthy of note, because they appear to be well designed to meet participant needs. We have organized our findings around four different clusters of SCSEP services, each of which covers a principal element of program participation: (1) recruiting and screening procedures; (2) service planning, case management, and linkages to services provided by other agencies; (3) skill development and training activities; and (4) services that help the participant transition to unsubsidized employment.

Bringing Participants into the Projects

Recruitment designs and procedures varied most significantly across the local SCSEP projects we visited in the following areas: (1) whether projects were currently recruiting new participants or whether enrollments were still “frozen,” due to over-enrollment; (2) how the projects recruit new participants; and (3) how the projects screen applicants to ensure eligibility and appropriateness for SCSEP.⁵⁹

Current Recruitment Status

Because of the budget cut, 23 of the 29 programs visited stopped recruiting and enrolling new participants for all or part of Program Year 2011. A manager in one project commented that “there is no reason to market the program [in its current state of over-enrollment], because it is futile to advertise services we can’t provide right now.” All of the over-enrolled programs maintained waiting lists of interested participants during the fall of 2011. While some of these

⁵⁹ Because intake procedures, including application, eligibility determination, and orientation, closely follow program regulations and federal guidelines, there is minimal variation across projects. We have chosen to not focus attention separately on this phase of SCSEP operations.

programs had always used waiting lists, the roster of waiting list participants has ballooned, and some lists contained hundreds of potential participants. In one project, the program stopped placing new names on the wait list; instead, it started telling inquirers to call back at a later date. To deal with the abundance of wait-listed participants, four projects began performing periodic “purges” of the waiting list by contacting wait-listed participants to verify their continued interest and eligibility. However, as a result of natural attrition and adjustment to new enrollment targets, ten projects indicated that they had already started enrolling again (these were sites visited towards the end of data collection) or planned to start enrolling again soon.

Recruitment Methods

Once the volume of participants has been reduced through attrition, recruitment will again become important to local projects. Local projects use a wide variety of methods to ensure an appropriate number of applicants. Below, recruitment strategies are listed in order of decreasing importance.

- **Word-of-mouth.** Local project staff and participants both overwhelmingly cited word-of-mouth as the most frequent recruitment technique.
- **Referrals from partner agencies** (many of which are also host agencies). As previously discussed, most programs receive referrals from their local American Job Centers, which often refer anyone over 55 to the SCSEP program. Although American Job Centers sometimes refer individuals who are not eligible for SCSEP, one project welcomes referrals from a Career Center, because this is a strong indication that the applicant is interested in unsubsidized employment, rather than a permanent paid community service position. In fact, this project actually discourages word-of-mouth referrals, as they prefer to work with people referred by the American Job Centers who have demonstrated that they are already searching for a job.
- **Attending community events and job fairs.** Recruiting at job fairs also offers programs access to a population motivated to seek employment; at a recent local job fair, SCSEP staff at one project signed up 18 people interested in the program. Program staff thought this technique was particularly helpful in recruiting those who are repeatedly visiting job fairs but not getting hired, a group that sees participation in SCSEP as a way to improve their skills while getting “temporary employment.”
- **Local media.** Advertising in local media is widely used. Listings in local “PennySaver” publications seem to be particularly effective. Several projects also reported that they hang flyers in libraries and retail stores.
- **Social Media.** At least one project reported that it is using Facebook to “spread the word” about the program by gaining “as many ‘friends’ as possible.” Facebook friends of this project include seniors as well as their friends and family members.

We identified some differences in recruitment practices between urban and rural areas. Staff at three urban projects explained that they did not engage in any active recruitment because the project was always operating at capacity; because they are so well-known within the community, applicants hear about the program by word of mouth and just come in without any action by the program. Sites in rural areas, by contrast, reported working particularly hard to recruit participants. In one rural site, because there are few agencies that make referrals to SCSEP, staff members drive around and hang flyers in “mom and pop shops” and libraries. In another site, the director explained that because staff members have experience administering a farm-worker job program that requires them to do active recruiting, they use an intensive, personalized approach to SCSEP recruiting as well: “We...do a lot of door to door canvassing...and going to churches and talking about programs.” Programs that serve both urban and rural areas often use different recruitment strategies in rural areas, focusing more on advertising in the urban areas (which is often cheaper than in urban media markets) and on canvassing in the rural areas. In one project that serves both an urban center and a large rural area, the program manager drives to a rural town that is an hour and a half away from his main office to personally recruit SCSEP participants. By contrast, in the city in which the SCSEP office is located, recruitment requires less intensive personalized effort because the One-Stop system serves as a “hub of information” for prospective participants. In another project serving both urban and rural counties, the project conducts outreach in outlying counties by sending postcards to older adults who participate in senior-serving programs, such as Foster Grandparents. The evidence from the case study sites suggests that in urban areas the key to recruiting SCSEP participants is creating an effective referral relationships with other agencies; in rural areas, project staff must undertake specific activities to actively recruit participants.

Screening before Enrollment

At least 12 of the local SCSEP programs we visited do some type of screening to determine program fit and eligibility as part of the recruitment process (many of the remaining programs do this step at the intake stage rather than while recruiting).

Screening to Give Priority to Individuals with Barriers to Employment or Other Characteristics

Most often, this type of screening is designed to ensure that the project will meet its performance measure for service to the most-in-need individuals. For many sites, this requirement is not difficult to meet because the population that naturally flows in to inquire about the program includes a high percentage of most-in-need participants. A representative at the national office of AARP, which serves the largest number of SCSEP participants of any grantee, estimated that 90% of participants served qualify as most-in-need. Similarly, a local project director told us, “We don’t need to look for the most in need, they find us.” However, one project director noted

that recruitment for this population is tricky because people with many of the eligible barriers “don’t want to admit that they have them.” Another project director noted that the economic downturn stimulated an influx of younger participants and “it’s hard to meet the [performance standard for]...barriers because we have a large group in the 59-to-61 age group.” Several projects appear to have expanded their recruitment of hard-to-serve individuals to include individuals with conditions such as alcoholism or mental illness, which are not categorized as official SCSEP barriers to employment in the program regulations.

Managers in several projects complained that the ETA definitions for what constitutes a barrier to employment are so strict that they exclude individuals who meet the “spirit” but not the letter of the definitions. For example, in several projects, managers would like ETA to be able to classify parts of a county as rural, if numerous participants reside in rural areas or economically depressed towns, even if the entire county is not classified as rural according to government statistics.

Some programs use specific outreach strategies to identify and recruit the most-in-need participants. One project focuses on identifying those who lack job searching skills, which project staff members believe is an effective proxy for the other measured most-in-need categories. Another project that has had difficulty meeting the most-in-need measure in the past has been advised by its national grantee to try to get referrals from agencies that serve individuals who are most in need (e.g., people who use homeless shelters).

Several projects reported that they occasionally receive requests from their national grantees to target recruitment to individuals from specific groups that may be underrepresented at the national grantee level. For example, one local project reported that its national grantee had asked the local project to increase its enrollment of ex-offenders and people with disabilities in the past. The same national grantee most recently requested that its local projects increase the level of services to members of the monolingual Spanish-speaking population. In another local project, a different national grantee asked one of the case-study projects to recruit more Latino participants and had facilitated this effort by running advertisements in the local Spanish-language media.

Some programs also prioritize certain populations based on their own internal goals for the program. In one project, the director aims for a diverse age range, but because she finds that those aged 55 to 65 are most interested in the program, she makes an effort to specifically reach out to older individuals. Another project prioritizes potential participants who state an interest in demand occupations because, according to a respondent, it is possible to “turn them around a lot quicker” and place them in unsubsidized employment.

Screening to Determine Whether Applicants are Appropriate for SCSEP

Another reason for screening at the recruitment stage is to determine whether participants are appropriate for the SCSEP program. Project managers explained that this means screening out individuals who, at one end of the spectrum, are too job-ready, and those who, at the other end, may have pre-employment needs that need to be addressed before the individual is ready to work in a community service position.⁶⁰ Screening out those who are too job-ready is the more common and necessary practice. In one site, staff explained that they do not officially discourage an applicant who is too job-ready, but rather will try to get the applicant to understand that the program may not be a good fit for them. For example, staff members will point out to the applicant that he or she might be frustrated with a community service assignment at minimum wage if he or she might be able to find employment at a better wage. Those who are looking at the program as a way to stay busy rather than as a way to find employment are encouraged to seek out volunteer work instead. This might be true of applicants who are receiving public benefits (such as SSI disability payments or subsidized housing) and want some meaningful activity but aren't willing to transition to unsubsidized employment because it might make them ineligible for ongoing benefits. In another project, staff members are wary of applicants who appear overqualified. Many are "retired and they just want something to do.... If they've got an advanced degree, they better have a medical reason to come into the program." The program director in another site noted that while he generally does not serve those who have substantial work experience, he sees an important opportunity to help older workers who are experienced but have been unemployed for a long time: "Maybe they're depressed and then we can step in and help them. They come here and get readjusted. A lot of times you think it's going to take a long time for them to get a job, but sometimes it happens more quickly."

Helping Participants Navigate SCSEP: Service Planning and Case Management

The Older Americans Act (OAA) requires program operators to assess a participant's goals and needs and use this knowledge to help the participant develop an individual employment plan (IEP) that will guide his or her training and progress towards obtaining employment. In this section, we examine the non-employment services that relate to the development and implementation of the IEP: initial service planning, assessment and delivery of supportive services, and ongoing service planning and case management. The section concludes with a

⁶⁰ Because of SCSEP's identity as a program for individuals with serious employment barriers, some projects will accept any eligible applicant, as long as the program is not over-enrolled. Other programs will try to convince individuals with unresolved drug abuse or mental health issues to first enroll in other programs to address these issues before seeking employment.

discussion of how practical considerations interact with participant characteristics to affect service planning.

Initial Service Planning

All local SCSEP projects assess participants—either during application, or once eligibility is determined—to begin the service planning process and create an IEP that will guide program participation. All projects address the key elements required by regulation and directly link the assessment to creating the IEP. However, the projects vary widely in how the IEPs are developed, and how they are used to guide the delivery of services to individual participants.

Eleven case study sites that are administrative units or sub-grantees of AARP, Mature Services, NCOA, and Experience Works now use computer systems to guide and assist intake, assessment, and service planning, ensuring a degree of consistency in the process and automatically creating the IEP based on the assessment results.⁶¹ In addition to simplifying the creation of the IEP and reducing the amount of data entry, use of these systems and the associated O*Net codes increases the precision of matching participant work experience and interests to suitable community service assignments and job goals.⁶² At least two other local projects indicated that staff members use O*Net to refine the IEP. In addition, two other sites use the Internet testing site Prove It! to determine the level of a participant's Microsoft Office skills for clerical community service assignments. Computer-assisted systems notwithstanding, an interview between participant and staff member is still at the core of the service planning process in all sites, and thus it is likely to be variable in thoroughness and depth and from individual to individual.

Assessment. The assessment process is the foundation for service planning. The purpose of assessment is to provide SCSEP staff members with key background information about the participant's current situation as well as the participant's specific employment strengths and employment barriers. In many sites, the assessment also provides an opportunity for the case manager to begin building a trusting relationship with the participant. Assessment procedures are quite thorough in most sites, regardless of whether the project uses a computer-assisted process or a paper process. Both the computer-assisted and paper-based sites use a very structured process, with specific forms to guide the assessment and record the results. In terms of scope, nearly all sites cover the following topics: work history, talents and aptitudes, need for

⁶¹ AARP, Experience Works, and NCOA are built on the same platform, a product of the National Business Services Alliance.

⁶² The Mature Services site we visited was just installing its computer-assisted system at the time of the site visit, so the process and IEPs reviewed for this report were developed using hard copies of the service planning forms.

supportive services, occupational preferences, and needs for training. Most also address factors that may affect the individual's potential for performing in a community service assignment and for achieving unsubsidized employment.

There is substantial variation among projects in the depth of the individual assessments and the level of detail recorded in the assessment record. Only a few sites use standardized testing to determine basic skills or to do in-depth career exploration. Among the most thorough assessments are those performed by a project in which a staff member spends about five hours with each participant over two face-to-face sessions to collect relevant information and develop the IEP. In contrast, a few sites spend as little as one hour on assessment. However, it is not clear whether the time spent on assessment correlates with the quality of the resulting service plan. A short assessment process may be adequate if the participant's background and prospects for program participation are simple and clear.

A Comprehensive Assessment Design

The state-funded SCSEP project operated by the Detroit Area Agency in Detroit, Michigan stands out for the depth and completeness of its assessment. In addition to spending a substantial amount of time collecting information relevant to service planning and discussing it with the client, a staff member works with the client to develop a five-page IEP that captures detailed employment history (including dates of employment, duties and skills, reasons for leaving, and wages), the results of a skills and aptitude inventory, a summary of education level and certifications, an assessment of supportive services needed, and a statement about participant interests and goals.

Initial Individual Employment Plan. In all sites, the IEP is directly based on the assessment results. Among the goals of the IEP process are the following: (1) make sure the participant realizes that the ultimate goal of SCSEP participation is unsubsidized employment; (2) help the participant establish employment goals (hours, wages, type of job) from the outset; (3) plan the different services needed to overcome barriers and set out a sequence of steps by which to reach the employment goal; and (4) provide a checklist for ongoing monitoring and updating of the IEP and a timetable for completion of activities and goals. In most projects, the IEP is usually completed very early in the intake period, and typically serves to identify the community service assignment as well as the unsubsidized employment goal. However, at least four local projects assign participants to their initial community service assignment before the IEP is completed. These latter projects defer the development of the IEP until after the participant has some work experience at the host agency. This allows the participant and case manager to build on the initial work experience and establish more relevant employment goals in the IEP.

As with the assessments, the IEPs vary substantially among the case study sites in terms of length and quality. IEPs in about half of the sites are quite terse, covering only one or two pages.

Some short IEPs provide only very general descriptions of skills deficits and training planned. For example, one IEP that a site visitor collected indicated the goal for unsubsidized employment as “employment.” Another had as a first step to “attend host agency training.”⁶³ During the site visits, some staff members shared with the site visitors their impressions that the service-planning process is “little more than a paper exercise.” Such limited IEPs tend to provide only limited guidance to participants and staff and do not provide any evidence of individualized planning in response to individual skills or deficits. On the other hand, a few shorter IEPs, though condensed, were rich with details about the participant and did indeed provide individualized service plans and goals. They may recognize that service planning in a given project is very straightforward, with a strong correspondence between participant goals and needs on the one side and the available community service assignments on the other. In such cases, the less detailed plans may be as serviceable as the more detailed ones. In the remaining sites, IEPs are substantially longer—from three to five pages. The longer format plans allow for substantially more information on skills needed and obtained. This richer detail appears to be more individualized to target specific skills deficits and can serve as a more precise planning tool in those instances where there is benefit from more individualized, detailed planning.

High-Quality IEPs

The Nashville Workforce Resource Center, in Nashville, Tennessee—a sub-recipient of National Council on Aging—bases IEPs on assessment results that draw on both self-assessment and formal testing. This local project develops IEPs that include very specific descriptions of the skills that participants are expected to acquire during training provided by the community service assignments and the SCSEP program. For example, in the case of a participant who is training as an administrative assistant, the plan describes both the SCSEP computer classes that the participant will take as well as how the variety of duties that will be carried out in the community service assignment will lead to the development of relevant skills. All skills and supportive services needs are tracked and include completion dates.

The project operated by Experience Works in Buffalo, Missouri uses an IEP that includes a statement of the participant’s employment goals and a description of the core and related skills required to achieve those goals, as well as a training plan. The training plan contained within the IEP lists the training and employment objectives and training strategies to reach the objectives. Periodically, SCSEP staff members rate the participant’s progress toward the stated objectives, based on participant self-assessment and feedback from the participant’s work supervisor at the host agency.

⁶³ Some of the findings and conclusions throughout this chapter are based on a review of completed IEPs collected by site visitors. Names and other identifying information have been changed to protect participants’ privacy.

All sites require the participant to sign the plan, signifying knowledge of and agreement with the plan. This helps emphasize that the IEP is the culmination of a negotiation process between the participant and a staff member intended to get the right community service assignment, encourage completion of other training, and establish a reasonable job goal.

IEPs for the SCSEP program differ in interesting ways from IEPs for WIA. First, IEPs for WIA usually prescribe a relatively “straight line” between a service plan (such as occupational skills training) and the desired employment outcome. In contrast, IEPs for the SCSEP project can be quite complex and require a larger number of sequenced steps over a longer time period, particularly if they anticipate that a participant will go through several different community service assignments before being placed into unsubsidized employment. Second, SCSEP IEPs are often developed sequentially and updated regularly depending on the participant’s experiences over the previous period. Often only the first link in the SCSEP service chain—the initial community service assignment and training to address the most immediate skills gaps—are addressed in the initial service plan.

The SCSEP IEP process can be quite challenging. In some cases, the staff member must establish a trusting relationship with the participant before the participant feels comfortable about revealing material facts affecting participation in community service or unsubsidized employment, such as physical limitations, literacy, or criminal records. Another challenge mentioned by staff in several sites is getting the participants to be realistic about their job prospects. This is typically a problem for dislocated workers who previously may have had higher-income (but sometimes lower-skill) jobs before long-term unemployment resulted in a downward financial spiral that resulted in the individual reaching the SCSEP income eligibility limit. At the other end of the spectrum, and perhaps more common, is the need for staff members to prod participants to recognize that they have more skills than they have acknowledged (sometimes outside of their work histories) and should aspire to higher employment goals. But regardless of the degree of difficulty in service planning, most staff members reported that they needed to get the participant to buy into the plan and stick to it in order for the participant to succeed in gaining employment.

Supportive Services

SCSEP recognizes (as do other workforce programs) that supportive services are often critical to successful program participation; accordingly, all IEPs, even the one-pagers, document participant needs. Participant needs for supportive services, as discussed above in “Initial Service Planning,” are almost universally documented. However, the program’s cost-limitation provisions severely constrain the amount of money that is available for either supportive services or other training (training is discussed below under “[Training Outside the Community Service Assignments](#)”). The consequences of these constraints were particularly apparent during the

time of our site visits, since SCSEP projects were still adjusting to reductions in their budgets for Program Year 2011.⁶⁴ Thus, most local projects use referrals to other agencies to provide participants with needed supportive services.⁶⁵ Only a few of the study sites pay for supportive services with SCSEP funds. One such project will pay for supportive services if funds are available. Otherwise, like other programs, it refers its participants to transit agencies, senior nutrition programs, housing agencies, Social Security and welfare agencies, WIA, and other American Job Center partners, for appropriate services.⁶⁶ At least two other sites that are operated by an area agency on aging leverage their operation of other senior-serving programs to provide one or more supportive services to SCSEP participants.

The example below shows how SCSEP project staff members and host agency staff members can be active in helping a participant arrange for available social service needs without expending a lot of SCSEP money.

Example of Coordinating a Participant's Social Service Needs

One project worked with a participant who needed help on a number of different social and health issues. SCSEP staff members revealed that the participant had posed some challenges and described him as a "handful." According to his host agency work supervisor, Jim showed some paranoid ideation. He was particularly apprehensive about filling out any required paperwork that included personal information, and would only provide this information to the SCSEP project manager.

Upon his initial placement at the host agency, the work supervisor had to work with the participant about issues of personal hygiene. The SCSEP case manager and the host agency supervisor reminded him that it was a professional environment and offered help. They worked together to ensure that the participant had proper facilities to shower and wash his clothes, providing him with clean clothes and access to a laundromat. The SCSEP staff also assisted him with getting a cell phone and provided him with transportation to the Department of Motor Vehicles so that he could get licensed to drive

⁶⁴ At least 11.5 percent is always available to be spent on supportive services or training, and grantees may request a waiver to divert up to 10 percent more of the grant from community service assignment compensation.

⁶⁵ Several study sites indicated that they also routinely refer individuals who are not eligible for SCSEP to other agencies for possible supportive services.

⁶⁶ Most referrals to the American Job Centers are for job search assistance. Co-enrollment in WIA, where more extensive supportive services may be available, is limited. According to SCSEP respondents, only a small proportion of participants concurrently enroll in WIA occupational training, where supportive services are available. However, in at least two local projects, a substantial number of participants are enrolled in WIA intensive services, where supportive services may be available. In one of those sites, a large number of SCSEP participants have been able to obtain free eyeglasses paid for by WIA supportive services.

their agency van. (The participant takes the bus to work each day). After working at a community service assignment for over a year, this participant was offered a permanent job as a custodian in a community mental health agency. Once they hired him, the agency assisted the participant in replacing his 17-year-old glasses by waiving the 90-day insurance wait period to receive company-supported health insurance.

Our analysis of SCSEP supportive services suggests that only half of the sites comprehensively assess participants' supportive service needs, actively refer participants to a potential provider agency, and follow up on the results in updates of the IEP. The employment emphasis of the program and its limited funding are factors that help explain the limited follow-through of the program with respect to addressing supportive service needs. In fact, one project, which also refers participants to other agencies for supportive services, explicitly reminds participants that it is an employment program and not a social service program.

The most common supportive service provided either directly or through referral is transportation, usually in the form of a bus pass or a gasoline voucher that enables participants to get to their community service assignments, SCSEP meetings and service planning sessions, and other training. At least eight sites specifically mentioned that they provided bus passes or referred participants to transit or welfare agencies that provide passes. Other services arranged for SCSEP participants include child or elder care, criminal background or drug-use checks, and uniforms.⁶⁷

Providing a “Benefits Check-Up”

Several of the local projects we visited make sure that SCSEP participants are aware of the benefits available from various assistance programs for which they may be eligible. Benefits CheckUp is an Internet-based application (<http://www.benefitscheckup.org>) that was developed by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) to help any individual estimate his or her eligibility for various assistance programs, including more than 2,000 federal, state, and private programs that may help participants to pay for prescription drugs, health care, utilities, housing, in-home services, transportation, and other basic needs. The web site is especially oriented to assist older workers, but individuals of any age can find programs for which they may be eligible. To get a page suggesting relevant programs in

⁶⁷ Some participants also receive supportive services, such as a free hot lunch or access to food from a food pantry, provided for by their host agencies as part of the agency mission.

his/her local area, all a user has to do is enter a zip code, areas of interest, and limited information on income, and assets. The results page suggests programs and provides contact information and web links to agencies administering the relevant programs.

The local NCOA project based in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, uses a similar website that allows users to actually apply for Pennsylvania's state-administered benefits in addition to estimating eligibility for a wide variety of other assistance programs.

Ongoing Service Planning and Case Management

SCSEP case managers generally have a substantial amount of contact with participants, especially when compared to other adult workforce programs, such as WIA. Periodic updates of the IEP are conducted, on average every six months or less. Ten local projects conduct their reviews more frequently than average, in one case monthly; four local projects conduct their reviews annually. Staff members serving rural areas sometimes reported that it was difficult to travel to participants in remote locations for IEP updates. At least two sites routinely conduct these updates by telephone to save staff and participant resources.

In addition to conducting regularly scheduled IEP updates, case managers often have additional opportunities to check in with participants and provide ongoing case management. For example, participants typically must come in regularly to file timesheets or job-search logs or pick up paychecks, and staff members frequently visit host agency work sites as part of their monitoring responsibilities. Staff consistently mentioned that these are opportunities to review the participant's experiences in his/her community service assignment, review needs for supportive services, and assess the progress of the participant's search for unsubsidized employment.

To supplement individual case management, at least 12 local projects reported that they hold periodic group meetings for all participants. The most common frequency is quarterly, but three sites hold their meetings monthly or bi-monthly. In some cases, attendance is mandatory. The purpose of these meetings varies, but nearly all sites reported that they invite guest speakers to the meeting to discuss potential supportive services, eligibility/enrollment for benefits (for example, Medicare or Food Stamps), program goals (for example, emphasizing the importance of looking for a job), SCSEP policies and procedures, or IEP review. Sometimes project staff members invite former participants to speak at these meetings about their successful transition to unsubsidized jobs.

Peer Review of IEPs

The SCSEP project in San Diego, California operated by Employment and Community Options (a State of California sub-recipient) has developed an innovative practice for providing ongoing review of participants' service plans and goals. Working in small groups with about eight participants to a group, each participant reports his/her progress and makes new goals with input from fellow participants. The project has trained some higher-skilled participants to act as facilitators of this peer-review process. SCSEP staff members review the updated IEPs after the meetings to see if anything is unclear or if follow-up is needed.

As participants approach the 48-month durational limit, they must prepare for life without the SCSEP community service assignment and its associated income. Participants who meet one or more approved waiver criteria may qualify for an extension of their SCSEP eligibility for one year or more.⁶⁸ While few participants had thus far faced the limit in most local projects, staff respondents in at least one project indicated that they expect that a significant number of participants will reach their participation limit and have to exit on July 1, 2012.

Participants approaching the mandatory durational limit of SCSEP participation present a priority concern for SCSEP case managers, as these are often people whose paths to unsubsidized employment are difficult. Transition planning is initiated as individual participants approach the mandatory duration deadline. Four sites begin activities 30, 60, or 90 days before the deadline, two sites begin six months in advance, and four sites begin transition planning a full year in advance. Project staff draw on some or all of the following activities as part of preparing participants to transition out of the program: (1) requiring participants to redouble their job searching efforts (covered later in this chapter), (2) referring individuals to other agencies that can assist them, and (3) providing some combination of intensified counseling and life planning workshops.

Most projects assume that participants approaching the durational limit still have a goal of finding employment. However, several sites let participants decide whether or not they want to pursue unsubsidized employment. If an individual formally changes his or her goal to exiting the program without employment, these projects will not require that individual to continue searching for an unsubsidized job. The content of counseling and life planning workshops offered by most projects focuses on how to adjust to the loss of income and information about services available from other agencies that can provide supportive services. In a few projects,

⁶⁸ Extension policies are set at the grantee level. At the time of our site visits, eight local projects provided extensions to the durational limit to participants who met any of the possible waiver factors, six local projects provided extensions to participants who met a more limited set of waiver factors, and 15 local projects did not provide any time extensions beyond 48 months.

case managers counsel participants on a broad range of topics, including budgeting, health, other benefit programs, maintaining a support network, and remaining active in the community.

Practical Themes in Service Planning

While the grantee's design of the printed IEP forms or online IEP software sets the basic parameters for service planning and case management, there is still considerable variation from local project to local project. Several practical considerations are likely to play significant roles in shaping service planning. First, the availability of staff members, especially since the budget cuts, almost certainly influences the intensity and frequency of case manager interaction with participants. More than a few project directors commented on how the budget cuts had adversely affected their program's ability to provide staff assistance to SCSEP participants, and in at least one case had caused the local project to shorten the IEP and reduce the level of detail provided in the service plan.

Staff members in at least four sites classify participants by their skill level and job readiness when deciding what case management services to provide. The assumption in these sites is that emphasizing service provision to the more employable participants will speed their reemployment, freeing up staff members to pay more attention to the more needy.⁶⁹ Case managers in one project informally classify participants according to the level of assistance they need in order to become employable and prioritize individualized services to participants in the middle group, reasoning that participants with the highest level of job-related skills will likely find jobs with little staff assistance, while those in the bottom group will likely not find jobs, regardless of staff efforts. In another project, although all participants receive periodic IEP reviews to ensure that they are benefitting from their community service assignments, staff members will spend the most time providing job search coaching to individuals who are assessed as being more employable. In two additional sites, staff members acknowledged that even though all participants receive equal attention from case managers in theory, in practice case managers use their assessments of the likelihood of finding employment in deciding how much effort to expend on behalf of a given participant. One case manager indicated that she spends relatively less time with participants who do not have clear employment goals or are not capable of reaching their goals. In another project, the project director stated that she expects everyone up to age 67 to find a job, implying that she has different expectations for participants above 67 years of age. Staff members in several other sites take the opposite approach, devoting more

⁶⁹ Prioritizing participants and rationing case management services was a particular need during Program Year 2011 because of high caseload sizes and the urgency of placing as many participants as possible to get the program down to an enrollment level that corresponded to the reduced number of funded community service positions.

time to participants who have difficulty in reaching their goals. In one project, a disabled individual praised staff members for their extra attention to his case.

Increasing Participant Skills

As SCSEP's low-income participants frequently lack key skills that would help them be successful in the labor market, SCSEP's employment component has always focused on increasing skills. This section discusses the two major components of skill building in SCSEP, community service assignments and the other formal and informal training that some receive from SCSEP and external sources.

Community Service Assignments

Community service assignments at host agencies are at the core of SCSEP, providing most of the work experience and on-the-job training that the program offers. In addition, some host agencies provide or arrange for formal training for the participant. This section covers how participants are matched to host agencies, what the nature of the assignments are, and how participants may change assignments. It also describes the aspects of community service assignments that are associated with high-quality training, as described by projects and participants.

Matching Participants to Host Agencies

The first step for all participants in SCSEP is to find an appropriate match among the list of existing host agencies or to identify a new agency that may be able to act as a host. In all cases, getting matched with a host agency occurs after an applicant for the program has been assessed; in most sites, it also occurs after the IEP is created (as mentioned above, at least four sites place their people in a community service assignment before completing the IEP process because they feel that an immediate community service assignment is beneficial).

The matching process is almost invariably informal, relying almost entirely on a SCSEP staff member's understanding of the participant's needs and his or her knowledge of the roster of host agencies and the jobs available at those agencies. The employment training coordinators in Buffalo referred to the matching process as being more of an "art than a science."

There is some potential rigor in the matching process. The national grantee assessment systems for AARP, Experience Works, NCOA, and Senior Service America, which are all built around O*Net occupational coding, are used to analyze the participant's needs and goals. Local projects administered by these grantees (and several other sites) are using the O*Net codes to increase precision in describing the competencies the participant needs to gain. But only one project has systemized its ranking of host agencies to support appropriate matches. This project recently decided to rank its host agencies on a scale of 1 to 4 in terms of the level of skill training they can provide. For example, if the community service position available at a host agency would

provide exposure to only minimal computer skills, the computer skills category would be ranked 1. If the position would involve learning to work with Excel spreadsheets, the position becomes a 3 or 4, depending on the complexity of the spreadsheet duties. The description of the participant's training needs, however, remains informal.⁷⁰

Most local SCSEP projects develop stable working relationships with a set of host agencies and tend to place participants with the same host agencies over and over again. Over two-thirds of all projects tend to emphasize finding a suitable match for new participants from among the existing host agencies. If SCSEP staff members need to find an appropriate community service assignment for a participant whose skill level is higher or lower than those of previous participants placed with the agency, they may ask a host agency if it can adapt an existing position or develop a new position. The remaining local projects place somewhat greater emphasis on developing a new community service position for each participant and will try to find a new host agency, if necessary, to provide a suitable match.

Five local projects maintain large rosters of host agencies relative to the number of participants, effectively providing case managers and participants with a relatively wide choice of host agencies from which to make appropriate matches. However, on average, projects appear to use a number of host agencies that is smaller than the number of participants and to place more than one SCSEP participant with each host agency at any one time.⁷¹ Regardless of whether the project primarily matches participants to existing host agencies or seeks new host agencies to match the needs of each participant, it is difficult to find host agencies in rural areas.

Developing an Individualized Community Service Assignment and Host Agency for Each Participant

Among the sites that develop new community service assignments for their participants, a very small state-funded project operated by Edmonds Community College in Lynnwood, Washington goes the furthest. With only 13 funded slots, this project maintains a list of existing host agencies, but during the initial assessment, the SCSEP director starts a discussion with the client about his or her ideal host agency and is willing to recruit a new agency to match the client's need.

⁷⁰ This host agency classification had only been adopted at the beginning of Program Year 2011, so the operator has not evaluated its efficacy.

⁷¹ Among the 20 case study sites that provided information about the total number of host agencies, the average ratio of host agencies to authorized slots for Program Year 2009 is .65, which means that, on average, each agency hosts about 1.5 SCSEP participants. The highest ratio we found was 1.87, and the lowest was 0.10. In the former site, only about half of the host agencies have an active participant at any one time, whereas in the latter site, each host agency has an average of 10 participants at a time

Not surprisingly, several sites reported that it is most difficult to find good community service assignments for participants with the lowest skill levels and most serious barriers to employment. Staff members at one local project reported that over 60 percent of its participants are affected by mental health issues, substance abuse, and/or criminal records. The latter barrier is particularly challenging, as schools, health-care facilities, and certain public agencies are not allowed to offer community service assignments to ex-offenders.⁷²

In addition to matching the skills, interests, and goals of participants to their assigned community service positions, most sites accord considerable weight to the practical issue of transportation limitations, especially if a prospective participant does not have a car. Transportation problems are especially prevalent in rural areas that already have difficulty finding host agencies and typically have little or no public transit, but respondents in several large city programs with active transit systems also noted that transportation is still a major issue for their participants.

The increased presence of dislocated workers and others with considerable work experience among SCSEP enrollees has created a new challenge for projects. Dislocated workers require a more complex set of skills enhancements from their community service experiences and have existing skills that allow them to carry out a broader range of tasks for their host agencies than typical SCSEP participants. We discuss the ways in which local projects are responding to this challenge below under “Developing Skills through Community Service Assignments.”

Most sites refer a single individual to a host agency and allow the supervisor to interview the individual to determine whether he or she is suitable for a SCSEP training position. Rejection of a SCSEP candidate under these circumstances is relatively uncommon. Some sites will refer three or four SCSEP participants for a given position to give the host agency some choice and enhance its ability to meet its own objectives. These sites feel that competing for a position will give SCSEP participants an initial taste of what a real job interview is like and will help prepare them for looking for unsubsidized jobs after their community service assignments.

From the local SCSEP project perspective, making a good match in placing a participant into a community service assignment is important for several reasons. First, providing the host agency with a suitable SCSEP trainee for a given position makes it more likely that the host agency will want to continue to participate in the program. Second, the better the match between the participant’s skills and training goals and the host agency’s staffing needs, the more likely it is that the participant will be hired into unsubsidized employment by the host agency, which most projects view as the best possible outcome. During participant focus groups, a few participants

⁷² Host agency willingness to hire the participant is also a key factor in selecting a host agency in many places. This is discussed further in the section on “Helping Participants Enter Unsubsidized Employment.”

commented directly on the issue of matching. Participants generally felt that their community service assignments were responsive to their needs and interests. One participant in Indianapolis, for example, noted that her community service assignment in a hospital directly corresponded to her expressed career interest. She said she is confident that the work will help her to get unsubsidized employment in a hospital or other medical care setting.

Regardless of the precision of the assessment, the breadth of the host agency roster, or the care taken in the matching process, some community service assignments do not work out well. Typical problems, as described by some SCSEP staff members as well as some participants, include assignments that are too low-level, duties that go beyond the scope of the assignment, poor supervision, and personal disagreements with supervisors or other workers. Focus group participants told us that nearly all SCSEP staff members were responsive to any complaints they had made about the quality of their placements. They reported that SCSEP staff members often made onsite visits to investigate any problems and either remedied the problem at that project or found the participant a new assignment. As a participant in one local project noted: “That’s one thing ... [SCSEP staff are]... excellent about. If we are assigned somewhere and we feel there might be a little bit of a problem that we’re having with [the host agency], they are very open to trying to find you something else.” However, at least one SCSEP operator admitted that he sometimes kept a participant at a given placement despite participant complaints. He acknowledged that “sometimes the fit is not perfect. But that’s okay because ... [participants] still get to prepare for a job.”

Developing Skills Through Community Service Assignments

Most of the SCSEP community service assignments are in relatively low-skilled work, regardless of the occupational classification. Clerical and office-related community service assignments—in which participants perform tasks such as filing, data entry, reception, and answering telephones—are overwhelmingly the most common types. Despite the low level of most office jobs, most provide the opportunity for participants to get some on-the-job experience using computers. Janitorial jobs, followed by customer service jobs (including retail jobs in thrift stores) are next most common. Participants are also commonly placed in positions involving food preparation and dishwashing (often in senior nutrition programs), health care, and education (as teacher’s aides or instructors and library aides). In general, almost all of these jobs can be characterized as entry level and relatively low skilled.

Despite the relatively low skill level of most SCSEP community service assignments, they provide important training. Both participants and supervisors noted that in carrying out these jobs systematically and precisely, participants are provided an important introduction to good working procedures and the operational practices of the host agencies. This is particularly important for participants with serious employment barriers or very limited work experience.

Most of the participants interviewed concurred that the assignments are beneficial, although some—typically those with higher skill levels—found little training benefit in their assignments. The customer satisfaction survey discussed in further detail in Chapter VIII echoes these sentiments: customers with higher levels of educational attainment generally reported less satisfaction with the program model.

As mentioned above, a number of the SCSEP projects are serving, apparently as a relatively new phenomenon, a number of dislocated older workers who have relatively high levels of education and extensive prior work experience. The economic recession and the slow recovery have taken a heavy toll on many older dislocated workers. Long-term unemployment has depleted the financial resources of many older workers and left them and their families in poverty. To respond to the needs of this new population of eligible participants, the SCSEP program has had to develop some community service assignments that take advantage of their higher education levels and more extensive work experience.

The most common community service assignments developed for these participants are positions as SCSEP participant staff members. As noted in Chapter IV, participant staff members are the primary SCSEP case managers at 17 of the 29 case study sites. These participants are working in positions that require participants to exhibit a high level of organizational and communication skills, familiarity with community systems, interviewing and counseling skills, data collection and analytic ability and flexibility, as well as creativity, drive, and the ability to work independently. If they don't already possess all these skills, participant staff members are developing and practicing skills that are required in professional-level jobs.

In addition, some projects have developed community service assignments in host agencies and participant staff positions that take advantage of the skills of the dislocated older workers they are now serving. Participants who come into the program with experience in specific areas are being placed into community service assignments where they are functioning as teachers, computer programmers, or managers of thrift stores or senior service programs. For example, in one project, SCSEP participants are working in community service assignments teaching English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) to Portuguese-speaking immigrants in adult basic education classes. In another project, a dislocated worker who had mainframe programming experience is being trained to manage a marketing management information system for her host agency, which indicated that it plans to hire her. In a third project, a former SCSEP participant staff member who had experience as a security officer created a manual on the job specifications for being a security guard. In the same project, a current participant staff member who has experience in the teaching profession was providing on-site GED tutoring.

Respondents in all sites agree that one of the most important and widespread skills deficiencies among SCSEP participants at all levels of education and work experience is lack of up-to-date

computer skills. It is valuable, therefore, that in many of the community service assignments, regardless of the level of other skills they are learning, SCSEP participants are able to learn a variety of computer skills. As one might expect, the clerical and administrative jobs most frequently provide computer experience. Some computer training also occurs in some of the non-office jobs that require the SCSEP participants to use computers. In many instances, the computer training received as part of the community service assignment is relatively broad-based and rudimentary. In some community service assignments, however, participants are being trained in more advanced computer skills. In focus groups and individual conversations with participants, SCSEP participants in at least 17 local projects mentioned that they appreciated the computer training they were getting from their community service assignments. Multiple participants in several local projects noted that not only are they learning computing on the job, but they are also able to practice their computer skills at the host agency on their own time after finishing a work shift. Only two individuals noted that their computer training was inadequate.

Hours and Wages

SCSEP traditionally has provided participants with 20 paid hours per week, which includes time spent in community service assignments, training, and other program participation activities such as group meetings. At the time of the site visits, weekly hours had been reduced in 25 of the local projects to an average of 16 hours, because projects found they had more participants enrolled than they could support at 20 hours per week.⁷³ Although all but four of the sites were operating with reduced weekly participant hours at the time of the site visits, some hoped to restore hours some time during 2012.⁷⁴ In ten sites, SCSEP participant staff members are allowed to work more hours a week than other participants. Exhibit V-1 displays the number of sites operating at each of six different levels of paid hours at the time of the site visit.

SCSEP requires that participants in community service assignments or in training receive the highest minimum wage in the locality, whether it is the Federal minimum, the state minimum, or the local prevailing wage. Twelve of the 29 projects studied pay the Federal minimum wage of \$7.25. Sixteen projects are in states where the state minimum wage is higher than the \$7.25 Federal minimum wage and therefore pay at the higher state rate.⁷⁵ Only one project pays a

⁷³ Projects were directed by ETA not to “fire” any currently enrolled participants. Until the number of SCSEP enrollees declined as a result of participants exiting the program “naturally,” cutting the numbers of hours available to current participants was the only possible way to avoid budget overruns.

⁷⁴ One of the sites had offered participants 25 hours a week before the cutbacks and had reduced the number of hours to 20 hours per week.

⁷⁵ As a result, the number of participant positions awarded by ETA has to be modified to account for the difference between the federal minimum wage and the higher state minimum wage.

Exhibit V-V-1
Paid Weekly Hours at Study Sites at the Time of the Site Visit

Paid Weekly Hours	Number of Sites
12	4
13	1
15	13
16	2
18	4
20	5

majority of its participants local prevailing wages (between \$8.00 and \$10.00 per hour). Finally, 18 projects pay SCSEP participant staff members at a higher hourly rate than other participants, as discussed in Chapter IV.

Rotation

Most of the local projects have general guidelines calling for a participant to be rotated to a new assignment after a specified length of time.⁷⁶ Some of these policies are developed at the grantee level (for example, Goodwill requires local projects to rotate participants at least once a year); others are locally developed. Rotation policies generally affect both participants and host agencies. For participants, there are two distinct, but related, objectives:

- Participants should not get “too comfortable;” that is, they should not forget that the community service assignment is temporary. Seven sites explicitly noted that the objective of their rotation policies is to prevent “nesting” by the participant.
- Participants will learn more if they rotate to another agency than if they remain at the same agency for an extended period. Nine sites specifically use their rotation policies to arrange for new skills to be provided by a new host agency.

The rotation policies are intended to remind the host agencies that the participant is in a training mode; the warning that a participant is about to be rotated away from an agency is intended to provide an incentive for a host agency to hire an individual who is performing well in his/her community service position. However, several projects do not often rotate participants to new

⁷⁶ Prior to the issuance in 2010 of the SCSEP Final Regulations for the 2006 Amendments, a number of SCSEP grantees and their local projects had policies about the maximum length of time an individual could remain in a given community service assignment. The 2010 SCSEP Final Regulations emphasized that ETA will not approve any rotation policy that does not require “an individualized determination that rotation is in the best interest of the participant and will further the acquisition of skills listed in the IEP.” As a result of the new regulations, rotation policies are required to be more flexible in order to respond to individual participant needs and interests.

host agencies, partly because they are sensitive to the fact that rotation may be disruptive to host agency operations. These projects allow participants to remain with a host agency for an extended period (as long as the placement continues to be satisfactory to both the participant and the host agency). Another project, which has more host agencies than participants, has reduced the duration of a typical community service assignment in order to offer participants to as many host agencies as possible. The latter project took this step as a direct result of the budget cut that reduced the number of SCSEP participants it can offer to host agencies in the community at any one time. [Exhibit V-2](#) displays the frequency of different duration limits on community service assignments.

Exhibit V-2
Community Service Assignment Duration Policies

Expected Duration of a Community Service Assignment	Number of Projects
6 months or less	7
7 to 12 months	13
13 months or more	6
No rotation policy	3

As required by the 2010 regulations, projects are flexible about these community-service-assignment limits. Most commonly, these projects are willing to extend the normal limits if the host agency needs some extra time to obtain funding to hire the participant. The second most common reason for extending the limit is if the host agency is willing to provide a different job or change the current job to provide a new training opportunity.

Perceived Quality of the Community Service Assignments

We examined the quality of the community service assignments from two different perspectives. First, we reviewed the comments provided by focus group participants to find out what features they associated with high-quality community service assignments. Second, we looked at the procedures developed by local projects and host agencies to promote high-quality community service experiences for participants.

Focus group respondents provided somewhat mixed reviews of their community service experiences overall, although specific comments were overwhelmingly positive. The aspect of the community service experience that respondents most often described positively was access to training, including both basic computer skills training and more advanced skills training. The aspect that they most often described negatively was the inability of the host agency to offer them permanent jobs.

Exhibit V-3 provides more detail about the qualities of community service assignments that were described positively by participants with whom we talked. The items have been clustered into themes. The order of items in this list does not reflect the number of times a specific item was mentioned.

Confirming the identifications of the positive aspects of high-quality community service assignments were participants' negative assessments of assignments that lacked some of these features. The most common complaint was that the community service assignment did not provide enough training. Some SCSEP participants complained that their community service assignments did not provide them with any skills that they did not already possess. Participants placed into jobs that required "manual labor" sometimes said they were not learning enough new skills or that their community-service jobs did not draw on the work skills that they already had. Some of the participants who said they had learned basic computer skills said that they needed higher-level training in computer skills in order to become attractive to private sector employers.

Furthermore, some of the participants selected for more highly skilled SCSEP job assignments complained that their host agencies had no ability to hire them into jobs at a wage rate that corresponded to their skill level. An additional complaint from some participants was that the skills they were using at their community service jobs had no relationship to the skills they needed to develop to further their employment goals.

Informed by this information about what participants valued about their community service assignments, we reviewed practices by local projects and host agencies to see what they were doing to increase the likelihood that participants would have high-quality community service experiences. Several types of practices stood out as strategies to increase the quality of community service assignments.

One group of promising practices includes efforts by local projects to develop community service assignments that are particularly relevant to a participant's employment goals. As noted above, most sites tend to match participants into community service assignments that they have previously used and have available within their host agency rosters. However, at least four sites make significant efforts to emphasize the needs of specific participants by recruiting new host agencies that could provide relevant training for those participants. These sites also tend to engage in continuous recruiting of host agencies.

Another promising practice is to get host agencies to commit to providing SCSEP participants with a systematic ladder of skills training resulting in continually increasing participant skills over time. A related practice is to hold frequent meetings with the host agency and participant to monitor the participant's progress and set continually increasing goals for new skills development.

Exhibit V-V-3
Elements of High-Quality Community Service Assignments,
as Viewed by Participants

Opportunity to Provide Community Service

- The participant got the opportunity to “balance head and heart” in the community service setting.
- The placement provided meaningful work.
- The placement provided the opportunity to help others and give back to

Overall Training Opportunities

- Participant learned skills relevant to his or her employment goals.
- Disabled participant learned new work-relevant skills.
- The host agency included SCSEP participants in regular in-house training provided to regular employees.
- The host agency provided training or certification to the SCSEP participant.
- The skills learned during the community service assignment were coordinated with additional internal or external training provided by SCSEP.

Training in Occupational Skills - Computer and Office Skills

- Participant learned basic computer skills.
- Participant learned high-level computer skills.
- Participant learned a wide range of basic office skills.
- Participant learned advanced office skills.
- Participant got experience working in a modern office environment.

Training in Other Occupational Skills

- Participant learned how to handle money and checks.
- Participant learned customer service skills.
- Participant learned retail skills.
- Participant learned food-handling skills.

Training in Soft Skills

- Participant improved soft skills.
- Participant learned how to work with difficult people.
- Participant learned how to work with diverse people.

Work Setting

- The assignment provided an opportunity for the participant to build confidence and competence in a safe environment.
- CSA work tasks were not menial.
- Participant got to “shadow” work peers or work supervisors.
- Participant had after-hours access to a computer on which he or she could practice skills.
- Assignment had flexible work hours.
- Participant received free lunch at work (senior center).

Income from Community Service Assignment

- Community Service job offered prevailing wage (above minimum wage).
- Participant staff assignment was paid at higher wage rate.

Responsiveness to Participants' Needs

- Host agency adjusted the job description to meet participant's needs (for example, cognitive or physical limits).
- Project rotated participant to new position if no training was being provided or if participant was unhappy with placement.
- Host agency developed job that benefitted from participant's high-level skills.

Relevance for Career Planning and Placement into Unsubsidized Employment

- Assignment expanded career interest.
- Assignment confirmed career interest in helping others.
- Skills gained are relevant to career options.
- Placement resulted in job references that supported job search.
- Placement provided opportunity to demonstrate skills to host agency.
- Demonstrating competence in the community service job led to a permanent job with the host agency.

Personal Development

- Participant learned skills relevant to non-working life.
- Participant gained more energy to deal with family difficulties.

Requirement for Host Agencies to Provide Continuous Skill Building

The project operated by the National Caucus and Center on Black Aging in Milton, Florida, which serves a large rural area, is noteworthy for its rigorous expectation that host agencies will provide training continuously during the community service assignment and for its careful oversight of participant progress. Program staff members expect that some degree of instruction will take place each day. As participants master the basic skills of their duties, host agencies are expected to move them to more difficult tasks. Participants are also expected to be included in all meetings and on-site trainings that the host agency provides to its regular employees. SCSEP staff members visit active host agencies at least once every two weeks to ensure that the host agencies are providing an adequate training environment. Staff members explained that if a host agency is not providing adequate training to help participants advance into unsubsidized employment "it is our responsibility to move them [to a new assignment]."

Local projects and host agencies both indicated that the goal of continuous skill building has been made more difficult during Program Year 2011 by the reductions in the weekly hours of community service. The more limited work schedules of SCSEP participants limited both the

complexity of the tasks that they could take on as part of their work assignments and their availability to participate in formal training provided by the host agency to all regular employees.

Training Outside the Community Service Assignments

While the overwhelming bulk of skill acquisition comes from the core activity of the community service assignment, a number of local projects supplement the training aspect of the community service assignment by providing some additional training using SCSEP funds or by paying participants for the hours they spend attending training provided by external training providers, provided that training is consistent with the participant's IEP. Under the framework established by Older Worker Bulletin 04-04, IEPs may plan for SCSEP participants to receive three types of training in addition to the training provided through community service assignments: general training, specialized training, and on-the-job experience (OJE).

The use of training funds is limited by SCSEP regulations that require that 75 percent of the grant be used for participant wages.⁷⁷ Because of this constraint, participants are frequently encouraged take advantage of training that is available from external training providers at no cost to the SCSEP program. Such training is encouraged when it can help participants remedy basic-skills gaps and limited English proficiency or obtain occupational skills. In addition, SCSEP case managers often encourage participants to take advantage of basic computer training and various life skills classes available from other providers. The balance of this section examines the extent to which the study sites provide general or specialized training in the areas of computer skills, basic skills, life skills, and occupational skills. Training in job readiness and job searching skills and the use of OJE will be covered in the next section on job placement supports.⁷⁸

In response to the budget cut for Program Year 2011, many sites had to give up paying for any training outside the community service assignment. Two projects had to give up workshops on generational diversity that staff members and participants believe are highly effective tools in orienting participants to the solutions to age discrimination and working in the contemporary labor market. Several projects had to eliminate training programs in the health care field, which

⁷⁷ Grantees can apply for a waiver to reduce the proportion going to participant wages to 65 percent, freeing up to 10 percent for training or supportive services. Although a number of the national grantees we interviewed stated that they had received this waiver in the past, we heard about local projects expending SCSEP funds for specialized training in only a few cases at the time of our site visits.

⁷⁸ Although all OJE contracts specify specific skills that the participants will gain from the on-the-job experience, we observed that the primary function of OJE for most of the projects we visited is to provide a hiring incentive for prospective employers.

had previously been successful in helping participants transition to unsubsidized jobs in that field. One project was able to maintain its health care training programs through an external grant.

An Emphasis on Outside Training

Training outside of the community service assignment is an integral part of the program run by the Nashville Workforce Resource Center, in Nashville, Tennessee, a sub-recipient of the National Council on Aging. Staff members noted that almost all participants are engaged in training outside of the community service assignment at some point during program participation. Training in computer literacy is stressed the most, both because basic computer literacy is required for many jobs and because job searching and applying is largely done online. Computer training is voluntary but strongly encouraged. Participants also pursue other types of training. If there is a cost for attending training, the project has the ability to cover the costs (within reason) through the waiver for training provision the national grantee has been granted by DOL. The local program manager noted that this waiver has been very helpful for the program's ability to cover participant training costs. However, some training programs, such as longer-term community college programs (e.g., medical assistant training), are too expensive for SCSEP to cover and so staff members generally help the participant find student grants or loans to cover the cost instead.

Training can be completed either before a community service assignment is begun or during participation in a community service assignment. Participants are paid the hourly rate for the time they spend in training, and this payment is part of the current 15 hours/week of allowable wages. Training is also offered both in-house—where it is taught by participant staff members or an outside consultant or is undertaken through self-paced training modules—and through external partners. Among the types of training provided are basic skills training through Adult Basic Education, self-paced GED/ESL training, companion care training, basic to advanced computer skills training, and accredited industry-specific training in a variety of fields from mediation to forklift operation. Except for the companion care training, which had to be discontinued after the budget cuts, the project is continuing to emphasize training as a complement to the community service assignment.

The project operated by Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana in Indianapolis, Indiana used to place an emphasis on additional skill training for SCSEP participants. The training courses described below were paid for out of SCSEP funds, appearing as “other participant costs” in the budget. Participants enrolled in training either out of interest or as directed by their case managers as part of the IEP requirements.

Prior to recent funding cuts, the project had developed partnerships with several different training providers to offer participants relevant training. Participants could take a computer-skill training course geared specifically to older adults, for example, or enroll in a personality assessment/behavioral modification course, or gain access to courses at the Division of Continuing Education at Indiana University Purdue University (IUPU) Indianapolis. Taking advantage of these arrangements for outside training, participants

had enrolled in a variety of courses available at IUPU, including computer classes (keyboarding basics to web design and HTML), classes on critical thinking and active listening, classes on effective presentation skills and business/professional writing, and classes such as introduction to human resources and project management.

Since the budget cutback, this project has had to discontinue its support for training for participants outside of the community service assignment. However, through a partnership between the Charles Schwab Foundation and the national grantee, the project is able to continue making a financial literacy course available to SCSEP participants.

Below we describe specific types of training that the local projects either promote or provide directly in the areas of computer skills, basic skills, life skills, and specific occupational skills.

Computer Skills Training

It is widely recognized that computer literacy is low among older workers. Lack of computer literacy is a major barrier to employment in most fields, now that computer use in the workplace is so widespread that computer literacy has become as basic a skill as reading and math. Several national grantees have prioritized computer literacy: Experience Works now offers computer training to all participants using a computer program called Technomedia, several Senior Service America programs host the Generations Online program (see following page) and the national office of Goodwill reported that all of its subgrantees offer computer training. All the local SCSEP projects we visited clearly recognize the need to provide some form of training in computer skills to supplement the skills learned during the community service assignments. The participants we talked to during our site visits also understand that knowledge of computers is a prerequisite for success in the labor market and, as described previously, value the computer skills training that they are receiving through SCSEP.

Eight projects provide computer training directly using SCSEP funds (in some cases, however, the computers have been donated or acquired through other funding sources). The most important consideration in the decision to operate the class directly is that the SCSEP program can adjust the pace and instructional methods to match the lower level of computer knowledge that seniors have at the beginning of training. Further, the lower level of knowledge is a considerable obstacle when seniors are intermingled in classes for the general population. Despite the advantages to be gained by operating a computer class specifically for older workers, the lack of training funds led six sites to rely entirely on external providers, most commonly American Job Centers. Other outside sources of computer training used by the SCSEP projects include libraries, senior centers, and community colleges. Four sites offer multiple ways for

participants to improve their computer skills by providing classes directly and encouraging the use of external resources as well.

Effective Linkages with Community Partners for the Delivery of Computer Training

The project operated by Mature Services in Youngstown, Ohio has established a strong relationship with local education providers. As a result of those relationships, both the local adult education program and the local community college customize classes for SCSEP participants and offer training in the resource room at the local SCSEP project's office. The computer training is delivered by adult education instructors, who bring in laptop computers so that participants can have hands-on practice. Most of the computer training courses involve two-hour sessions, twice a week for two to three weeks. In addition to helping participants learn computer applications for business (Excel, Word, QuickBooks), instructors also spend some time teaching participants to use Skype so that they can communicate more easily with out-of-town children and grandchildren. Participation in computer training may be initiated either by participants or by program staff members. Participants receive the hourly wage for time they spend attending computer classes.

Citizens for Citizens in Fall River, Massachusetts, a sub-recipient of Senior Service America, is one of the local projects funded by Senior Service America's Digital Inclusion Initiative to provide instruction to seniors on Internet and e-mail usage. This local project operates a free, daily computer training drop-in program which is mandatory for SCSEP participants, but is also open to anyone in the service area who is 55 years old or older. This training is administered through a software program called Generations Online that gives participants with no computer skills a basic training in tasks such as performing internet searches and sending emails with attachments. The project director's assistant explained: "It's all hands on. It's all big. It's easy to read. It's not really narrow. It's elderly-friendly, really. It's geared just for them." The SCSEP project also runs a more advanced 10-week, 40-hour computer-training program, also held each day. The training locations and computers used by this project are loaned by various organizations without charge, and the training is conducted by SCSEP staff members after they have been trained on the software.

The training mode used for computer training varies from project to project. Most commonly, participants learn computer skills in a classroom context. Classes sometimes use formal curricula acquired from other sources. Other modes for providing computer training include self-paced instruction and one-on-one instruction. Some sites offer computer training using several different modalities.

Basics Skills Training

Almost 10 percent of all SCSEP participants have limited English proficiency and 20 percent have low literacy. Remedying those deficiencies is an important service component for local projects whose participants have these barriers to employment. For most projects, basic-skills training is accomplished by referring participants to adult basic education providers in the local

area. Staff members encourage SCSEP participants to attend adult basic education training, although attendance often appears to take place outside of the paid weekly SCSEP hours. Only two sites address needs for basic-skills training by using instruction provided by SCSEP staff members or make attendance at classes taught by outside providers mandatory. One project requires that participants with limited English proficiency (who make up 60 percent of total customers) attend ESL classes and attend job search workshops in which participants practice speaking English during mock job interviews. Another project provides self-paced computer instruction, with support from SCSEP participant staff members, which helps participants learn English and complete GED training.

Life Skills Training

Several sites provide training to address common financial, self-esteem, personal relationship, and health issues that could interfere with a successful community service assignment or hamper the search for unsubsidized employment. Three sites provide financial management workshops, one project provides a program that includes work on self-esteem as well as job search skills, three sites provide courses in motivation or personal relations, and one project has a class in health management.

A Required Course in Healthier Living

In San Diego, California, a state-funded SCSEP project operated by Employment and Community Options as a subcontractor of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) requires all SCSEP participants to take a “healthier living” course sponsored by the county AAA. The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program is a six-week workshop (with weekly sessions lasting two-and-a-half hours each) that helps individuals with chronic conditions learn how to better manage their symptoms, eat well, exercise regularly, and communicate effectively with their doctors. Developed by the Stanford University School of Medicine, the course covers a variety of topics: (1) techniques to deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain, and isolation; (2) appropriate exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility, and endurance; (3) appropriate use of medications; (4) communicating effectively with family, friends, and health professionals; (5) nutrition; and (6) how to evaluate new treatments.

Occupational Skills Training

Training in occupational skills is almost always the most expensive form of training. During the current budget environment, we found only ten projects where occupational-skills training is being supported by the case study projects. Some projects will pay tuition for participants to attend training provided by public or proprietary training providers, as long as the tuition is under a certain cost and the training is included in the participant’s IEP. These projects also pay for the hours the participant spends in training (training hours must be included within the weekly limit

available to SCSEP participants in that project). Within this category are several projects that will pay for specialized training for specific occupations (e.g., security guard and home health aide) where the training has been developed in close coordination with private sector employers and the employers promise to hire participants who successfully complete the training. For example, one SCSEP project will pay for a one-day security guard training course that is required for an individual to obtain a state-issued security guard license.

Paying for and Arranging Teacher's Aide Training

Citizens for Citizens in Fall River, Massachusetts, a sub-recipient of Senior Service America, recently arranged for 10 participants to complete a training program to help them become teacher's aides, an occupation which requires an associate's degree in the State of Massachusetts. The national grantee, Senior Service America, obtained foundation funding so that Citizens for Citizens could be part of a multi-site demonstration with the University of Pittsburgh, which sent a professor to Fall River to train a local, retired teacher on the teacher's aide curriculum. This part-time teacher then trained participants on site at the SCSEP project office over 10 weeks at 20 hours per week for a total training cost of \$6,000. Each Friday, someone from the University of Pittsburgh came and evaluated the participants. The final evaluation was administered by the Massachusetts Department of Education, which awarded participants a "certificate to become a teacher's aide," which is equivalent to an Associate's Degree. The project director reported: "Every single one of them that went through that class ended up getting a teacher's aide job."

Other projects have been able to make it possible for SCSEP participants to receive occupational-skills training that is paid for by another entity. Under this model, the SCSEP project schedules the delivery of the training (either through an individual referral or by arranging for the delivery of a class-size training to a group of SCSEP participants) and pays the participants for the hours spent in training.

Paying for and Leveraging Funds to Support Reemployment of Dislocated Workers in a Regionally Depressed Economy

Pathstone, a nonprofit organization that provides SCSEP services to participants in 20 counties in New Jersey and Pennsylvania as a sub-recipient of National Council on Aging, serves a number of older workers who had worked for 25 or 30 years in now-shuttered manufacturing plants in the region. Occupational-skills training is part of this project's

strategy to help participants obtain employment in higher wage jobs. Although they were more active in paying for occupational skills training before the budget cuts, the project is still able to support a small number of individuals in online or classroom training programs in a variety of occupational fields. A few participants are even enrolled in two-year associates' degree programs in fields that include medical records management; radiology; and heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning repair (HVAC).

Pathstone has also managed to leverage funds from other programs and obtain grants that will allow it to purchase training for SCSEP participants in computerized numerical control (CNC) machine operation as well as occupations associated with shale oil production. For several SCSEP participants who are also eligible for the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) that Pathstone operates under separate funding, the project has been able to pay \$6,000 per person to help the participants prepare for high tech manufacturing jobs that will help the participants "make a transition to something they'll be comfortable in, that they'll stay at." The company that they are partnering with to provide the training is planning to hire some of the trainees at the conclusion of training.

The organization has also received a Community Services Block Grant that will enable it to offer training in health occupations for seniors, including SCSEP participants.

Helping Participants Enter Unsubsidized Employment

SCSEP projects are required to assist participants in securing unsubsidized employment through job search and job placement services they provide directly or by referring participants to community partners—such as the One-Stop delivery system—that can provide such services.⁷⁹ During Program Year 2011, job search and job development services were a particularly high priority for the local projects because most projects began the year with substantially more participants than they had funded slots. Unless they succeeded in transitioning significant numbers of participants into unsubsidized jobs, they could not enroll any new participants and were in danger of exceeding their budget allotments. Most local projects used several different strategies to help participants move from community service assignments to unsubsidized employment. In this section, we review how the case-study projects vary in providing job search and job placement services through direct staff efforts and by supporting self-directed job searching by participants.

⁷⁹ Although the 2010 Final Regulations for the 2006 OAA Amendments state that all SCSEP enrollees must have an initial goal of unsubsidized employment, ETA recognizes that, for some participants, unsubsidized employment may not continue to be a feasible goal as time goes on. In such cases, an updated IEPs must indicate a different goal, such as a retirement or transition to unpaid community service.

Direct Job Placement Services by the SCSEP Staff

Local SCSEP programs place participants into unsubsidized jobs in two major ways: they encourage host agencies to hire SCSEP participants and they develop private sector jobs for SCSEP participants. Included in the latter category is the use of on-the-job experience (OJE) agreements (this special topic is discussed separately, however).

Encouraging Host Agencies to Hire SCSEP Participants

In nearly all sites, the first employment option that staff members explore for a SCSEP participant is permanent hiring by the host agency for which the participant has been working. Hiring by host agencies is the predominant source of unsubsidized placements for participants for nearly half of the local sites visited (14 of 29). In the remaining sites, host-agency hiring is encouraged but occurs less frequently.

Some projects that depend on host-agency hiring make a point of recruiting host agencies that indicate a willingness to hire participants. Several projects include in their host-agency participation agreements a clause that says the host agency will consider hiring participants for open positions. One project works exclusively with host agencies that are committed to hiring qualified participants. Some projects continually contact host agencies to ask them to hire individual SCSCP participants who are good fits for the agencies. To encourage any particular host agency to hire a participant, one local project may offer to extend the typical length of the community service assignment with that agency by 30 to 90 days to allow for further training of the candidate. If that might be considered a “carrot” approach, several other projects indicated that they use a strategy more closely resembling a “stick:” they inform a host agency that a SCSEP participant is about to be rotated to another agency in order to try to encourage the agency to hire the participant. Staff respondents at several projects said that if a host agency has an open position and does not hire a SCSEP participant into that position, they would seriously consider removing all other SCSEP participants from that host agency and discontinuing the host-agency relationship.

SCSEP projects use several additional strategies to encourage host agencies to hire participants. One project does so by rotating participants to new host agencies after only three to four months, on average. Respondents at another project said that when a participant is approaching the durational limit, they send a 30-day notification letter to both the participant and the host agency. The letter to host agencies includes information about the dollar value of the service that the SCSEP participant has provided to the agency and points out the hardship the participant will face upon exiting the program. This type of letter has prompted some host agencies to hire participants who are approaching the durational limit.

One local project reported that it has been successful using what it refers to as “host agency hiring agreements” to secure employment for some participants. When a new participant is

assigned to a nonprofit or public agency, this project offers the agency a trial employment period of 90 days. During this trial period, the paid community service assignment may include more than the typical number of paid weekly hours, while the host agency decides whether the participant is a suitable candidate for the job vacancy. If the SCSEP participant performs well during the trial employment period, the host agency is required to hire the participant per the host agency hiring agreement. If the host agency determines that the SCSEP participant is not a suitable candidate, then the participant is rotated to another host agency.⁸⁰

Although it is not a deliberate strategy for encouraging host-agency hiring, staff members at several projects mentioned that the cutback of participant hours from 20 hours per week to lower levels has had the unintended effect of stimulating several host agencies to hire their participants. This has occurred when host agencies want participants to carry out work assignments that require time commitments greater than what the SCSEP program can currently fund.

Effective Marketing of SCSEP Participants to Host Agencies

The SCSEP project operated by the Southwestern Community Action Council of West Virginia in Huntington, West Virginia for National Council on Aging is now viewed by a local city agency as a reliable source of new full-time employees. The agency representative stated that without SCSEP the agency would have to “hire off the street,” but that by using SCSEP workers the agency can “try out” the worker first. As a result, it has “been able to get better quality workers.”

The Bronx, New York City, project operated by AARP has established a “win-win” relationship between SCSEP and a senior-service agency that sponsors about 20 different SCSEP participants at a time in 18 different community service locations around the city. Most participants are ultimately hired by the agency. If a SCSEP participant is not hired, the agency will work closely with the individual to help him/her find an unsubsidized job with another employer.

Many respondents at local projects that have placed large numbers of participants with host agencies mentioned a particular benefit of this placement strategy: the participant is already well trained to carry out the job and, as a result, is likely to be a stable and long-term employee. However, managers at some other projects were not as sanguine about host-agency placements. These respondents indicated that the jobs available at host agencies are often minimum-wage jobs without any career pathways for upward mobility over time. Furthermore, managers in a number of the projects we visited indicated that fewer host agencies can afford to hire participants since the economic downturn.

⁸⁰ Reviewers familiar with the SCSEP program regulations have noted that this placement strategy would only be permissible if used with an agency that is not currently serving as an active host agency for other SCSEP participants.

Strategies to Increase Private Sector Placements

Most projects say that they also try to “develop jobs” for SCSEP participants. This approach to placing participants in unsubsidized employment requires that project staff members play more active roles in contacting private-sector employers, providing job leads to participants, and marketing specific participants to employers. This section reviews strategies that the projects have deployed.

- **Identify job leads.** One of the most common placement methods is to review online job banks and other listings and provide these leads to participants in-person or by telephone or e-mail. Several projects have developed supplemental methods to get listings. For example, in one project, job developers have formed relationships with Post Office letter carriers and have carriers report to them any job postings they see while on their routes. The job developer reported that this unique relationship has been an effective source of job referrals. In another project, an American Job Center staff member emails “hot” job postings to the project director, who then shares them with anyone coming into the resource room and with selected participants by telephone or email that appear to be well qualified for the opening and are very serious about job searching.
- **Attend job fairs.** Job fairs are important tools for some projects. Staff members in several sites report that they take job-ready participants to job fairs. A respondent at one project said that he has convinced several job fairs to open an hour early to interview SCSEP participants. In another project, the SCSEP project organized its own older-worker job fair during Program Year 2010, which was attended by more than 300 job seekers and 50 agencies and private sector employers. However, at least one project found that having participants attend job fairs was not an effective way of helping participants find jobs.
- **Work with temporary or leasing agencies.** Two projects developed relationships with recruiting or staff-leasing companies to increase access to a wider variety of available jobs.
- **Contact employers to identify possible jobs for participants.** In a number of sites, participant staff members are expected to develop jobs on behalf of the participants in their caseloads. As described by the project manager at one project, employment specialists call firms that have hired SCSEP participants in the past, or even do “cold calling” or walk door-to-door trying to find openings.
- **Target specific occupations or employers.** As described in the previous section on training, some projects try to increase their ability to place participants by providing training that will make participants attractive to employers in specific industries. In selecting the industries to target for placements, SCSEP projects have to take into account participant abilities and interests, labor-market demand,

and cost.⁸¹ Among the occupations that projects have successfully targeted for placement of SCSEP participants are security guard, childcare aide, and home health care aide. Because the training needed for each of these occupations is relatively short-term, some projects have found money in their budgets to pay for these types of training. Two projects have successfully targeted childcare aides. The SCSEP project in Miami, Florida, will pay for participants who are placed into a community service assignment at a childcare center to complete the state-required 45 hours of training to get a childcare certificate program at the local community college. This fulfills a prerequisite that participants must meet before they can be hired permanently as childcare aides in the state of Florida.⁸² San Jose has also targeted home health care aides, as described below.

Success Placing Participants as Home Health-Care Aides

The San Jose, California project operated by Silicon Valley Council on Aging for the State of California attributes its high entered-employment rate to its ability to rapidly place participants who complete its home-care class. Though it was originally intended to help SCSEP participants who were taking care of family members as unpaid work, the program subsequently adjusted its 60-hour curriculum to enable participants to be eligible for jobs in the home health care field. In addition to technical training in CPR, emergency procedures and other skills specific to health care, the training also covers resume preparation and interview skills and incorporates presentations by local home care companies. The program director noted that some participants secure employment even before finishing the class, as they are brought on as contingent hires prior to official certification.

Using OJE as an Incentive for Private Sector Employers

As noted in Chapter III, OJE is only used for a very small percentage of SCSEP participants nationally.⁸³ Among our process study sites, 14 of the 29 local projects had some experience with OJE, but only eight projects consider it a valuable addition to their menus of services.

⁸¹ Because of problems in these areas, targeted training doesn't always work as anticipated. The Oakland SCSEP project, which previously placed at least 8 participants per year in para-professional child care jobs by paying for the required training, had to end its targeted-training program because the reduced number of community service hours for Program Year 2011 could not provide enough time to meet the state's credit-hour requirement. One project that paid for nursing aide training found that hospitals were laying off workers, so only one of the trainees was able to find a job.

⁸² Miami also paid for one-day training to meet state licensing requirements for a participant who needed it to be hired by a security-guard company.

⁸³ OJE is a form of specialized training in which a SCSEP operator can contract with an employer (can be for-profit, public, or non-profit) that is not a host agency to provide up to 12 weeks of training for up to 40 hours per week. The objective of OJE is to encourage an employer to provide a prospective employee with an opportunity to gain the skills and experience needed to carry out the job function satisfactorily. SCSEP can pay (or reimburse the employer) up to 100 percent of the wages for the first 4 weeks and up to 50 percent for subsequent weeks. The employer must agree to hire the participants who have performed satisfactorily.

Although on-the-job training occurs as part of OJE contracts, most sites consider OJE primarily a placement tool, rather than a training modality. This may be because participants must participate in a community service training assignment before entering an OJE placement.

Among the sites visited, OJE agreements have been developed with a wide variety of employers, including a hospital, a supermarket chain, a tax preparer, a publishing company, and a firm requiring manual labor. Projects would like to develop ongoing OJE relationships with large employers where they might be able to make multiple placements over time; most of the OJE agreements, however, were with smaller employers who find the OJE financial incentive more attractive.

Project staff members indicated that employers generally think of OJE agreements as formal arrangements for a period of “try-out” employment. Employers agree to hire an individual into an unsubsidized job after a brief try-out period, as long as the participant performs successfully during the OJE period. Among the eight projects that indicated that they are successfully using OJE, the primary indicator of success is that the employer follows through with the agreement to hire the participant at the end of the OJE period. Several of the projects with poor experiences with OJE indicated that some employers reneged on their agreements to hire at the end of the training period.

The projects most enthusiastic about OJE tend to develop agreements with employers for very brief periods of training/wage subsidy. In one project that is enthusiastic about OJE because it is “a powerful incentive” for employers to hire SCSEP participants, staff members said that they almost always write an OJE agreement when placing a participant with a private-sector employer. OJE agreements result in a permanent placement “99 percent of the time,” noted one respondent. This project will not write OJE agreements that last longer than six weeks to ensure that the employer does not take advantage of the OJE arrangement. Another SCSEP project that is also an enthusiastic user of OJE, limits the OJE training period to two weeks and views it as a trial period for both the participant and the employer, to facilitate the participant’s transition to unsubsidized employment.

Some local projects we visited also seemed to be misinformed about the requirements for OJE, including several who developed their own versions of OJE that did not include formal agreements. In one case, a local security company trains SCSEP participants for about a month, while SCSEP pays half the participants’ wages as a payment for training, but there is no required commitment to hire and participants are not always hired when the training is over. Another local project sometimes removes participants from community service assignments for a “specialized training” program with a private sector employer (typically a large retail chain or call center) for 30 days or less with “a reasonably firm commitment to hire.” The SCSEP program continues to pay the participant the regular SCSEP wage during this time. If the

participant is not hired by the private-sector trainer, the participant returns to the host agency placement at which he or she previously worked. Neither of these practices are compatible with SCSEP regulations, and the implied misinformation about what OJE actually requires may be an additional reason many local projects were not enthusiastic about pursuing OJE.

Projects that have attempted to interest employers in OJE agreements without success reported that many employers are not interested in the paperwork required for the OJE and would rather make a direct hire. Another project said that the process was too time-intensive for SCSEP staff members. A third project said that employers are reluctant to use OJE in the current economy because they are not in positions to hire new employees.

Constraints in Staffing Job Placement Services

There are several significant staffing constraints on providing effective placement services. First, as discussed in previous sections of this report, many local SCSEP projects are heavily dependent on participant staff to provide direct services to participants. These participants generally lack professional credentials, work part-time, and must leave after reaching SCSEP's durational limit. Although participant staff members typically are more skilled and better educated than the average SCSEP participant, their lack of professional training in job counseling and job placement makes it especially difficult for them to be effective in conducting outreach to private-sector employers. Second, the high participant caseloads of employment specialists in most projects further limits the amount of support project staff members can give individual participants who are searching for jobs. In response, many projects provide job search support to SCSEP participants in group settings—a phenomenon discussed in more detail below. Nevertheless, in focus groups at several projects, participants said that their case managers or employment specialists had found time to provide help them with individualized job-search support, including help with resumes and cover letters, individualized instruction in how to use online job search tools, and help preparing for individual interviews. In some instances, participants said, their employment specialists had even accompanied them on job interviews.

Supporting Self-Directed Job Search by Participants

As important as direct staff efforts to place participants are, they cannot secure all participants unsubsidized employment. For those participants who aren't hired by their host agencies or benefit directly from SCSEP staff members' job development efforts, SCSEP provides the means by which participants can learn to search for jobs on their own. In this section, we examine the two major ways in which this is accomplished: referring participants to the American Job Centers and providing job-search training and job-search support directly.

Referring Participants to American Job Centers for Job Search Assistance

All projects require SCSEP participants to sign up for services at the American Job Center within the first several weeks of SCSEP participation. This typically requires a participant to register for the online job bank in his or her state. Projects also encourage all participants to take advantage of the other core services available at One-Stop centers, which often include workshops on a wide range of job-readiness topics.⁸⁴ The extent to which SCSEP participants actually take advantage of these services appears to vary. In about 19 of the 29 case study sites, American Job Centers appear to be important sources of job search services for SCSEP participants, although they are not usually the sole source of job search support available to them.

Effective Use of American Job Center Services

The SCSEP project in Fort Worth, Texas operated by SER Jobs for Progress is located in a social service campus that houses a number of agencies included in a comprehensive American Job Center. SCSEP staff members refer all participants to the American Job Center's job search workshop, which is offered three days per week. Other workshops that SCSEP participants have attended at the One-Stop Center include resume preparation, dress for success, how to explain a criminal record, and how to look for a job online. Several participants also mentioned that they had attended a five-day workshop on how to get a customer-service job that included information on how to prepare a resume. Although not all of these individuals were looking for customer-service jobs, they all agreed that the skills they learned at the workshop (greeting customers warmly, listening to the customer first before responding) would be useful in other work settings.

In the Oceanside, California, SCSEP project, one case manager requires all participants on her caseload to enroll in a four-day series of job-readiness and skill-development workshops offered at the American Job Center. Participants in these 20-hour workshops learn about stress solutions, a step-by-step action plan for finding and getting a great job, resume writing, interviewing skills, dressing for success, personal accountability, and individual coaching.

⁸⁴ Until the cutback in participant hours in Program Year 2011, a number of the sites would include the time spent in job readiness workshops as paid training hours in the participant's weekly work schedule. However, at the time of our site visits, some sites had discontinued such payments in order to ensure that participants would be available to their host agencies for community service work for as many hours as possible each week. These sites encouraged participants to participate in job readiness workshops on their own time, although they could not require individuals to participate in workshops for which the time were not paid.

Below are a few of the more significant examples of SCSEP projects making use of the job-search and job-readiness services provided by American Job Centers.

- The Detroit Urban League, an affiliate of National Urban League, requires participants to complete two courses for employment enhancement on topics of the participant's choice, such as resume development or computer skills.
- In San Diego County, Employment and Community Options, a state sub-recipient, requires all participants to co-enroll in WIA core services upon SCSEP program entry and attend one class every quarter, to keep their American Job Center memberships active.
- In the Buffalo, Missouri, Experience Works project, which serves older workers in 104 counties in the state, some of the employment and training case managers are housed within American Job Centers. Counselors strongly encourage participants to attend the job search workshops offered by the Centers.
- In Milton, Florida, the SCSEP project operated by National Caucus and Center on Black Aged deliberately housed both its employment specialists and job developers within American Job Centers, so that participants would have increased access to information about job openings, and could more readily take advantage of other available resources, such as job search assistance and trainings.

A number of projects identified problems that make it difficult for SCSEP participants to receive effective job search supports from American Job Centers. In some local areas, American Job Centers are experiencing budget cuts that are requiring them to cut back on their hours of operation and the availability of staff-assisted core services. Similarly, respondents indicated that distance and lack of transportation to American Job Centers are major barriers for many SCSEP participants in making use of these resources. In addition, even when American Job Center services are ample and accessible, core services typically provide very limited individualized staff assistance. One SCSEP staffer said, "For the most part, the only One-Stop service that SCSEP customers typically access is help with resumes and some workshops—these help to get people job-ready, but the system generally provides little help in actually finding a job.... [SCSEP participants] rarely get the one-on-one help from case managers that they need." This situation has led some SCSEP participants in our focus groups to conclude that One-Stops are not interested in serving older workers.

Self-Directed Job Search within SCSEP

Due to the limitations of the American Job Center system as noted above, and because staffing constraints limit the reach of direct placements, many projects make self-directed job search a central component of their efforts to help participants with the transition to unsubsidized employment. About a third of the projects we visited provide formal instruction using computers, workshops, or individualized help in job readiness and job search skills. In this area, SCSEP projects face the difficult challenge of providing appropriate services to the full range of

participants, from those who quickly become “job ready” to those who may not be prepared to enter the labor market even after four years of program participation. Projects meet the needs of diverse participant groups by providing a variety of different services using different delivery modalities:

- **Provide training on computer-based job search.** Several local projects have online job-search capabilities because their national grantees (AARP, NCOA, Experience Works, and Mature Services) include these capabilities as part of their service planning/case management software. Staff members at these local projects instruct participants on how to use these online tools to support job search efforts. For example, participants in the SCSEP project in Huntington, West Virginia, are required to take sixteen fundamental employability classes that are part of the JobSource set of online programs. These courses, which cover topics such as resume writing and what to do during an interview, can be accessed from a home computer or from the project’s computer lab (open two days per week for any job-searching activity). Staff members are available to help with resume writing and other job-search activities.
- **Offer classes and workshops on searching for a job.** At least six projects offer one or more courses or workshops on the job-search process. Of these projects, two have particularly well-developed job-searching workshops (these are described in more detail in the first box below).

Well-Developed Job Search Instruction

The Miami Beach, Florida SCSEP project operated by Unidad of Miami Beach as a sub-recipient of the State of Florida requires all SCSEP participants to attend 10 or 12 job-search classes that are offered every Monday at the SCSEP office. The classes include English language practice for participants whose primary language is Spanish. These workshops help them learn what they need to do in order to get a job and/or extend their education. Session topics include interview skills, wage/salary negotiation, appropriate dress, and other issues specific to SCSEP participants (including addressing participant worries that they will earn too much to maintain their subsidized housing or other benefits).

In San Diego, California, the SCSEP project operated by Employment and Community Option, a sub-contractor to the San Diego County Area Agency on Aging, which is a sub-recipient of the State of California, requires all participants to take an eight-week class in “Job Search Skills for Older Workers.” This class, taught by a former SCSEP participant, offers assistance with career exploration (through interest and aptitude testing), brushing up on resume development and interviewing skills, combating negative stereotypes, and learning how to promote your skills and sell yourself. Participants are required to develop a 30-60 second self-promotional advertisement. Another required course in computer skills provides assistance with online job searching and how to submit applications online with a resume attached.

- **Offer motivational training.** Several of the SCSEP projects enroll participants in motivational training courses offered by outside contractors to motivate them to conduct an effective search for a job. One local project requires all SCSEP participants to enroll in a four-week motivational course as their first SCSEP community service assignment. Another project offers a five-day motivational training to all participants who reach 30 months of participation in the SCSEP program as part of planning for their transitions out of the program after they reach the 48-month limit.⁸⁵
- **Specify the required steps for job searching.** One project, in an effort to make its universal job-search requirement meaningful for participants, has developed very detailed guidelines describing nine tasks that all participants should complete within 90 days of enrollment. Among the required nine activities are the following: complete a resume, update the resume to include the community service position with the host agency, have a working telephone number with the ability to record voicemail messages, attend job search workshops, and receive services to create positive first impressions.
- **Provide individualized job-search support.** Staff members in several SCSEP projects provide individualized job-search support, but such services are typically only provided to the neediest participants or, more broadly, to those living in some rural areas. This strategy is particularly necessary for projects serving rural areas, where it is impractical to convene participants in a central location for group job search training or job clubs. For example, in one local project that serves sixteen counties, participant staff members who work as employment specialists are “on the road constantly,” driving to meet with participants at their host agencies or at American Job Center locations. Staff members help participants update their resumes and provide them with job-search advice.

Individualized Support for Job Searching

Staff members of the Southwestern Community Action Council of West Virginia (a National Council on Aging sub-recipient) in Huntington, West Virginia put a lot of energy into supporting individuals in their job-search efforts. Focus group participants indicated that the biggest advantage SCSEP provided them in securing unsubsidized employment was the assistance that staff members provided in all phases of the job search. First, participants explained that staff members helped them discern what skills they had that qualified them for employment. One participant stated, “I knew I had knowledge, but it wasn’t up-to-date and my confidence was low. The program helped me see what I had done that is worthwhile.” Another participant indicated that she came to the program to

⁸⁵ This latter training was discontinued because of budget cuts in Program Year 2011, but staff members indicated that they hoped the training could be reinstated in the future.

have a “cheerleader” because her confidence was low and she “didn’t know how to tell jobs to hire me” when she “didn’t feel ready” for work. She said her job developer helped her “understand that I am more valuable than I thought I was.”

- **Combine group and individualized support.** One project combines group and individual job search activities for job-ready participants through its Employment Readiness Training (ERT). Individuals enrolled in ERT develop employment-focused IEPs during meetings with their employment specialists, spend at least 15 hours a week on job-search activities, and attend job-search workshops with other participants enrolled in ERT. These individuals can schedule one-on-one appointments with their employment specialists for assistance with job searching and interviewing, and they have full access to the project’s computer lab.
- **Offer job clubs.** At least 10 of the sites visited have developed job clubs, which take advantage of peer support and networking to improve participants’ job-search skills and rate of success. Job clubs generally convene a relatively small number of participants together (usually 4 to 10 individuals) who share challenges and strategies, help motivate each other, and receive coaching from a group leader. Participants and program staff members in several sites identified the job club as a particularly successful practice in moving participants towards unsubsidized employment. While some job clubs involve the general participant group, others are targeted to particular subsets of participants. Some job clubs are designed to meet the needs of participants with serious barriers to employment. Others are designed for participants who have been identified as being job-ready.

A Well-Developed Job Club Model

The director of the Mature Services SCSEP project in Youngstown, Ohio considers lack of job search skills to be the greatest employment barrier for SCSEP participants and the best indicator of who is “most in need” of SCSEP services. Prior to Program Year 2011, this project established a job club for older workers with funding from the Local Workforce Investment Board. This older-worker job club was designed and delivered jointly by the SCSEP training coordinator and a staff member of the American Job Center. Initially provided at the SCSEP project office, the job club was later moved to the Job Center, where it was available to all older customers. Under the grant, five older workers participated in each three-week long job club. The “curriculum” covered all aspects of job search. Participants met Monday through Friday from 9 am to 1 pm throughout the three-week period, for a total of 60 hours. Activities included mock interviews, the sharing of job leads, and mutual support. The SCSEP training coordinator would frequently invite an employer who would talk about his labor needs and conduct mock interviews. Job club graduates who had found employment were invited to explain their successful job-

searching experiences. To encourage the sharing of leads, the job club coordinator gave a weekly prize to the participant who brought in the most "warm" job leads (as evidenced by business cards collected from contacts).⁸⁶

- **Require regular reports on the job-search process.** Roughly one third of the projects require all participants to document their job-search efforts by submitting lists of employment contacts to the SCSEP office bi-weekly.⁸⁷ One of these projects has adopted a specific enforcement mechanism. Its staff members monitor job-search activity and deliver written performance warnings to participants if they do not submit the required job search logs. Another increases the number of job-search contacts required for participants at the beginning of their third year in SCSEP to increase the pressure to find a job. Project staff members described this practice of requiring documentation of job search contacts as only somewhat effective in promoting meaningful job search efforts. Although it helps to emphasize the importance of unsubsidized employment as a goal of the SCSEP program, it is not always taken seriously by participants who are reluctant to leave their community service assignments. As one respondent noted, when some participants submit the required documentation it is clear they are just “going through the motions.”

Key Findings on Participant Services

SCSEP project managers face a demanding set of operational responsibilities. Managers and staff members must carefully review and document participant income and individual barriers to employment to ensure that applicants meet eligibility requirements and that the project is prioritizing services to those most in need. In deciding whom to enroll, staff members must screen applicants to ensure that enrollees meet enough of the statutory barriers to employment that the grantee will meet its “hard-to-serve” performance goal. They must also assess participant suitability for the program by ensuring that participants are interested in unsubsidized employment and that they are not sufficiently skilled as to be job ready. Entering and maintaining up-to-date information on all participants in the SPARQ system is another

⁸⁶ During Program Year 2011, the funds were no longer available to support the job club. At the time of our site visit, the three-week long job club has been replaced by a 1-hour long meeting facilitated by the training coordinator every other Friday (still held at the American Job Center). The project is also trying to maintain the cooperative aspect of the job club for the most job-ready participants, who now convene a weekly peer-group meeting to share job leads and conduct mock interviews. They manage the group themselves and hold one another accountable for job searching efforts.

⁸⁷ Some projects consider registration with the state job matching system, which is universally required, to be the equivalent of meeting a job-search requirement.

operational responsibility that project managers describe as time-consuming. Once participants are enrolled, the local project operators must provide initial and ongoing assessment and service planning and active case management; arrange for and provide continuous oversight of work experience and skill enhancement through the community service assignment and other training opportunities; arrange for participants to receive needed social services, and provide placement and job-search assistance.

Developing and delivering a comprehensive menu of services for SCSEP participants would be challenging under any circumstances. In the current environment, in which budget cutbacks leave little funding for staffed services, the challenge is greater. Because of the requirements that at least 75 percent of the SCSEP grant be spent on participant wages and benefits and that administrative expenses be limited to 13.5 percent, project operators have very limited funds with which to accomplish these functions. Given the expenditure requirements and the overall reductions in the level of funding for SCSEP during PY 2011 and beyond, grantees and their local project operators have had to be exceedingly cost-conscious in designing and providing participant services.

Working under these challenges and constraints, the SCSEP project managers have been working hard with limited regular unsubsidized employees to deliver all the required SCSEP services. As discussed elsewhere in this report, projects depend heavily on participant staff members to carry out many of the services described below.

Recruitment and Screening

- Because most local projects were over-enrolled during most of Program Year 2011, very little recruitment took place.
- A number of projects started the program year by putting interested individuals on waiting lists. However, as the waiting lists got longer and longer, a number of sites froze their waiting lists and asked individuals to contact them at a later date to see if they were taking in any new participants.
- In urban areas, recruiting SCSEP participants has not been particularly challenging, because word-of-mouth and referrals from community partners—especially American Job Centers—has often resulted in enough referrals to fill available slots.
- In rural areas, project staff members have had to use more active methods to recruit participants, including presentations at senior centers and door-to-door canvassing.
- In about half the projects visited, staff members actively screen and prioritize applicants, in addition to determining their eligibility. Screening has several functions. The first is to ensure that the project gives priority to those who are

most in need and that it reaches its most-in-need goals.⁸⁸ A second function of screening is to screen out job-ready applicants.

Service Planning

- Planning services for newly enrolled participants is very staff-intensive. All projects conduct comprehensive assessments to support service planning. Assessments and service planning are usually performed in a face-to-face interview setting, with support from computerized service planning tools in some sites.
- The detail and depth of IEPs varies significantly from site to site. Some projects develop very detailed and individualized IEPs with specific skills-development goals and service strategies. In other sites, the documented assessments and service plans appear to lack detail, suggesting that some staff members and participants tend to view service planning—or at least the written documents that record service plans—as a paper exercise.
- Monitoring participant progress is also a staff-intensive process that usually involves visits to host agencies and meetings with host-agency work supervisors and participants.
 - Projects follow different schedules for updating IEPs and monitoring participant progress. Most projects update IEPs at least every six months as required by the regulations.
 - Staff members widely believe that monitoring participant progress is important for reminding participants that their community service assignments are not jobs, for overseeing their job-search activities, and for monitoring participant progress in reaching stated IEP goals.
- SCSEP projects usually arrange for supportive services from other agencies, rather than providing them directly. While most projects document supportive services in service planning and refer their participants to other agencies, there is usually limited staff capacity for tracking referrals and determining whether participants are actually receiving those services. (In Chapter VI, we discuss the extent of customer satisfaction with supportive services on a national customer satisfaction survey of SCSEP participants.)

Training through the Community Service Assignment

- Most of the SCSEP community service assignments are in relatively low-skilled work, regardless of the occupational classification. Clerical and office-related community service assignments are overwhelmingly the most common types of assignments.

⁸⁸ Only 6 of the 29 projects fell below 85 percent of their most-in-need performance standard, based on the Quarterly Program Report for Program Year 2009-2010.

- At the time of the site visits, the paid weekly hours available to SCSEP participants had been reduced significantly in 25 of the 29 study sites to between 12 and 20 hours.
- The community service assignment is perceived as the primary source of training for most participants.
- Matching a participant to an appropriate community service assignment is an informal process that relies on SCSEP staff members' understanding of the participant's needs and their knowledge of the roster of host agencies and jobs available at those agencies. Relatively few projects use specific tools, such as O*Net codes or ranking host agencies, to increase precision.
- Data from participant focus groups suggest that participants are usually quite satisfied with their community service assignments. Some participants with higher levels of education and work experience, however, complained that they were not learning any new skills at their community service assignments. These sentiments align with findings from the customer satisfaction survey, which showed that participants with education beyond a high school diploma were less satisfied with the program than other participants.

Other Training

- The reductions in the SCSEP budget have severely restricted the amount of training that occurs outside of the community service assignment. Not only did most sites have to cut back the funds available for other training because of the reduction in the overall level of funding, but it was harder to schedule training for participants within their reduced weekly schedules of paid participant hours.
- Budget cuts have affected the ability of the projects to provide computer-skills training, which both project staff members and participants clearly identified as a high priority for preparing older workers for the modern labor market.
- Occupational training has been eliminated in most projects because of its cost. A small number of participants receive occupational skills training funded by other programs (including very limited co-enrollment in WIA training).
- A few projects provide very short-term occupational skill training, usually in connection with a potential placement.
- Few projects are actively pursuing OJE opportunities, and OJE is viewed more as a financial incentive to convince employers to hire SCSEP participants than as a mode of occupational skills training.

Placement and Job Search Services

- Nearly all projects emphasize placing participants into unsubsidized jobs in their host agencies. In some projects nearly all participants placed into unsubsidized jobs are placed at their host agencies.
- Placement and job searching are central to the program's principal goal of moving low-income seniors into unsubsidized employment.

- The projects in the study display three models for supporting participants in the transition to unsubsidized employment:
 - Some projects emphasize direct staff job development and referrals to positions developed by project staff.
 - Other projects emphasize more individualized, but largely *ad hoc* support of participant job-search efforts.
 - Projects in the third group support participants' self-directed job search efforts with structured group activities, such as job search training workshops and job clubs.
 - Staffing reductions have limited the extent to which SCSEP staff members can offer direct one-on-one job search support.
- Although a trend towards group-based support of self-directed job search efforts is emerging among the SCSEP projects, SCSEP participants do not appear to embrace this service model. A number of focus group respondents expressed a wish that SCSEP would provide more individualized assistance by referring participants to available jobs.
- OJE is a little-used, but potentially powerful, tool for structuring short-term training with a specific employer in exchange for a commitment to hire the trainee at the end of the training period. Where it is used by the SCSEP projects, it is generally considered a hiring incentive rather than a training modality. Several project staff members explained that OJE is not more used because there is a widespread lack of employer interest, at least partly due to the perceived paperwork burden involved for the employer.

VI. MANAGING PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Core Performance Measures

As discussed in Chapter I, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), which oversees SCSEP, has established an annual performance accountability system to assess state and national grantees' progress toward meeting SCSEP's goals. Currently, there are six core measures of program performance for which grantees are held accountable, as well as three additional measures,⁸⁹ which are tracked but used more for informational purposes than for accountability purposes. The discussion in this section focuses on the six core measures of performance:

- 1) *aggregate hours of community service employment*: the total number of community service hours worked by all participants enrolled during the program year (exclusive of paid training hours), divided by the total number of hours funded in the grant⁹⁰
- 2) *entry into unsubsidized employment*: the number of participants employed during the first quarter after exit, divided by the number of participants who exited during the quarter (after excluding certain exiters who are not available for employment)
- 3) *retention in unsubsidized employment for six months*: the proportion of those employed during the first quarter after exit who are also employed during the second and third quarters after exit
- 4) *average earnings*: the average earnings during the second and third quarter for those employed during the first, second, and third quarters after exit

⁸⁹ The three additional measures are: (1) retention in unsubsidized employment for one year; (2) satisfaction of participants, employers, and host agencies with their program experiences and the services provided; and (3) entry into volunteer work, added effective March 2012, to capture participants who exit the program and enter into a volunteer position in the community.

⁹⁰ The denominator is adjusted for the difference between the state's minimum wage and the federal minimum wage, if applicable. Also, because of the dramatic fluctuations in funding over the last three program years, ETA did not have an accurate way of determining the denominator for performance goal 1. To respond to the absence of a baseline performance level, ETA neutralized this measure by setting the goal low enough that all grantees would meet it. Higher performance goals for this measure have been reestablished for Program Year 2012.

- 5) *number of eligible individuals served*: the total number of participants served divided by the total number of positions funded in the grant⁹¹
- 6) *number of most-in-need individuals served*: the total number of employment barriers (as indicated by the priority-of-service criteria and the duration waiver eligibility criteria) recorded for all participants, divided by the number of participants served during the program year.⁹²

Each of the SCSEP performance measures is designed to gauge grantees' success in achieving a different desirable condition or outcome. Two measures (1 and 5 above) assess the efficiency and productivity of grantee operations.⁹³ Three measures (2, 3, and 4 above) assess different aspects of grantee performance in placing participants into unsubsidized employment. The final measure (6 above) calculates the extent to which grantees are enrolling individuals who face multiple barriers to employment.

In managing program performance, many project managers view several of these measures—particularly the number of most-in-need individuals served and the rate of entry into unsubsidized employment—to be in tension with one another, so that doing well in one area may lead to lower performance in the other. Taken together, the performance measurement system is intended to ensure that the SCSEP program balances several different goals: providing high levels of community service, reaching as many participants as possible, serving as many participants with employment barriers as possible, and achieving appropriate rates of employment—given participants' barriers—in quality jobs that will be retained and bring their incumbents sufficient earnings levels to meet their financial needs. Currently, none of the core measures measure customer satisfaction or quality of life after participants leave the program.⁹⁴

Ahead of each new program year, ETA proposes for each grantee an expected level of performance for each core measure that takes into account the previous year's performance on

⁹¹ The denominator is adjusted for the difference between the state's minimum wage and the Federal minimum wage, if applicable. Also, because of the dramatic fluctuations in funding over the last three program years, ETA did not have an accurate way of determining the denominator for performance goal 5. To respond to the absence of a baseline performance level, ETA neutralized this measure by setting the goal low enough that all grantees would meet it. Higher performance goals have been reestablished for this measure for Program Year 2012.

⁹² The statute lists low literacy and limited English proficiency (linked by "or") as two criteria defining a single measure. Thus, if a participant meets both criteria, this still counts only as a single barrier.

⁹³ Aggregate hours of community service employment is also supposed to be a proxy for providing maximum feasible benefit to the community through the expenditure of grant funds.

⁹⁴ This is perhaps not surprising, since ETA has no experience setting quality-of-life goals or managing performance in relation to such goals.

that measure with an added margin to encourage program improvement.⁹⁵ Subsequent negotiations with each grantee result in an agreed-upon level of performance for which the grantee is held accountable. To assess whether a grantee has met its goals overall, ETA averages the percent of performance levels to target goals across all of the six core measures. If the average percent of goals met is 80 percent or greater, the grantee has met its goals. If a national grantee fails to meet its goals in the aggregate four years in a row, it cannot compete in the next SCSEP national grantee competition. If a state fails to meet its goals three years in a row, the state must hold a competition to designate a new agency to be the SCSEP state grantee. Although only a very small number of grantees have ever failed to meet their goals more than one year in a row, negotiating and meeting the performance measures is an important management concern at the grantee level.

Grantees are held accountable for the negotiated performance goals and get to decide how they will work with their sub-recipients to achieve these goals. Program administrators at the local project sites we visited reported that performance levels are generally passed down to them from their sponsoring grantees unchanged from the levels the grantees had agreed upon with ETA. Local program operators, they said, do not usually have the opportunity to request adjustments to account for variations in the local contexts in which they operate.

Given the multiple goals of the SCSEP program, it is not surprising that local sites expressed differing perspectives on which performance measures are most important or most meaningful as indicators of the program's success. Most program administrators in the process study sites asserted that employment outcomes (either entered employment or entered employment combined with employment retention and earnings) are paramount in measuring the program's success. Several other program administrators responded that community service and employment are both important, and several additional program administrators relayed that all the performance measures are equally valuable as indicators of the program's success. These varied opinions suggest that local sites hold differing views on whether SCSEP is primarily an employment and training program or a program that can simultaneously encompass income support, community service, and employment-focused objectives.

⁹⁵ ETA made no incremental increases to the performance goals set for grantees whose performance was at or above the national average between Program Years 2010 and 2011 because of the multiple challenges that grantees and local programs have faced during Program Year 2011. Grantees performing below the average had a continuous improvement increment designed to move them toward the national average. Modest continuous improvement increments have been restored for Program Year 2012.

In the rest of this chapter, we describe grantee performance levels, the factors project managers think inhibit local project performance levels, the strategies projects use to improve local program performance, and the societal benefits that SCSEP provides that are not taken into account by any of the existing performance measures.

Grantee Performance Levels

SCSEP grantees generally meet the target goals for the program on each of the six core performance measures used to gauge the program’s success. As shown in Exhibit VI-1 below, the average performance across all grantees exceeded the target goal for four of the six core measures for both Program Years 2009 and 2010. The average grantee performance level fell just short of the goal on the entered employment and most-in-need measures in Program Year 2009 but otherwise surpassed all program goals during both years.

**Exhibit VI-1:
Nationwide Performance on Core Measures: Average Across all Grantees**

	Program Year 2009:		Program Year 2010:	
	Goal	Actual Performance	Goal	Actual Performance
Community Service	77%	82%	50%	83%
Entered Employment	47%	46%	43%	48%
Employment Retention	68%	70%	65%	71%
Average Earnings	\$6,229	\$6,900	\$6,650	\$7,633
Service Level	100%	180%	100%	139%
Most-In-Need	2.54	2.53	2.46	2.54

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010) Summary performance information downloaded from http://www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html_docs/GranteePerf.cfm

Individual grantee performance varies considerably. For Program Years 2009 and 2010, most grantees met the 80-percent-of-target-goal calculation—which is the calculation used by ETA to determine a grantee’s success or failure—for all six core measures. While some individual grantees performed within a narrow range of their negotiated goals, other grantees performed well above or below their negotiated targets. Exhibit VI-2 below shows which performance goals grantees had the most difficulty meeting. In Program Years 2009 and 2010, grantees had the greatest difficulty meeting the most-in-need measure. The entered employment, employment

retention, and average earnings measures were also challenging for some grantees. Grantees did not experience as much difficulty meeting the community service or service level measures.⁹⁶

**Exhibit VI-2:
Nationwide Performance on Core Measures: Proportion of Grantees Meeting Goals**

	Program Year 2009:		Program Year 2010:	
	Percent of Grantees Meeting Negotiated Goal	Percent of Grantees Meeting 80% of Negotiated Goal	Percent of Grantees Meeting Negotiated Goal	Percent of Grantees Meeting 80% of Negotiated Goal
Community Service	66%	99%	100%	100%
Entered Employment	47%	79%	71%	82%
Employment Retention	70%	93%	73%	93%
Average Earnings	66%	88%	78%	97%
Service Level	99%	100%	100%	100%
Most-In-Need	39%	85%	38%	91%

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010) Summary performance information downloaded from http://www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html_docs/GranteePerf.cfm

Perceptions about Factors that Inhibit Performance Levels

In the process study sites, we found staff members’ concerns about meeting certain performance targets to be aligned with the performance data presented above. While program administrators at several local sites reported having no difficulty meeting their expected levels of performance, most program administrators said they had experienced challenges in meeting expected performance levels for at least one and sometimes multiple performance measures. Program administrators did not indicate any difficulty meeting target levels for the number of eligible individuals served and the hours of community service employment provided, but they did often struggle to meet the target levels for the three measures related to employment outcomes (entry into unsubsidized employment, retention, and earnings) as well as the number of most-in-need individuals served. Respondents at local sites offered numerous reasons for why they sometimes fall short of their expected levels of performance on these measures. The following discussions

⁹⁶ As noted previously, these goals were set at a low level during Program Years 2009 and 2010.

summarize the feedback provided to the research team by field staff, and have not been independently verified by the evaluators.

Rules for calculating the measures may not fully comport with actual circumstances. Staff members at several local sites report that the rules governing how some performance measures are calculated yield performance levels that are less positive than they believe they should be. This is particularly true for the measure for serving those most-in-need. For example, staff members at one project that serves a significant number of Native American participants explained that many of these participants have both limited English proficiency and low literacy levels, but according to the regulations, only one of these barriers can be counted toward the most-in-need measure. Staff members at another site that serves a large number of ex-offenders lamented that the most-in-need criteria do not cover individuals who struggle with substance abuse issues or who are ex-offenders, despite the obvious barriers to employment faced by these populations. Staff members at a few sites were also troubled by the fact that a participant can exit from the program for reasons outside of the site’s control—by moving or going over the income eligibility limits, for example—and yet not be excluded from the entered-employment measure. Such a participant counts as a negative outcome because he or she does not exit into employment and does not meet any of the excludable criteria such as having a health/medical problem.

Documentation requirements can be challenging to comply with. Staff members at several sites said they found it challenging to track down and document the outcome data required for some of the performance measures. The data collection instructions given to sites recommend that sites verify the employment retention and earnings of recently exited participants through employers first, and then through participants if attempts to reach employers are unsuccessful. However, staff members at several sites relayed that it is difficult to track down and contact some participants for follow-up after they exit the program, especially if they are homeless.⁹⁷ The SPARQ data collection instructions also require local sites to verify that a participant meets a “most-in-need” criterion. Yet, according to staff members at several sites, verification can be hard to obtain. For example, staff members at one site report that they have trouble verifying participants’ low literacy skills because participants are reluctant to admit their deficiencies and testing is too expensive for the program to pay for. Moreover, staff members at other sites mentioned more generally that the amount of paperwork and data validation required to

⁹⁷ According to the *SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, Revision 6*, the U.S. Department of Labor is in the process of seeking access to federal Unemployment Insurance wage records for all of its programs, which would reduce the data-collection burden for individual SCSEP projects. (Charter Oak Group, 2010)

document performance is burdensome and takes time away from providing services to participants.

The depressed local economy may not be fully taken into account. Staff members at many local sites suggest that the local economy has a significant influence on whether or not they are able to meet their expected levels of performance on the employment measures.⁹⁸ Respondents report increasing difficulty meeting the expected levels for these outcomes, particularly over the last several years. In one site located in a very economically depressed area, staff members explain that it has been very difficult for participants to find work because the unemployment rate has remained over ten percent for several years. Staff members at this site also note that participants are facing additional challenges due to the depressed local economy; they pay higher prices for food because no national grocery stores are present in the community and have increasing difficulty accessing social services because the city is closing senior centers and cutting back on bus routes.

The additional challenges of rural geography may not be fully accounted for. Staff members at local sites operating in rural areas suggest that achieving positive employment outcomes is particularly challenging in such locations. Staff members at several sites note that rural areas have fewer employers and fewer job openings, limiting the options for transitioning participants to unsubsidized employment. As a staff member at a SCSEP project that serves a rural area notes, “The closest thing you might see to a job is a Wal-Mart.” Staff members at several other sites also mentioned that the rate of pay in rural areas is often lower than in urban areas, making it difficult to achieve the expected earnings level. According to the program administrator at a rural site, anything above \$10 per hour in that service area is considered “executive pay.” Likewise, staff members at several more sites report that lack of access to public transportation in rural areas creates a considerable barrier to finding employment for participants. Staff members at a site covering both urban and rural areas observe that they perform better in meeting their unsubsidized employment outcomes in areas where participants have access to public transportation.

A large proportion of participants have multiple employment barriers. In addition to the barriers that most participants face as a result of erratic work histories, outdated skill sets, or age discrimination, some participants also have additional barriers that make it even harder for them

⁹⁸ The national SCSEP program office does factor economic conditions into the proposed performance goals at the grantee level, and many grantees successfully negotiated for lower goals based on local conditions. Grantees may or may not negotiate different goals for those sub-recipients most impacted.

to obtain employment.⁹⁹ Some of the common additional barriers that sites encounter among participants are physical and mental health issues, homelessness, and language and cultural barriers. When a local project serves a relatively large number of participants with such barriers, it can face greater challenges in meeting its employment goals than other projects. One program administrator who serves a sizable immigrant population describes participants' language and cultural barriers as one of the most significant obstacles the project faces in meeting its performance expectations. As the program administrator explains, it takes extra time to "polish these individuals" by putting them through extra workshops and helping them to acclimate to the business culture in the United States. Further, staff members at many local projects felt successful if they helped place a participant with multiple employment barriers into any unsubsidized job. Staff members suggested that, except in unique cases, it was unrealistic to place such participants into jobs paying much above the minimum wage.

Some participants are reluctant to transition to unsubsidized employment. Respondents at some sites report that a particular performance challenge arises from the fact that a number of participants are not serious about wanting to transition into unsubsidized employment.¹⁰⁰ Despite staff efforts to be clear in their marketing of SCSEP as a time-limited job training program, staff members at multiple sites report that a significant sub-group of participants (as many as 30 percent in some sites) are not interested in finding an unsubsidized job. Staff members at one local project say that some participants want to work in their community service assignments for as long as possible and then retire (generally by taking early Social Security). Staff members at another site say that many participants come to see their host agencies as their employers and their assignments as jobs and do not want to transition away from the comfort of their host agency positions. In addition, participants are often reluctant to transition to unsubsidized employment if it will jeopardize their eligibility for any essential public benefits they are receiving while participating in SCSEP. Staff members at one local project explain that participants at times face hard choices between taking employment and maintaining eligibility for subsidized housing.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ The national SCSEP program office does factor high most-in-need rates into proposed performance goals at the grantee level in acknowledgement that participants with multiple barriers are harder to serve. Grantees may or may not negotiate different goals for those sub-recipients most impacted.

¹⁰⁰ The national SCSEP program office has set the entered employment goals for SCSEP lower than other employment and training programs in part to acknowledge that the target population for this program faces challenging circumstances and choices regarding economic self-sufficiency.

¹⁰¹ Wages from SCSEP participation are not counted as income for the purposes of maintaining eligibility for subsidized housing while wages from unsubsidized employment are counted as income.

A reliance on participant staff members can limit service capacity. Several sites indicate that their reliance on participants to staff the SCSEP program can pose a challenge for meeting performance levels. One project administrator comments that many participant staff members do not have the credentials or relevant work experience—either in case management or workforce development—that she would be looking for if she were to hire professional staff for the same roles and feels that the overall quality of the program services suffers as a result. Project managers in several sites also identify the frequent turnover of participant staff members as an issue that has made it difficult to meet performance measures. One program administrator explained that he has had particular problems with staff quality since durational limits kicked in; previously, his SCSEP office had been staffed by participants who had been with him for many years, knew how to run the program, and knew how to place people in good community service assignments. Another program administrator made a similar observation, noting that “this year is volatile” because many participant staff members will be reaching their durational limits and leaving the program. A third program manager said that as a result of participant staff turnover, she is always in “staff training mode.”

The perceived tension between the entered-employment measure and the service to most-in-need measure can be difficult to resolve. Respondents at a significant number of local sites express some frustration in attempting to meet their entered-employment goal while at the same time achieving their expected level on the measure to serve those most in need. Respondents at a number of projects say that they are constantly trying to balance performance on these two measures. Staff members at one project say they feel torn between the goal of placing a high proportion of exiters into unsubsidized employment and the goal of serving the most-in-need. To meet the entered-employment goal, they feel pressured to focus services on participants who are close to being job-ready and are engaged in the job search process; to meet the “most-in-need” goal, they must prioritize participants with multiple barriers who are not close to being job ready and thus require more assistance. Likewise, a program administrator in another local project feels that the tension between the two measures has resulted in mixed messages from both their grantee and ETA. The program administrator explained, “On the one hand [we are being told that] we need to get our numbers up, we need to place people...and on the other hand we [are being told that we] need to be (the new buzz word) kinder and gentler with people...” She appealed for a clearer message from the top about how to balance program priorities.

Strategies Used to Improve Performance Levels

While respondents at local sites identify various factors that they say make it difficult for them to meet their expected levels of performance, they also are able to describe a number of different strategies they have developed to improve their performance levels. These strategies fall into

two categories: (1) strategies to improve overall program performance, and (2) strategies to improve performance on the employment outcomes.

Strategies to Increase Overall Program Performance

Train and support participant staff members. Many local sites rely on participants to help administer SCSEP services. Because participant staff members are so important to program operations, program managers at several sites focus on training these individuals so that they can provide the best service possible, seeing this as a strategy that is essential to improving their local sites' overall program performance. In training participant staff members, permanent staff members at these sites put a particular focus on SCSEP's performance measurement system and how it works, saying that it is important to help participant staff members understand what outcome measures the site is being held responsible for, why meeting the expected levels of performance on the outcome measures is important, and how their specific job duties can contribute to the site's positive performance. This training generally occurs during staff meetings. A program administrator in one project explained that it is particularly important for the project managers to hold weekly conference calls with participant staff members who are stationed in outlying counties so that they are all receiving the same program messages on a regular basis, even though they are not working alongside regular employees in the project's central office. Managers at several projects also try to motivate participant staff members to focus on performance through team-building exercises. One project offers a reward, such as a lunch or a pizza party for all staff members, if the local project meets certain goals.

Provide a supportive environment for participants. Respondents at numerous local sites say that providing a supportive environment for participants leads to higher overall program performance. These respondents believe that participants will work harder to reach their goals if they feel comfortable with staff members and have a sense that staff members care about them and are invested in their success. Staff members within these projects attempt to evoke these feelings by building relationships, providing support and encouragement, and creating a family-like atmosphere. One program administrator explained: "We owe a lot of our success to pushing them [participants] all the time—making them feel like they are needed. They're not just a number here; they are wanted, and the staff cares for them." Another program administrator gave the site visitor a similar assessment: "We get invested; we even have lunch with some former participants. We think of participants more like acquaintances."

Strategies to Increase Performance on Employment Measures

Strive for a good program fit. As discussed previously, many local sites find it difficult to meet their expected levels of performance on the entered employment measure while at the same time meeting their expected levels for serving participants who are most in need and have

multiple barriers to employment. Consequently, staff members at some sites explain that they try to keep both measures in mind as they are considering whether an applicant would be a good fit for the program. While staff members do give priority to applicants who fit the most-in-need criteria, they also think about which applicants have the potential to work successfully in a community service position and eventually transition to unsubsidized employment. As one program administrator summarized, “The performance system does play a role in who we keep in the program and who we refer to other places.” For example, if an applicant meets the most-in-need criteria but has some severe disabilities that can be better addressed by another agency, staff members at this site will often refer the applicant to that other agency for receipt of needed social services, rather than enrolling them immediately in SCSEP.¹⁰²

Communicate clearly with participants about program goals. Once participants are enrolled in SCSEP, some local sites make a point to remind them about the program’s training and employment goals on a regular basis. In particular, staff members at several sites emphasize to participants that the program’s services are designed to prepare them for eventual transition to unsubsidized employment. Staff members at one project find the quarterly participant meetings they hold to be a good place to communicate this message, especially for SCSEP participants who have been with the program for years and tend to view the program more as a subsidy than a training opportunity. Along the same lines, staff members at another site indicate that they take every opportunity right from the beginning of program participation to “hammer into” their participants the value and importance of continual job searching. Project staff members at this site remind participants about the program’s employment goals at the end of each pay period when participants turn in their required job search forms. Despite their best efforts at clearly communicating the program’s goals, staff members at several sites expressed frustration that there are nevertheless some participants who have little desire to transition to unsubsidized employment. Staff members at one project refer to such participants as “homesteaders” and, given limited staff resources, invest less time in those individuals than in participants who are making good-faith efforts to find employment.

Use assessments and service planning strategically. Respondents at several local projects say that they emphasize the use of assessments and IEPs as strategic tools to prepare participants for the transition to unsubsidized employment. For example, one local project uses the online assessment and service planning software provided by its national grantee because the package includes concrete occupational information. Using this software results in an IEP that specifies

¹⁰² Although some projects do not feel like they have the expertise to serve individuals with severe disabilities, a number of other projects have been successful in finding community service assignments and jobs for participants with emotional difficulties or serious physical disabilities, such as blindness.

the job skills and proficiency levels required for the occupation of interest to the participant and a service plan that includes detailed training objectives (e.g., “training in Microsoft Word or Excel”) instead of broader, vaguer goals (e.g., “office skills training”). Another site has implemented a policy requiring participants to undergo a rigorous battery of assessment tests upon program entry, designed to give both participants and staff members more specific information to support the development of a targeted training plan with a realistic employment goal. The battery of assessments used by this site includes a basic skills test (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System or CASAS), a career aptitude test (The Career Ability Placement Survey or CAPS), and a career interest test (Career Occupational Preference System or COPS). Several other sites have increased the frequency with which they update service plans and check in with participants to ensure that participants’ activities are in fact leading toward employment goals. Staff members at one site say that they now conduct IEP updates, reassessments, and host agency visits every three months in order to determine if the training participants are receiving as part of their community service assignment is meeting their needs “before it really wastes time for them.”

Emphasize the training aspect of the program. Respondents at many local sites report that they are placing an increased emphasis on the training aspect of SCSEP. Staff members at several sites say they are trying to “re-brand” the community service assignment as a training ground or stepping-stone to future employment rather than simply a temporary employment placement or an opportunity to provide community service. At one site, staff members have shifted to calling the community service assignment a “community training assignment.” Moreover, this site has increased the frequency with which they rotate participants through “community training assignments” so that participants have the opportunity to learn a variety of skills and to lessen the chance that participants will become too comfortable in one assignment and begin to view it as a job. At a few other sites, staff members have spent considerable energy making sure host agencies understand their responsibility to provide quality training beyond basic skill development. For example, while host agencies sponsoring a community service assignment in a janitorial position would likely train a participant on proper techniques for mopping and vacuuming, staff members at one site encourage host agencies to add more specific skill training, such as education in the use of “green” chemicals, to these basic skills. Similarly, at another site, a host agency supervisor described planning a sequence of activities for one of his SCSEP participants that provided the participant with training in using Microsoft Access and then assigned her to a work project that involved using Access.

As described in more detail in Chapter V, numerous projects arrange for SCSEP participants to receive training outside of the community service assignment so that participants can learn additional skills. Many sites offer participants the opportunity to attend training to improve their basic computer literacy as well as to learn more advanced computer skills. Other sites offer

training on financial literacy, generational diversity in the workplace, personality differences in the workplace, and healthy living. Still other sites coordinate occupational training for participants, such as preparation to work in the home health care or customer service industries. However, due to recent budget cuts, sites were beginning to scale back on these training opportunities.

Provide job placement assistance proactively. While local sites generally provide basic job search assistance to participants, numerous sites also engage in proactive strategies to more closely link participants with job opportunities. As described in more detail in Chapter V, these strategies include networking with local employers, encouraging host agencies to hire SCSEP workers, and providing job clubs at which SCSEP staff members may provide job leads, conduct mock interviews, or bring in employers as guest speakers. During the site visits, staff members at a number of local projects asserted that the structure and motivation provided by job clubs is especially effective in helping participants transition to employment.

Unmeasured Outcomes

In addition to the outcomes for which local SCSEP sites are currently held accountable through the performance measurement system, SCSEP provides other important benefits to program participants, to host agencies, and to the larger community. In particular, SCSEP bolsters participants' economic security and physical and emotional well-being and helps public and non-profit agencies provide vital services to the larger community. Respondents at local sites expressed frustration that the existing set of core performance measures does not adequately capture these benefits of SCSEP.

Benefits to Participants

Staff members we talked with at most local sites told us that they observe a significant improvement in the social and emotional well-being of most participants over the course of their engagement with the SCSEP program. Staff members at numerous sites described participants who enter the program with deflated levels of self-esteem and self-worth after struggling with extended periods of unemployment and unproductive job search efforts and begin to experience increased confidence levels through SCSEP. One program administrator stated that she regularly hears anecdotes from participants along the lines of "I was at rock bottom when I came in, and the program helped pick me up." Staff members at many sites say that participants report having gained a renewed sense of purpose and personal value from their time in SCSEP. "Some [SCSEP participants] don't care about the money," said one staff member, "they just need to feel like they belong, that someone needs them." At a different local project, a staff member opined, "They want to become part of society, to survive, to feel wanted, to make a difference." Staff members at several sites also mentioned that some participants are struggling with depression

when they enter but throughout the program become less depressed and less isolated. One program administrator noted that quite often participants are “depressed and feel beaten by the system” so staff members try to lift participants up and enjoy “watching them blossom” as a result. Finally, staff members at several sites explained that the peer support participants receive from one another is a source of valuable social engagement and motivation that is different from what staff members can provide. These staff observations about SCSEP’s benefits are supported by customer satisfaction data.

Besides enhancing the psychological and emotional well-being of participants, SCSEP also helps to improve participants’ physical health and economic security. Staff members at different sites say that as a consequence of their engagement with SCSEP, some participants visit the doctor less frequently, lose weight, and become more effective at getting medical needs met. Further, respondents explained that many participants experience improved economic security from SCSEP, either because of the wages they earn from working at a community service assignment or through connections to public benefits or community resources facilitated by SCSEP staff members. Staff members at various sites gave examples of how participants are better able to pay for medications, resolve situations of homelessness, receive clothing vouchers, obtain food assistance, and get medical care through subsidized health insurance as a result of SCSEP’s assistance.

Benefits to Host Agencies and the Community

Respondents at many host agencies express a profound appreciation for the additional labor that SCSEP participants provide to them free of cost (although host agencies do invest resources in training and supervising participants). Moreover, host agency respondents are quick to explain that the benefits the host agency receives from sponsoring a SCSEP participant include an increased organizational capacity to reach the people and the communities they serve. For example, in one local area, SCSEP participants have helped to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio in child care centers and, in another host agency, were trained and served as financial counselors to help meet the staggering demand for providing assistance to homeowners facing foreclosure. Particularly during the recent recession, when public agencies were experiencing budgets cuts and hiring freezes at the same time that non-profit agencies saw increased demand for their services, the additional labor contributed by SCSEP participants was vital to host agencies’ continued ability to provide services. An administrator at an area agency on aging suggested, “We couldn’t have survived without the [SCSEP] program.” Similarly, an administrator of a homeless shelter stated, “I don’t know where I would be without SCSEP.”

Respondents at host agencies report that if they had to get along without SCSEP participants, they would develop alternative staffing arrangements, but these alternatives are all less appealing than working with SCSEP participants. Some host agency supervisors said that the duties

performed by SCSEP participants would be absorbed by the agency's regular unsubsidized employees, which would result in lower levels of service. Staff members at one assisted-living facility, for example, reported that without SCSEP participants, staff members would have to spend more time on administrative work and would have less time available for attending to residents' needs. Other host agency supervisors stated that they would seek out volunteers, including community members, college students, or participants in other employment and training programs such as vocational rehabilitation programs or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Yet, all of these host agency supervisors preferred SCSEP participants to other types of volunteers for several reasons. First, host agency supervisors note that SCSEP participants can work more frequently and on a more regular schedule than most other volunteers. Second, host agency supervisors consider SCSEP participants to be more dedicated than some other volunteers because they are paid wages and treat their responsibilities more like jobs. Third, host agency supervisors prefer SCSEP participants to younger volunteers because they are more reliable (they show up on time and don't call in sick very often), have a strong work ethic, and care about doing their jobs well. For other host agencies, the absence of SCSEP participants would result in the agency providing fewer services. For example, a supervisor at a social service organization reported that the agency would have to be open fewer days, while a One-Stop Career Center supervisor indicated that the agency would not be able to provide as much individual assistance to help persons with language barriers. In an extreme case, a supervisor at a senior center managed by a city recreation department said they would have to close their doors if they lost their SCSEP participants.

Respondents at host agencies report that having older workers as part of their staffing teams provides value beyond the additional labor. For some host agencies that serve an older adult population, such as area agencies on aging or senior centers, having SCSEP participants on their staff is more desirable than having younger workers or volunteers. Respondents at these agencies believe that SCSEP participants are more interested in, more sensitive to, and better able to connect with the older adults they serve because of their similar ages. Even host agency respondents whose organizations serve younger clientele appreciated having SCSEP participants working for them. Respondents at these host agencies said that SCSEP participants provide mentoring and wisdom to younger persons with less life experience. A host agency supervisor at a small college described how their current SCSEP participant, though in an administrative role, acts as a "quasi-parent" and is "patient and calm" with the students who have few life skills; permanent college staff members have little time to counsel such students. A supervisor at another host agency that provides work readiness training to a younger population made a similar remark: "Young people need [the] wisdom that the 'seasoned' can bring. Many times the seniors attach themselves to the younger people. They provide a sense of perspective like 'you'll get through this, and it's going to be okay.'"

Key Findings on Performance Management

Performance Measures

- Grantees do not negotiate expected performance levels with their sub-recipients. Instead, they generally pass down the grantee performance goals that they have negotiated with ETA.
- Most program administrators asserted that employment outcomes (either entered employment or entered employment combined with employment retention and earnings) are paramount in measuring the program's success.
- A somewhat smaller number of local program managers believe that employment measures and other performance measures are equally important.

Factors that Influence Local Performance Levels

Project managers identify several key factors that may impede their efforts to meet their performance goals:

- The statutory measures of employment barriers do not always account for characteristics that make some individuals particularly difficult to place into employment (e.g., ex-offender status, history of substance abuse, or mental health conditions).
- It is challenging to validate some of the most-in-need criterion as well as track down participants and document outcome data, particularly for participants who are homeless.
- Lack of public transportation is a major barrier in placing participants into jobs.
- In depressed urban and rural economies, the lack of available job openings can make it extremely difficult to help participants transition to unsubsidized employment. In addition, rural areas must contend with fewer employers and lower wages.
- Participants with multiple barriers to employment can be particularly challenging to place into unsubsidized employment.
- Some participants are not serious about wanting to transition to unsubsidized jobs.
- Most projects rely on participant staff, many of whom do not have experience in case management or workforce development and turnover more frequently due to durational limits.
- Many projects experience tension between meeting the entered employment goal and at the same time prioritizing services to individuals who are most in need.

Local Strategies to Improve Performance Levels

To improve project performance on a variety of measures, project managers use the following strategies:

- Train participant staff—particularly around the issue of program performance—and provide a supportive, encouraging environment for all participants.

- Make sure that each participant is a good fit for the program—and that pressing social-service needs are being addressed.
- Emphasize to all participants that the goal of the program is unsubsidized employment.
- Conduct comprehensive assessments and develop detailed IEPs that set specific training goals, make host agency assignments that are a good match to the participant’s goals, and monitor host agency and participant progress in furthering IEP goals.
- Arrange a broad range of training activities for participants outside the community service assignment, including training in computer skills and other topics such as financial literacy and healthy living.
- Provide proactive job-search assistance through job clubs and instruction in effective job search methods.

Outcomes Not Referenced by the Current Core Performance Measures

Project managers emphasize that the SCSEP program yields additional benefits not adequately captured by the current core performance measures. Perceived benefits to participants include the following:

- *Improvements in participants’ social and emotional well-being.* Participants often enter the program with deflated levels of self-esteem and self-worth after struggling with extended periods of unemployment, but the program helps participants rebuild social supports and individual confidence at the same time that it helps build occupational skills.
- *Improvements in physical health and well-being.* Being a participant in SCSEP often helps individuals get their medical needs met and encourages them to adopt healthier lifestyles.
- *Improvements in economic security.* As a result of the wages they earn or their improved connections to additional community resources or benefits, SCSEP participants are better able to pay for medications, resolve situations of homelessness, receive clothing vouchers, and obtain food assistance.

At a time when public and non-profit agency budgets are shrinking, SCSEP participants are also making meaningful contributions to the community by increasing the capacity of host agencies to address community needs. Specifically, participants are perceived as providing the following benefits:

- Participants expand the capacity of host agencies to provide services by assisting in the delivery of direct services or by providing administrative support (which frees up more time for regular employees to provide direct services).

- Participants provide a high level of maturity, dependability, and empathy with clients of all ages, which makes using them a more highly valued staffing option for host agencies than recruiting college students or other volunteer workers.

SECTION THREE: PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Section Three summarizes quantitative and qualitative findings and makes several recommendations intended to build on the strengths of the program and improve the responsiveness of SCSEP services to the needs of participants.

Chapter VII describes the outcomes achieved by SCSEP projects and grantees during Program Years 2009 and 2010 and identifies factors that are associated with differences in employment outcomes. Chapter VIII describes customer satisfaction outcomes, as measured by an annual customer survey as well as by customer focus groups and informal discussions conducted as part of the process study site visits. Chapter IX draws on both the qualitative and quantitative findings to summarize the key features of the SCSEP program, discuss tensions that arise from contradictions between the multiple program objectives and structure, identify effective practices and make recommendations about how to improve the program in the future.

VII. POST-SCSEP EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

The SCSEP program has the dual goals of engaging seniors in useful community service activities and moving them into unsubsidized employment once they have improved their skills by completing a community service assignment. In this chapter, we examine the program’s success with realizing the latter goal. While our primary focus is on the entry into unsubsidized employment, we also examine workers’ starting hourly wages and earnings.

Employment Outcomes for Included Exiters

The national performance goals for the SCSEP program are adjusted every program year. If overall economic conditions are favorable, they are adjusted upward to provide an incentive for continuous improvement. If economic conditions are poor, however—particularly as indicated by the unemployment rate—the goals may be adjusted downward. This was the case for Program Year 2009, when the national goal for the entered employment rate performance measure was reduced from the 54 percent goal set for PY 2008 down to 47 percent, in recognition of the high unemployment rate.¹⁰³ The 47 percent goal for the entered employment rate was lowered again, to 43 percent, for Program Year 2010. As is the case elsewhere in this report, none of the employment performance measures presented in this chapter consider outcomes for participants with excluded exits.¹⁰⁴

We found that 46 percent of included exiters in Program Year 2009 and 47 percent of included exiters in Program Year 2010 had entered into unsubsidized employment in the first quarter after program exit (Table F-15). Included exiters are defined as having “entered employment” according to the Common Measures established for the SCSEP program if they are employed in the first quarter after exiting SCSEP. Since the rates of employment were very similar across the

¹⁰³ http://www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html_docs/GranteePerf.cfm, accessed 4/4/12.

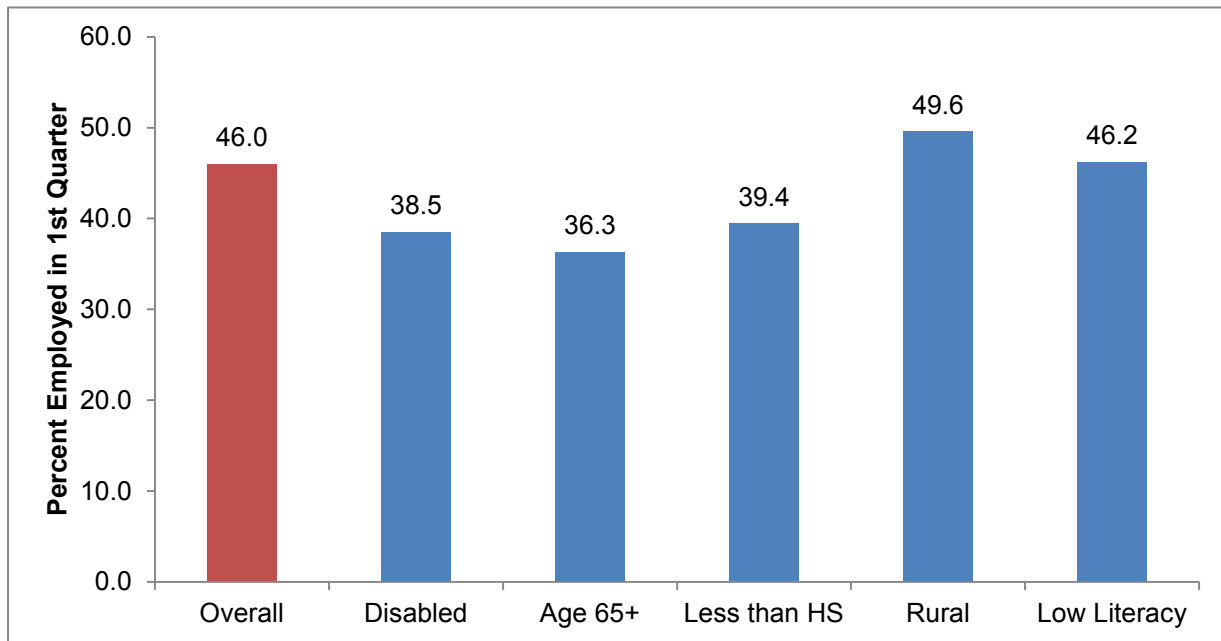
¹⁰⁴ Recall that “excluded” exits refer to those who are excluded from the performance measures because they were unable to be employed due to death, ill health, the need to care for a family member, or other reasons. As described in Chapter III, twenty-nine percent of SCSEP exiters during Program Years 2009 and 2010 were excluded from the employment performance measures because they were not available for employment. “Included” exits refer to exits that are included in the performance measures.

two program years, the remainder of this chapter discusses outcomes for the universe of excitors in Program Years 2009 and 2010 combined (employment outcomes by program year are reported in the Table F-15).

While the overall entered employment rate for included excitors is of interest—it shows that SCSEP met its national goal in PY 2010 and fell just short in PY 2009—valuable information is gained by examining the entered employment rates of different demographic groups. Although the SPARQ data differentiate between a wide variety of demographic characteristics, in this chapter (as in Chapter III), we focus on a particular subset of characteristics: having a disability, being 65 and older, having a low educational attainment, residing in a rural area, and having low literacy skills. These characteristics cover a broad spectrum of the typical challenges faced by SCSEP participants and were meant to present a comprehensive consideration of these challenges.

As shown in Exhibit VII-1, participants with a disability were less likely to enter unsubsidized employment. Only 39 percent of participants with disabilities were employed in the first quarter after exit, compared to 46 percent of all SCSEP excitors. Workers more advanced in years and workers without a high school diploma were also less likely to be employed. Two other potential barriers, living in a rural area and having a low level of literacy, did not appear to be a limitation, as these groups had rates of employment similar to that of the average SCSEP participant.

**Exhibit VII-1
Employment of Included Exitters, by Select Participant Characteristics**



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

Percent employed is out of 55,639 included exits total.

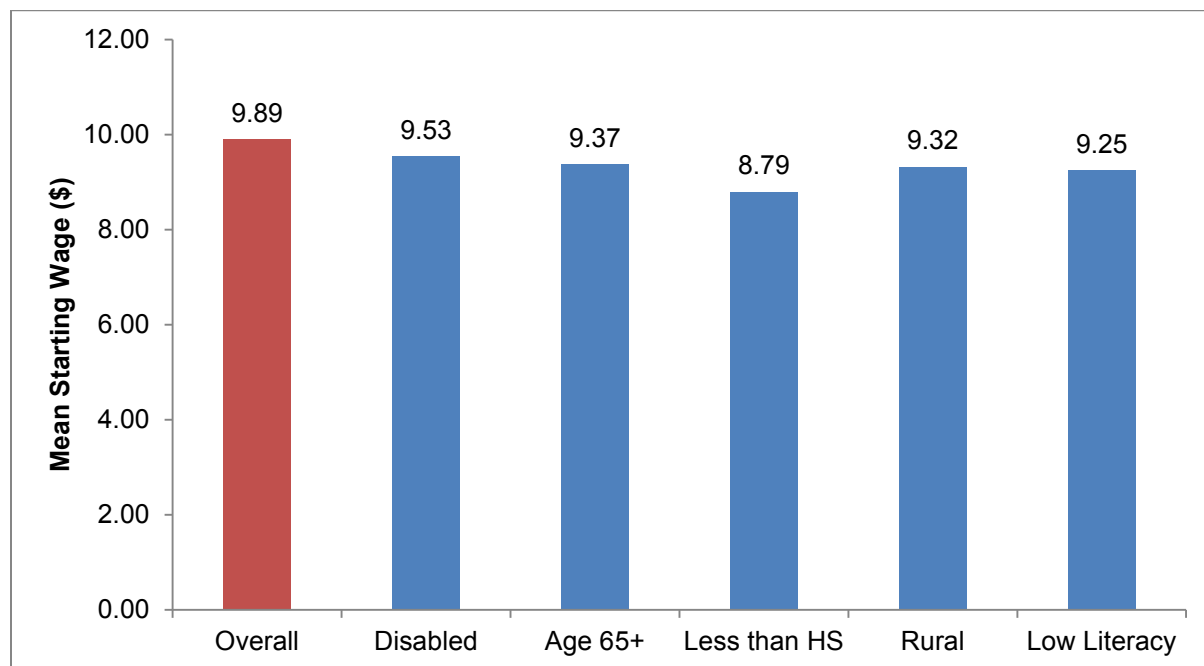
While an initial placement into unsubsidized employment is important, the participant’s economic well-being will also depend on the hourly wage, the number of hours worked per week, and the length of employment. Examining these other employment parameters is consistent with the program’s aim to increase the economic self-sufficiency of its participants. The SPARQ database provides data on both the initial starting wage in the first quarter after exit, and the average earnings in the second and third quarters after exit for those who are still employed at some point during the third quarter after exit.¹⁰⁵ Average earnings during the second and third quarter after exit (i.e. earnings over a six-month period) for individuals who retained employment is also one of the Common Measures used to evaluate the performance of SCSEP programs. One important limitation of this measure is that it only includes the included exitters who were employed in the third quarter after exit.

SCSEP participants with an unsubsidized employment placement had an average starting hourly wage of \$9.89. Participants in all five categories of disadvantage—those with disabilities, older

¹⁰⁵ Hourly wages were imputed for outliers with reported wages that were below \$4 per hour or above \$40 per hour. The regression-based imputation procedure used information on a participant’s gender, age, race, education, occupation category, and geographic location.

than 65, without a high school diploma, living in rural areas, and with low literacy—received lower average starting wages (Exhibit VII-2). Participants without a high school diploma had a starting wage of \$8.79, more than a dollar per hour less than the average starting wage (Exhibit VII-2). It is notable that even though participants in rural areas and those with low literacy did not have lower placement rates than the average SCSEP participant, they did have lower starting wages.

Exhibit VII-2
Mean Starting Hourly Wage for Included Exitters, by Select Participant Characteristics

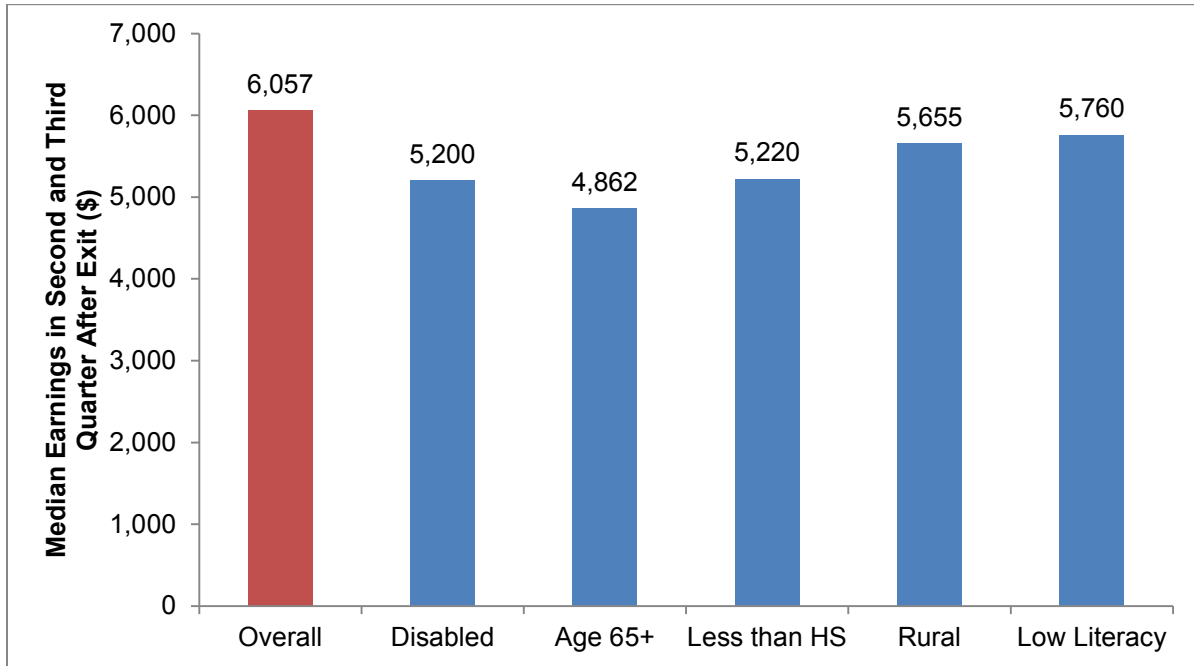


Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

Mean starting wage is based on 25,816 included exits.

The data on average earnings for those still employed in the third quarter following program exit tell a similar story. For purposes of analysis, we present data not on mean earnings, however, but on median earnings. This is because the mean earnings for the different demographic groups we are examining are somewhat higher than the median earnings due to the presence of a few higher earners in each category. As shown in Exhibit VII-3, the median SCSEP participant still employed at the end of the third quarter had earned \$6,057 over the previous six months, while workers with any of the five barriers to employment had lower median earnings. Workers with a disability, those without a high school diploma, and those 65 and older had median earnings that were more than \$800 lower than those of the median post-SCSEP worker.

**Exhibit VII-3
Median Earnings in Second and Third Quarters after Exit, by Select Participant Characteristics**



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

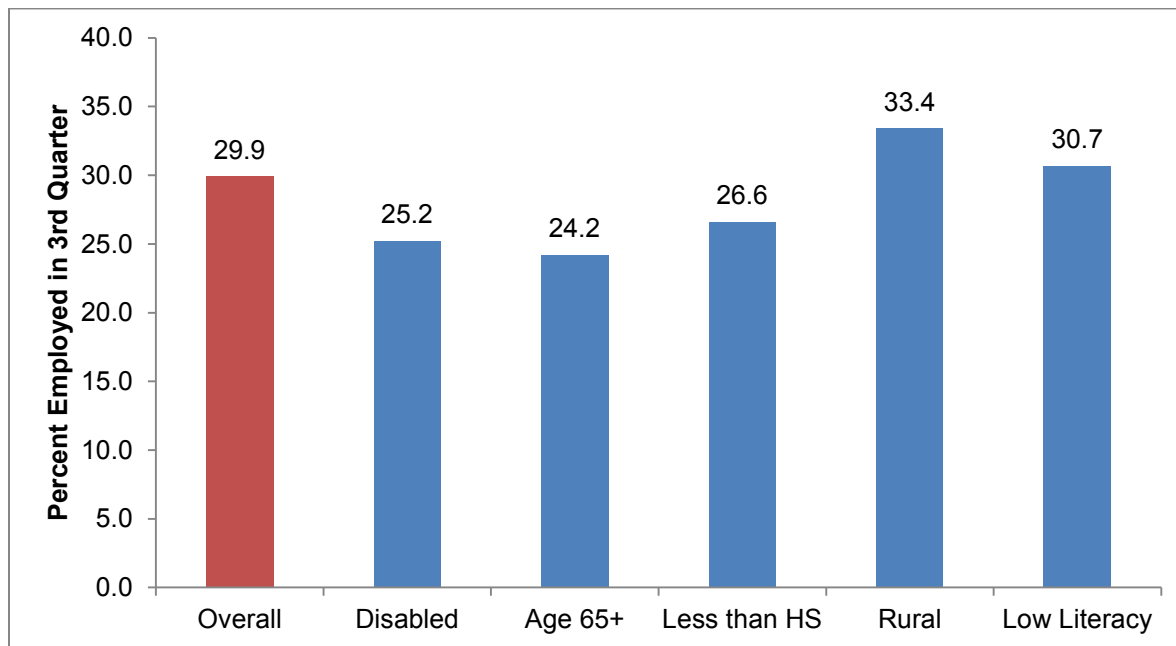
Median earnings is based on 16,420 included exits.

The observed difference in median earnings for workers with barriers to employment was magnified by a difference in percentage of workers who were employed during the third quarter after exit. We only observed earnings for the participants who found a job, were still employed in the third quarter after exit, and were successfully tracked by the program.¹⁰⁶ The SCSEP participants with disabilities, those who are older, and those with lower levels of education fared worse at each stage—they were less likely to have an unsubsidized employment placement, and they were less likely to be employed in the third quarter (Exhibit VII-4).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ On average, 85 percent of exiters employed in the first quarter after exit were successfully tracked in the second quarter. Participants whose employment outcomes were unknown because they were not successfully tracked were assumed to be unemployed and their earnings were recorded as missing.

¹⁰⁷ The percentage of all included exiters who were employed in the third quarter after exit should not be confused with ETA's core performance measure for employment retention, which measures the proportion of those employed during the first quarter after exit who are also employed during the second and third quarters after exit. The national performance measure of employment retention is shown in Exhibit VI-1 in Chapter VI.

Exhibit VII-4
Employment in Third Quarter after Exit, by Select Participant Characteristics



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

Percent employed is out of 55,193 exits that are eligible in the third quarter after exit.

Variation in Employment Outcomes Across Sub-recipients and Grantees

Underlying the overall job placement rate of 46 percent, there was substantial variation across both sub-recipients and grantees. As shown in Exhibit VII-5, ten percent of sub-recipients had entered-employment rates below 18 percent, while the top 10 percent of sub-recipients had entered employment rates that exceeded 69 percent. (More detailed data are presented in Tables F-16 and F-17; these show the distribution of employment outcomes across sub-recipients and grantees, respectively. In both tables, each row shows the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentile of the distribution.) This wide variation across sub-recipients is discussed further in a later section of this chapter.

We also observed substantial variation across sub-recipients in the starting hourly wage and quarterly earnings of the participants they placed in employment (Exhibit VII-5). The lowest-performing 10 percent of sub-recipients achieved an average starting wage of \$8.18 or less, compared to an average starting wage of \$12.10 or more for the top-performing 10 percent of sub-recipients. In terms of median third-quarter earnings, the performance of the sub-recipient at the 90th percentile was more than twice as high as the level achieved by the sub-recipient at the tenth percentile of the distribution.

**Exhibit VII-5
Variation in Employment Outcomes Across Sub-recipients**

	10th Percentile Sub-recipient	Median Sub-recipient	90th Percentile Sub-recipient
Percent Employed in 1 st Quarter after Exit	17.6	43.7	69.6
Average Starting Hourly Wage	\$8.18	\$9.85	\$12.10
Median Earnings in the 3 rd Quarter after Exit	\$1,905	\$3,120	\$4,665

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
Percentiles of sub-recipients out of 618 sub-recipients total

Many factors could contribute to this sizable variation in employment outcomes across sub-recipients. These include variation in service delivery, differences in program practices, differences in participant populations, differences in local economic conditions, and differences in geographic location. With the SPARQ data, we were limited in the factors that we could examine. We had almost no information on service delivery or program practices and were limited to examining differences in participant populations, local economic conditions, geographic locations, and sub-recipient features.

Sub-recipients associated with a national grantee had a somewhat higher entered-employment rate in the first quarter after exit than did state sub-recipients (48 percent compared to 41 percent). The employment rate also varied by the size and urbanicity of the sub-recipient (Table F-18). Large- and medium-sized sub-recipients had higher rates of employment (48 and 46 percent, respectively) than did small sub-recipients. Small sub-recipients, defined here as sub-recipients with 50 or fewer funded community service positions, had an employment rate of 39 percent. Sub-recipients in rural and mixed rural-urban areas had higher rates of employment (52 and 50 percent, respectively) than did urban sub-recipients (43 percent).

Unlike the employment rate, the starting hourly wage of employed SCSEP participants did not vary across state and national sub-recipients, nor across sub-recipients of different sizes (Table F-18). We did find variation in the starting wages based on the geographic area of the sub-recipient. Sub-recipients in urban areas had an average starting wage of \$10.31, compared to an average starting wage of \$9.14 in rural areas. These differences in wages for SCSEP participants are likely consistent with the overall differences in wages between urban and rural areas.

Associations among Employment Outcomes and Characteristics of Participants and Sub-recipients

The SCSEP Evaluation was not designed to measure the impacts of services on employment outcomes or the causal relationship between program characteristics and employment outcomes. We do not know what would have happened to SCSEP participants in the absence of the

program. Yet, it is still valuable to use a regression model to look at the associations among post-SCSEP employment and participant characteristics, local economic conditions, service receipt, and sub-recipient characteristics, even though this analysis cannot establish causal connections. If certain factors are associated with more positive outcomes, they may suggest ideas to examine in future studies.

We used an individual-level regression model to examine the relationships between post-SCSEP employment and each of the following:

1. participant characteristics, including those that are barriers to employment,
2. the type of community service assignment, and
3. the local economic conditions.

The justification for the regression modeling exercise is that the relationships between employment and each of these variables are likely to be influenced by many factors. The models help identify the relationships while controlling for the other factors, such as the local unemployment rate and individual characteristics like age and education, that also influence employment. The model lets us control for the barriers to employment that an individual faces and an individual's community service host agency type.

We are using a fixed effects model to observe the relationships between obtaining employment and personal characteristics after controlling for differences in the sub-recipients. We also adjusted the standard errors to take into consideration that participants are clustered into sub-recipients (see Appendix E for more detail). Since employment is a binary outcome, we use a fixed effects logistic model and present the regression-adjusted employment rate for different subgroups. The regression included two years of program data, so we added controls for the year and quarter of a participant's program exit. The full model results are available in Appendix Table E-1.

We found statistically significant relationships between many participant characteristics and the probability of entering unsubsidized employment (Exhibit VII-6). Women were more likely than men to exit into unsubsidized employment. Black or African American participants and participants in the "other race/ethnicity" category were less likely than White non-Hispanic participants to be employed; their average employment rates were 42 percent and 43 percent, respectively, whereas the average employment rate for White non-Hispanic participants was 47

percent.¹⁰⁸ The average employment rate for Hispanic participants was similar to the employment rate for White non-Hispanic participants.¹⁰⁹

**Exhibit VII-6
Regression-adjusted Mean Employment Rate, by Subgroups**

	Regression-adjusted Employment Rate
Gender	
Female	46.4
Male	42.6**
Race/Ethnicity	
White Non-Hispanic	46.6
Black or African-American Non-Hispanic	41.7 ^{††}
Hispanic	47.3
Other race or ethnicity	42.8 [†]
Age (Years)	
55 – 59	52.8
60 – 64	46.4 ^{††}
65 – 69	39.7 ^{††}
70 – 74	33.1 ^{††}
75+	23.5 ^{††}
Education	
Less than High School	40.8
GED	43.8 ^{††}
High School Graduate	45.4 ^{††}
More than High Graduate	46.6 ^{††}
Other Characteristics	
Previously Enrolled in SCSEP	41.1
First Time Enrolled in SCSEP	45.4**
Coenrolled in other Employment/Education Program	46.1
Not Coenrolled	44.4
Receiving Public Assistance	40.2
Not Receiving Other Public Assistance	48.5**

¹⁰⁸ In this section, we use the term average employment rate to refer to the regression-adjusted probabilities calculated holding all other covariates at their mean values.

¹⁰⁹ These adjusted rates for PY 2009 and PY 2010 are similar to the unconditional employment rates reported in the “SCSEP Analysis of Service to Minority Individuals, PY 2009,” <http://www.charteroakgroup.com/pdf/Preliminary%20SCSEP%20PY%202009%20Minority%20Report%20Vol%20I%20Revised%205%2027%2011.pdf>, downloaded on 8/30/2012.

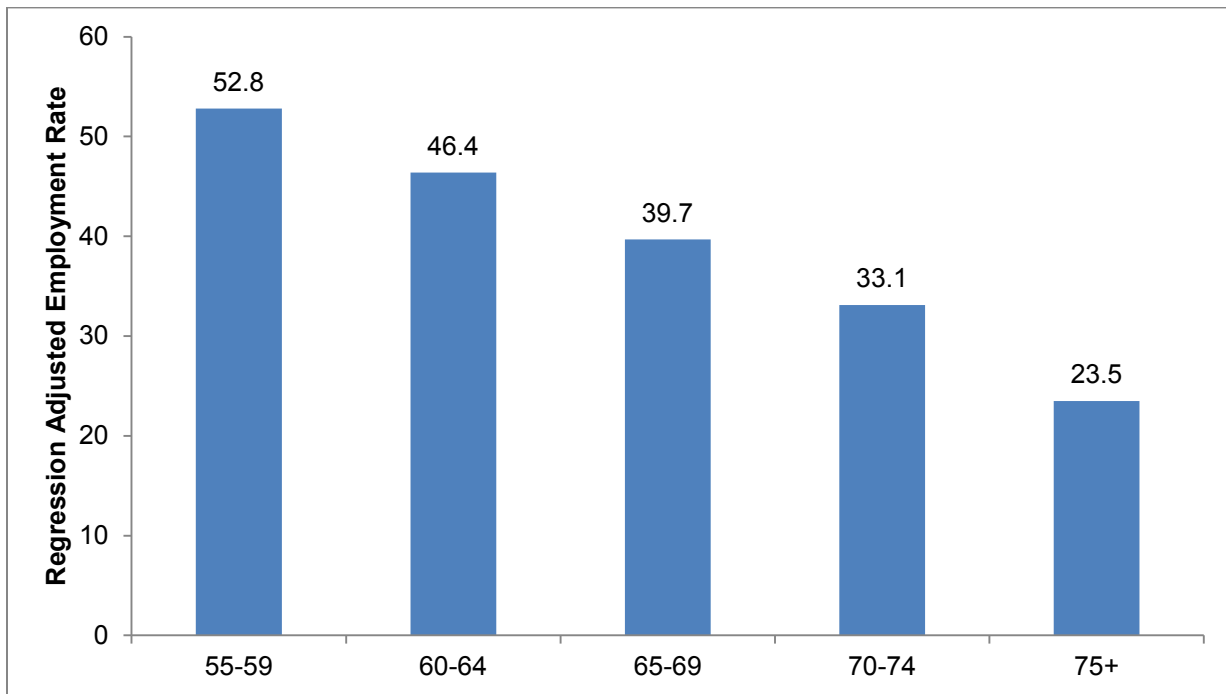
	Regression-adjusted Employment Rate
Family Income at or Below Poverty	44.6
Family Income above Poverty	47.8**
Disabled	37.3
Not Disabled	46.1**
Low Literacy Skills	43.3
Not Low Literacy Skills	45.3*
Limited English Proficiency	45.6
Not Limited English Proficiency	44.9
Rural	44.3
Not Rural	45.2
Veteran or Eligible Spouse	44.7
Not Veteran	45.0
Low Employment Prospects	44.8
Not Low Employment Prospects	45.7
Failed to Find Employment after using WIA Title I	47.0
Not Failed after using WIA Title I	44.6*
Housing Status	
Homeless	35.8
At Risk of Homelessness	47.4††
Not at Risk of Homelessness	44.7††
Unemployment Rate in County During Quarter of Exit (Percent)	
< 7	47.0
7 – 9	46.2
9 – 11	44.6
11+	43.1†
CSA type	
Government CSA	45.2
Non-profit CSA	44.8
N	54,581

*** Difference between subgroup category and the subgroup listed previously is significant at the 0.05/0.01 level, two-tailed test. ††† Difference between subgroup category and first category listed in the subgroup are significant at the .05/.01 level. Regression adjusted probabilities are calculated holding all other covariates at their mean values. The predicted employment rate holding all covariates at their mean values is 44.9 percent.

The relationships between several of the other variables reported in Exhibit VII-6 and the probability of entering unsubsidized employment are both statistically significant and of possible interest to policy makers. We discuss these relationships in some detail below.

The likelihood of being employed after program exit fell sharply with the increasing age of the participant. This relationship is readily apparent in Exhibit VII-7. Controlling for other factors, the average employment rate of participants age 59 and younger was 53 percent. Among the oldest participants, those 75 and older, the average employment rate was only 23 percent, less than half of the average employment rate of the youngest participants. The strong relationship between age and employment may reflect the difficulty older workers face in finding unsubsidized placements or it may partially reflect a weaker desire for employment among the oldest workers.

Exhibit VII-7
Regression-adjusted Employment Rates, by Age

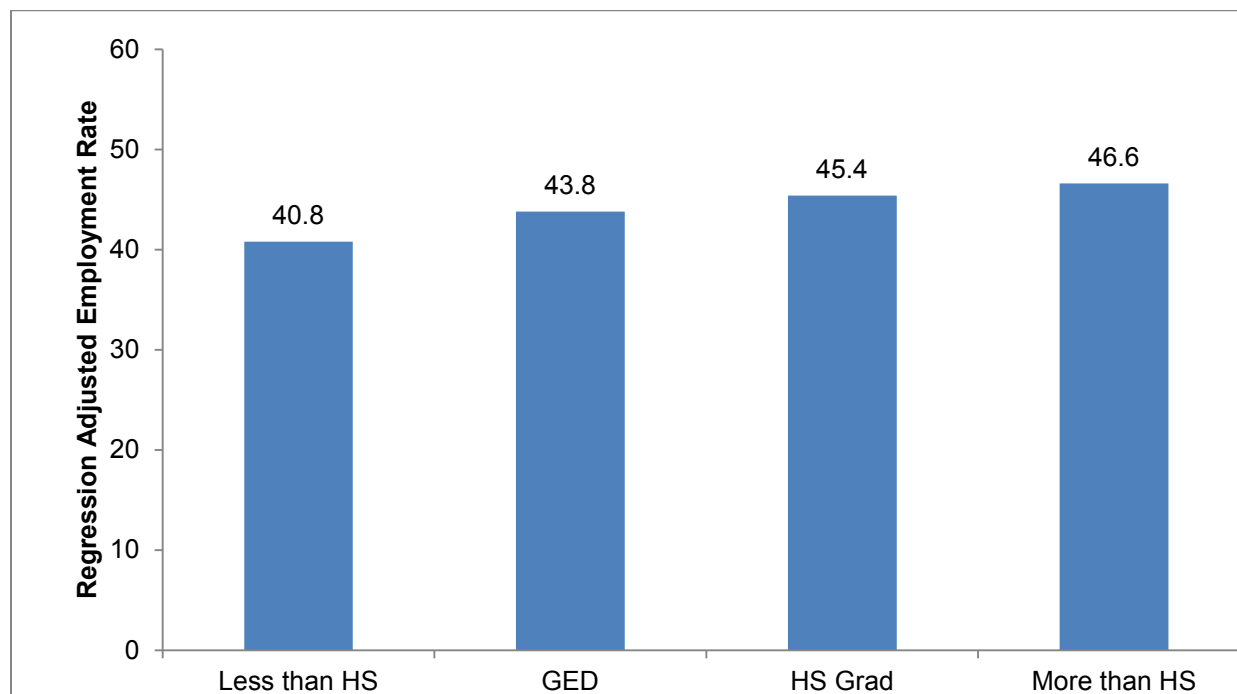


Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010).

Employment rate based on 54,581 included exiters.

There was also a moderately strong relationship between the probability of entering unsubsidized employment and the participant's educational attainment. Controlling for other factors, the average employment rate increased with a participant's level of education (Exhibit VII-8). Participants without a high school diploma had an average employment rate of 41 percent, compared to 45 percent for high school graduates.

Exhibit VII-8
Regression-adjusted Employment Rates, by Education



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010).

Employment rate based on 54,581 included excitors.

During site visits, participants and staff members noted that individuals receiving public assistance benefits may have a financial disincentive to enter unsubsidized employment. The findings from the regression model were consistent with this hypothesis. Controlling for all other factors, participants who received other public assistance were significantly less likely than those not receiving such assistance to enter unsubsidized employment; they had an average employment rate of 40 percent compared to 49 percent for participants not receiving public assistance (Exhibit VII-6).

The relationship between the priority-of-service criteria and employment is also a matter of some interest, at least in part because prioritizing service to those most in need might be expected to be in tension with the goal of maximizing employment. As shown in Exhibit VII-6 and summarized in Exhibit VII-9, the results here were mixed: the employment outcomes of participants in the priority-of-service categories were not always worse than the outcomes of other participants. Participants who were disabled and those who were homeless were much less likely to have positive employment outcomes. Participants with low literacy skills were also less likely to have

positive employment outcomes, but the size of the difference was smaller. These multivariate findings are generally consistent with the bivariate findings reported in Exhibit VII-1.

**Exhibit VII-9
Differences in Regression-adjusted Employment Rates
Between Those With Certain Barriers to Employment and Those Without**

Significant Negative Difference	Significant Positive Difference	No Significant Difference
Disabled	At risk of homelessness	Limited English proficiency
Homeless	Failed to find employment after using WIA	Veteran (or eligible spouses)
Low literacy skills	--	Low employment prospects
--	--	Rural

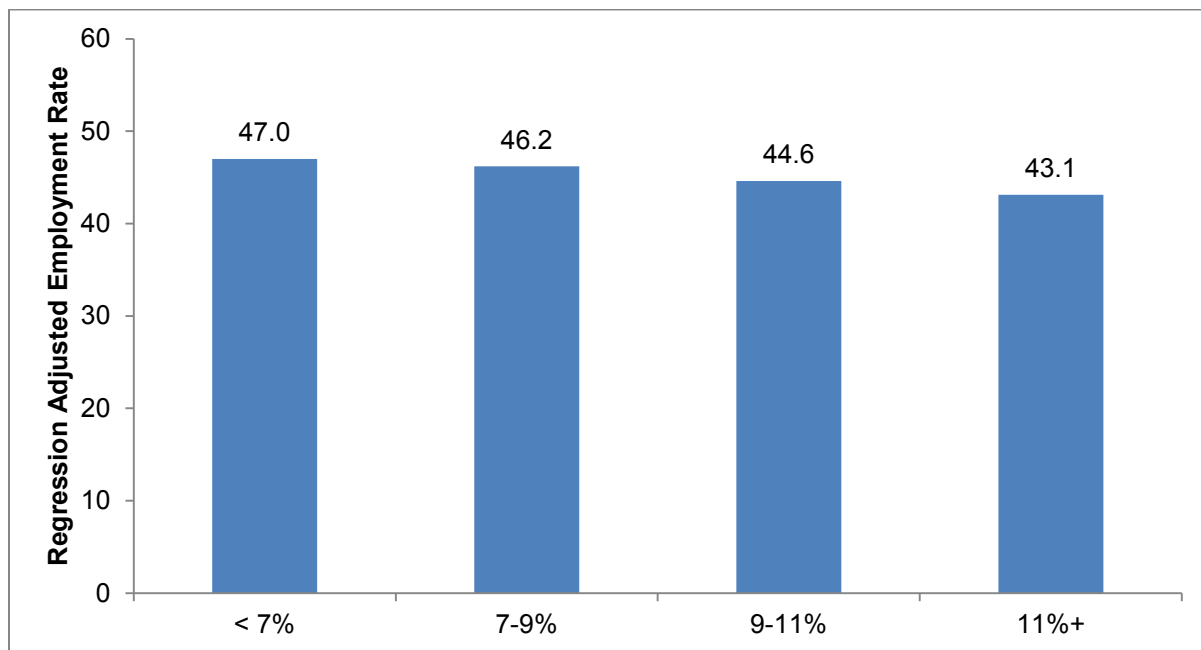
Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010) Regression-adjusted employment rates for each subgroup are reported in Exhibit VII-6.

Surprisingly, two of the priority-of-service categories had a positive relationship with employment. Participants at risk of homelessness and those who had failed to find employment after using WIA were actually more likely to have an unsubsidized employment placement than their counterparts without these characteristics. We cannot make any causal claims about these findings, but one possible explanation could be that participants in both of these groups may be particularly motivated to find employment. Individuals at risk of homelessness certainly have a high stake in the job search. Individuals who have continued to seek employment after failing with WIA may have a strong desire to find employment, or SCSEP may be able to offer services that supplement the services available from WIA for older workers. For the remaining priority-of-service characteristics, we found no significant differences in the likelihood of an employment placement.

The relationship between SCSEP services and employment outcomes is also important to examine. We found no significant difference between a community service assignment with a nonprofit and an assignment with a public agency (Exhibit VII-6). We also controlled for the local unemployment rate in the model because it is reasonable to expect that in areas with higher unemployment, SCSEP participants will have more difficulty finding unsubsidized employment. We included a series of indicator variables for different levels of unemployment to allow for a flexible relationship between the unemployment rate and employment outcomes. We found that the probability of a positive employment outcome did decline as the unemployment rate in the participant’s county increased, although the effect was not pronounced (Exhibit VII-10). A possible reason why our findings do not show employment outcomes to be more strongly associated with local unemployment rates is that the decision to exit from the SCSEP program

may be responsive to the local unemployment rate. That is, some participants may continue to participate in SCSEP because unsubsidized jobs are too difficult to find. If this is true, our analysis of employment after program exit understates the true impact of the local unemployment rate on the probability of unsubsidized employment.

Exhibit VII-10
Regression-adjusted Employment Rates, by Level of Local Unemployment



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010) and BLS LAUS Data.
Employment rate based on 54,581 included exciters.

Exploring Variation in Employment Outcomes Across Sub-Recipients

One of the primary goals of this study is to understand the variation in employment outcomes across SCSEP sub-recipients. As noted earlier, while the average sub-recipient entered employment rate is 46 percent, 9 percent of sub-recipients have entered employment rates below 10 percent and 9 percent of sub-recipients have entered employment rates above 70 percent (Exhibit VII-11). A portion of the variation in employment outcomes across sub-recipients is likely related to differences in the characteristics of the participants served or the local economic conditions. In this section, we examine what share of the variation in sub-recipient employment outcomes can be explained by observable factors about the participants and the sub-recipients.

To carry out this analysis, we used a sub-recipient-level regression model to examine the relationship between the entered employment rate and each of the following:

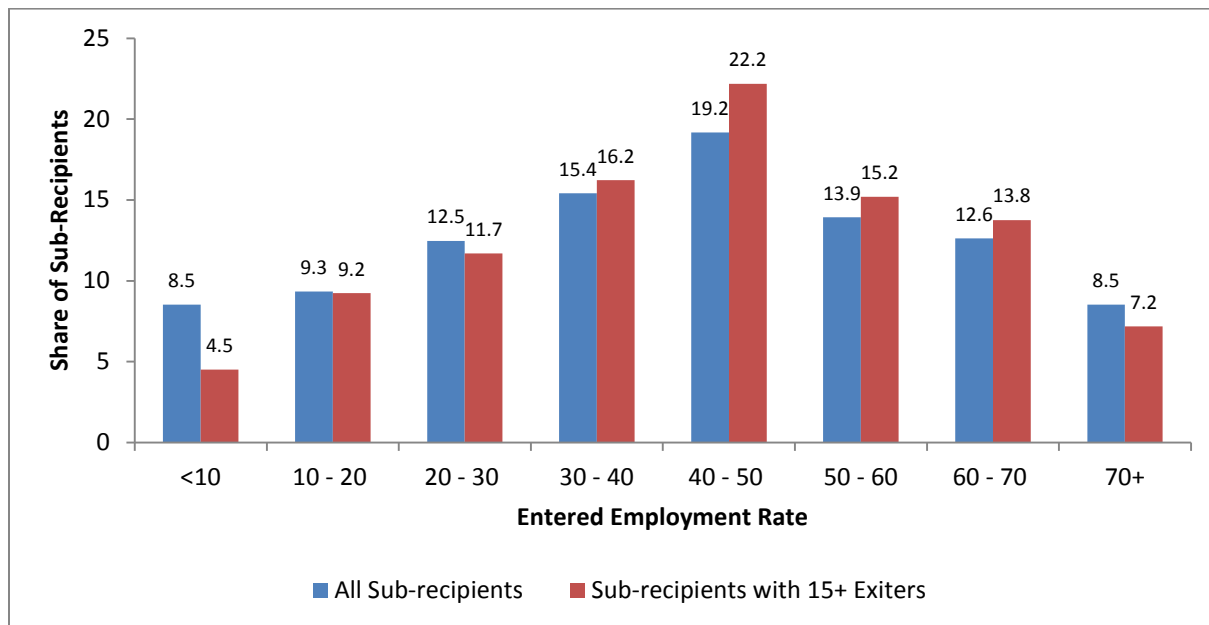
1. average participant demographics including gender, race/ethnicity, age, and education,

2. average participant characteristics including barriers to employment, coenrollment, and receipt of public assistance,
3. sub-recipient characteristics and local economic conditions, and
4. SCSEP program factors including CSA characteristics and program exit rates.

The sub-recipient-level regression model allows us to examine how sub-recipient characteristics affect aggregate performance and how much of the variation in aggregate performance can be explained by characteristics observed in the data.

As discussed earlier, we observe substantial variation in employment outcomes across sub-recipients. One possible explanation for the extreme positive and negative performance outcomes—that is, the sub-recipients that perform far below and far above the average—could be small sample sizes. If a sub-recipient has fewer than 15 individuals included in the calculation of performance, it is easy to envision the possibility of relatively extreme performance measures, even if the sub-recipient is an average project. In Program Years 2009 and 2010, there were 123 sub-recipients with fewer than 15 included excitors. If we examine the distribution of employment outcomes with these small sub-recipients excluded, the variation across sub-recipients is still substantial, but it declines (Exhibit VII-11). Therefore, we limit our sample to the 487 sub-recipients with at least 15 included excitors during Program Years 2009 and 2010. This allows us to avoid focusing on variations in entered employment rates that could be entirely due to a small sample.

Exhibit VII-11
Variation in Entered-employment Rates across Sub-recipients



Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

Share of sub-recipients based on 618 sub-recipients total and 487 sub-recipients with at least 15 excitors.

In our sub-recipient models, we added groups of covariates in a stepwise fashion to allow us to examine how much of the variation in employment outcomes is accounted for by different types of covariates. The initial model includes the basic demographics of sub-recipient participants, including the share of females, the racial/ethnic composition, the age distribution, and the education level of participants. While all programs serve older workers, there was significant variation in the age compositions of different SCSEP sub-recipients. We found that variation in the participant demographics across sites accounted for 14 percent of the variation in the entered employment rate (Exhibit VII-12).

Next, we added other sub-recipient-level average participant characteristics to the model. The characteristics include the share of participants with other SCSEP-identified barriers to employment as well as the share of participants receiving public assistance and the extent of program coenrollment. Including these other characteristics in the sub-recipient model significantly increased the share of the sub-recipient variation in the entered employment rates explained by the model. The variation in participant characteristics accounted for one-third of the variation in entered employment across sub-recipients. While our data on participant characteristics is relatively rich, the share of performance-measure variation explained by observed participant characteristics may understate the full importance of participant characteristics since we cannot measure many relevant participant attributes, including average prior labor market experiences and the extent of transferrable skills.

The next set of factors added to the model were the characteristics of the sub-recipient including size, urbanicity, the unemployment rate in the local area, and the share of participants exiting in each calendar quarter. Adding sub-recipient characteristics to the model increased the share of variation explained by the model only slightly (33 percent to 35 percent). The differences between expected sub-recipient performance and actual sub-recipient performance for the 29 case studies discussed in Chapter IX are based on this model.

The final set of characteristics that we examined was SCSEP program characteristics: the proportion of participants who had been previously enrolled, the share of participants placed at non-profits and the sub-recipient's exit rate. These program factors did not provide additional explanatory power.

Exhibit VII-12. Adjusted R-Square Values for Sub-recipient Employment Models

	Adjusted R-Square
Participant Demographic Characteristics (11 covariates)	0.139
+ Other Individual Characteristics (22 covariates total)	0.329
+ Sub-recipient Characteristics (37 covariates total)	0.347
+ Program Design Factors (42 covariates total)	0.349
Number of sub-recipients	487

Sub-recipient regression model is limited to sub-recipients with at least 15 included exiters in Program Years 2009 and 2010. Full regression results are reported in Appendix E.

Variations in the observed participant and sub-recipient characteristics account for a little more than a third of the variation in the entered employment rate across sub-recipients, leaving the majority of the variation in performance unexplained. In particular, we found that our limited set of program design factors did not provide additional explanatory power. The case studies can provide qualitative insights on this issue and thus supplement the findings from the quantitative analysis.

Key Findings on Post-SCSEP Employment

This quantitative analysis was designed to provide a basic description of SCSEP outcomes in Program Years 2009 and 2010, providing information about variation across sub-recipients and the factors related to successful employment outcomes. As described in the key findings below, there is substantial variation across sub-recipients in terms of both the characteristics of the populations they served and employment outcomes. While some of the variation in both of these areas can be explained by the characteristics of the sub-recipients, such as whether they are urban or rural, there is ample room for the qualitative analysis on sub-recipient practices to contribute to our understanding of successful program practices.

- Forty-six percent of SCSEP exiters nationwide entered unsubsidized employment. The employment rate was lower for some groups of participants including participants with a disability, older workers, and participants with lower levels of education.
- SCSEP participants with an unsubsidized employment placement had an average starting hourly wage of \$9.89 in the first quarter after exit.
- Behind the overall job placement rate of 46 percent, there was substantial variation across sub-recipients. Ten percent of sub-recipients had placement rates below 18 percent, while the top 10 percent of sub-recipients had placement rates that exceeded 69 percent.

- In a regression model, we found strong relationships between many participant characteristics and the probability of entering unsubsidized employment. The likelihood of entering unsubsidized employment declined sharply with age. Not all of the priority-of-service criteria were associated with negative employment outcomes.
- There was no significant difference in employment for participants who were placed with a nonprofit organization and those who were placed with a government agency.
- Participants were less likely to enter unsubsidized employment if they lived in counties with the highest unemployment rates.
- Variations in the observed participant and sub-recipient characteristics account for a little more than a third of the variation in the entered employment rate across sub-recipients, leaving the majority of the variation in performance unexplained.

VIII. THE PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE

An important goal of the study was to learn what is important to SCSEP participants. What do they need and want when they apply to SCSEP? How do they feel about the quality and responsiveness of the services they receive? How well does the program address factors important to their overall quality of life? How satisfied were they with the program's ability to develop their employment-related skills and create opportunities for unsubsidized employment? To answer these and other questions, we analyzed the data from an existing annual national survey of customer satisfaction of SCSEP participants and we talked directly with SCSEP participants, in both informal interviews and focus groups, during the 29 case-study site visits. The first section of the chapter describes the findings derived from the customer satisfaction survey; the second section presents the findings from the case-study interviews and focus groups.

Findings from the Customer Satisfaction Survey

As described in Chapter I, SCSEP underwent significant changes as a result of the OAA amendments of 2000 and 2006. Greater emphasis was placed on the goal of increasing economic self-sufficiency by helping participants transition into unsubsidized employment. Another change was that the program was required to place a greater emphasis on customer satisfaction. The 2000 Amendments recommended that customer satisfaction data be collected for each of the three customer groups: employers, host agencies, and enrollees. In April 2004, DOL adopted final rules implementing the 2000 amendments to the OAA. The regulations created a new customer satisfaction performance measure and called for grantee performance on this measure to be included in the overall assessment of grantee performance. The 2006 amendments to the OAA retained customer satisfaction as a SCSEP performance measure. Although—effective starting in Program Year 2007—customer satisfaction is no longer a core measure included in the annual evaluation of grantees' performance, the program continues to emphasize the importance of achieving a high level of customer satisfaction.

To assess the level of customer satisfaction, ETA conducts a yearly customer survey. The analysis of customer satisfaction presented in this section is based on existing data from the nationwide participant survey conducted for ETA in 2010. Approximately 25,000 surveys were mailed to randomly selected participants who had been active in SCSEP at any time between

July 1, 2009, and September 30, 2010. The survey instrument consisted of the three standard questions that are used to compute the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI):

- What is your overall satisfaction with [the program]?
- To what extent has [the program] met your expectations?
- How well did [the program] compare to the ideal program?

The survey also included a series of questions that asked about various aspects of participants' experience with SCSEP. These additional questions were designed to gather information about participants' views of how they were treated by the program, the value of their community service experience, how well SCSEP prepared them for unsubsidized employment and helped them find such employment, and the impact of SCSEP on their physical health, outlook on life, and financial circumstances.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

To begin the analysis of customer satisfaction outcomes, we examined the characteristics of the survey respondents. Selected survey respondent characteristics such as age, ethnicity, gender, and barriers to employment were summarized and compared to the characteristics of all SCSEP participants between July 1, 2009 and September 30, 2010 (which constitutes the universe from which the survey participants were selected).¹¹⁰ When we compared the two groups, we found that the stratified sampling procedure that was used to select the survey respondents resulted in the oversampling of participants served by state grantees compared to national grantees. (Exhibit VIII-1 below).¹¹¹ To reduce the differences between the survey sample and the universe, we weighted the survey data such that the proportion of the program participants served by all state and national grantees in the survey sample matches the population proportion in the universe (see Appendix H). In addition, the data were weighted to account for differences between respondents and non-respondents on gender, race, age, education, program status, and residence (rural/urban) to correct for any possible non-response bias in the reported results.¹¹² Throughout the remainder of this section (and the appendix) all the reported statistics are based on the weighted data.

¹¹⁰ Thus, the characteristics of the SCSEP participants listed here are slightly different from the ones reported in Table F-2 because of the different time intervals covered (only five program quarters for the survey validation compared to the eight quarters used in the analysis presented in Chapter III).

¹¹¹ A full description of the sample and SPARQ characteristics is offered in Appendix H (Table H-1).

¹¹² Non-response bias can occur whenever the non-respondents to a survey differ in some non-random way from the respondents.

**Exhibit VIII-1:
Demographic Characteristics of Customer Survey Respondents
and the Universe of Program Participants (Program Year 2009 and Q1 of Program Year
2010)**

	Unweighted Survey Data (%)	SPARQ (PY 2009 and Q1 of PY 2010) (%)
Served by a national grantee	55.3	79.7
Served by a small sub-recipient ^a	22.8	7.8
Female	70.1	64.6
African-American, Non-Hispanic	29.5	31.7
Age 55 to 59 (PY 2009)	26.6	33.1
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit (PY 2009)	36.8	38.8
Low literacy skills ^b	15.8	20.6
Rural	38.6	30.9
Low employment prospects ^c	80.6	87.8
At risk of homelessness ^d	17.5	27.8
N	16,943	121,327

Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010)

^a We define a sub-recipient as small if it had 50 or fewer modified positions in Program Year 2009.

^b A participant has low literacy skills when his or her ability to calculate or solve problems, read, write, or speak English is at or below the 8th grade level or he or she is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

^c Low employment prospects means the likelihood that an individual would be unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban area where employment opportunities are limited.

^d At risk for homelessness means an individual is likely to become homeless and the individual lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

Analysis of Satisfaction as Measured by the American Customer Satisfaction Index

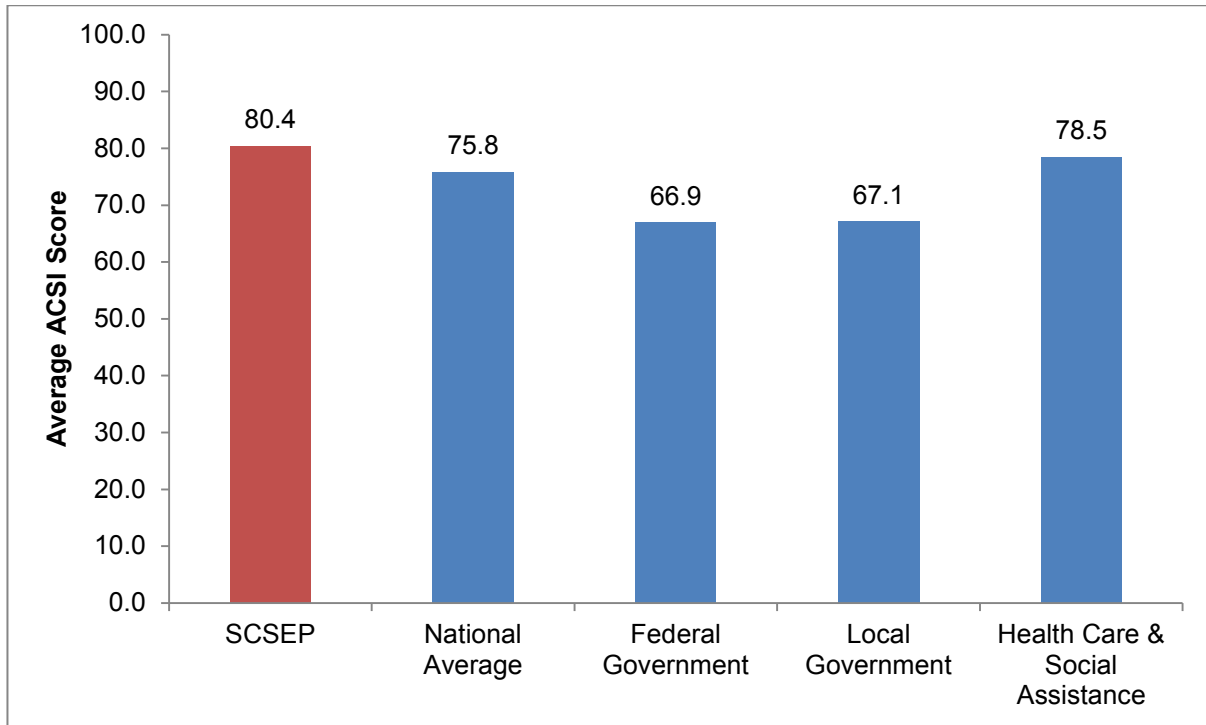
One of the main goals of the customer satisfaction survey initiated by ETA was to allow the measurement of an American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) for SCSEP. The ACSI uses customer interviews as input to a multi-equation econometric model developed at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business. Initially developed for the private sector, ACSI is now broadly used in the public sector as well to measure the quality of government services as perceived by consumers of those services. Across all sectors, the ACSI index is constructed from three questions that address different dimensions of customers' experiences. (The standard form of these three questions is presented in the introduction to this chapter.) Weights are applied to each question's score, and the ACSI score is obtained by combining the weighted scores from the three questions. The minimum ACSI score is 0 and the maximum is 100.

ETA highlighted the importance of ACSI by determining that only the three questions that the ACSI comprises would be used to determine grantee performance. The designers of the survey, however, included additional survey items that explore customer satisfaction with different aspects of the SCSEP program, to provide information that could be used for program improvement.

As seen in Exhibit VIII-2 below, the ACSI mean score in our sample was 80.4. This score compares favorably to the mean ACSI scores calculated for other public and private sector organizations. Average customer satisfaction for SCSEP is significantly higher than that for both the federal government and local government, and it is also higher than the average score in the health care and social assistance sector. Nationally, the average ACSI score across all public and private sectors was 75.8.¹¹³

¹¹³ The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) produces scores on four levels: national, sector, industry, and company/agency. The national ACSI score is calculated from sector scores weighted by each sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). <http://www.theacsi.org>

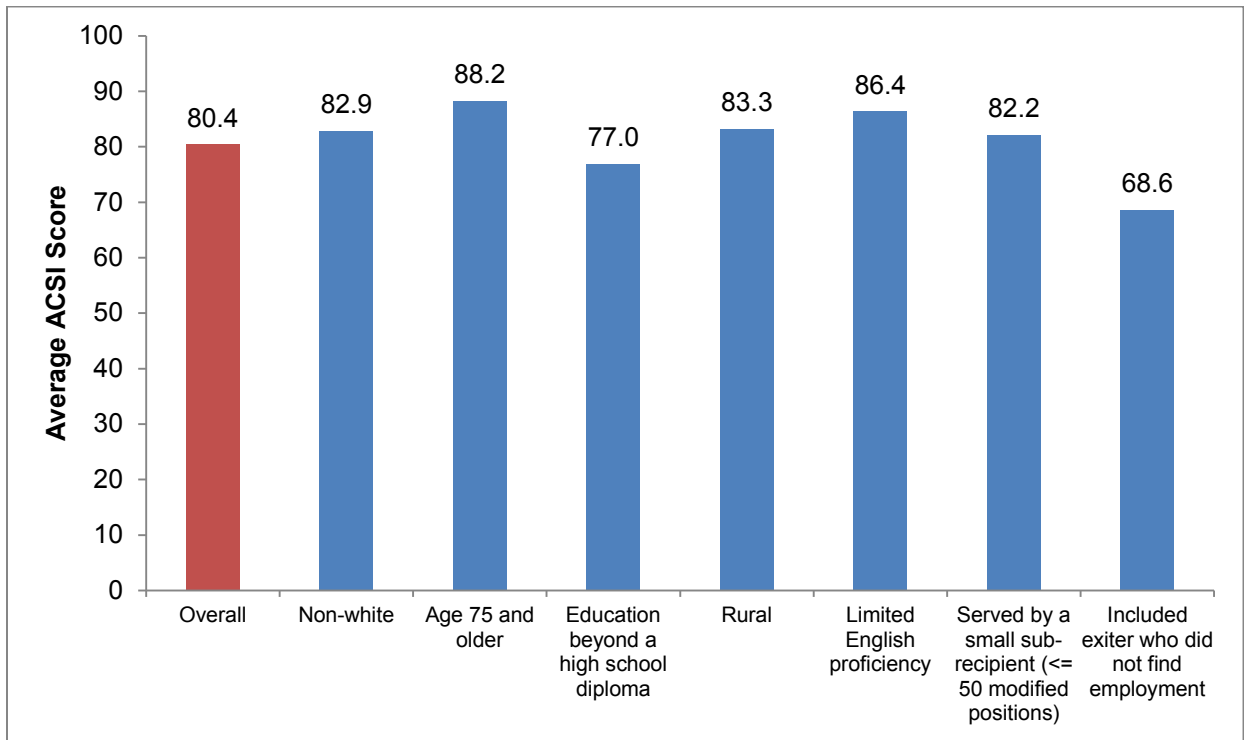
**Exhibit VIII-2:
Average ACSI Score for SCSEP Compared to Other Public Sector Entities**



Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and <http://www.theacsi.org>, retrieved April 27, 2012.

In addition to this overall comparison, our interest was to detect variations in customer satisfaction at the level of various subgroups. Our analysis revealed considerable differences in customer satisfaction across different subgroups. Exhibit VIII-3 shows how customer satisfaction scores vary across selected groups. (Exhibit H-2, containing the full listing of ACSI scores, is included in Appendix H.)

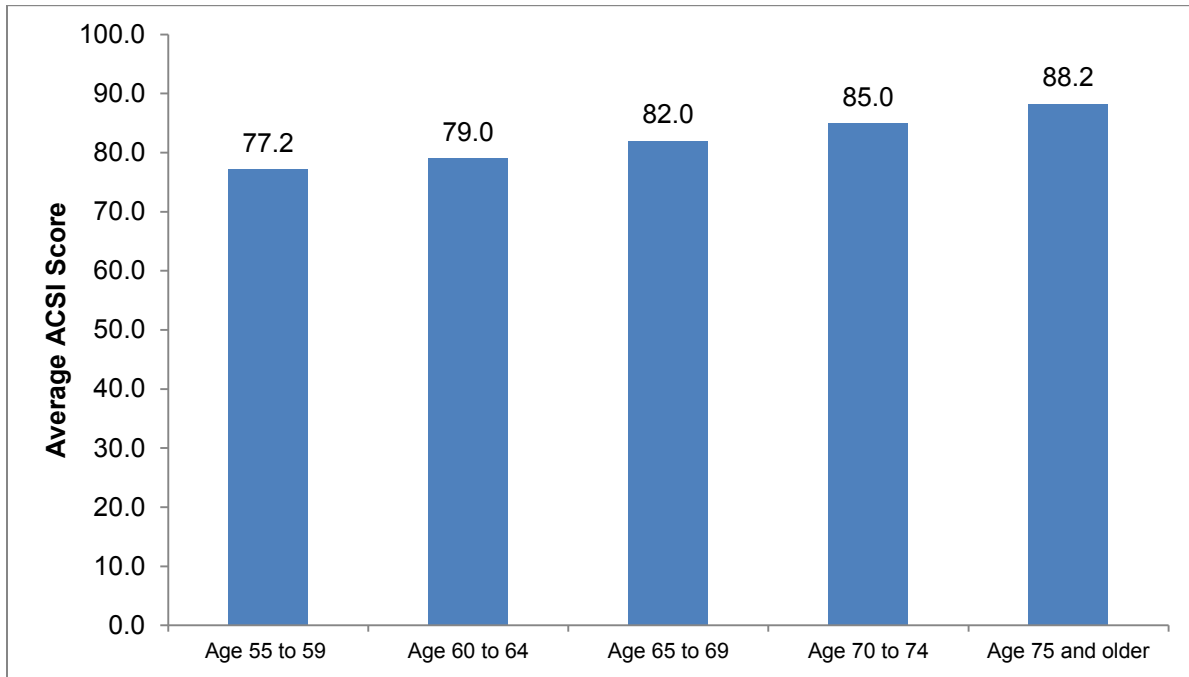
**Exhibit VIII-3:
Average ACSI Score for Selected SCSEP Subgroups**



Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
N=15,873.

An examination of the breakdown of ACSI mean scores by subgroups reveals several interesting patterns. Non-white participants, participants age 75 and older, and less educated participants tend to be more satisfied with the program than the average participant, whereas white respondents, younger respondents, and respondents who have exited the program without finding employment have generally lower satisfaction scores. Exhibit VIII-4 below shows the distribution of the mean ACSI by age groups. As shown, satisfaction increases for each older age cohort, attesting to a strong relationship between satisfaction and age.

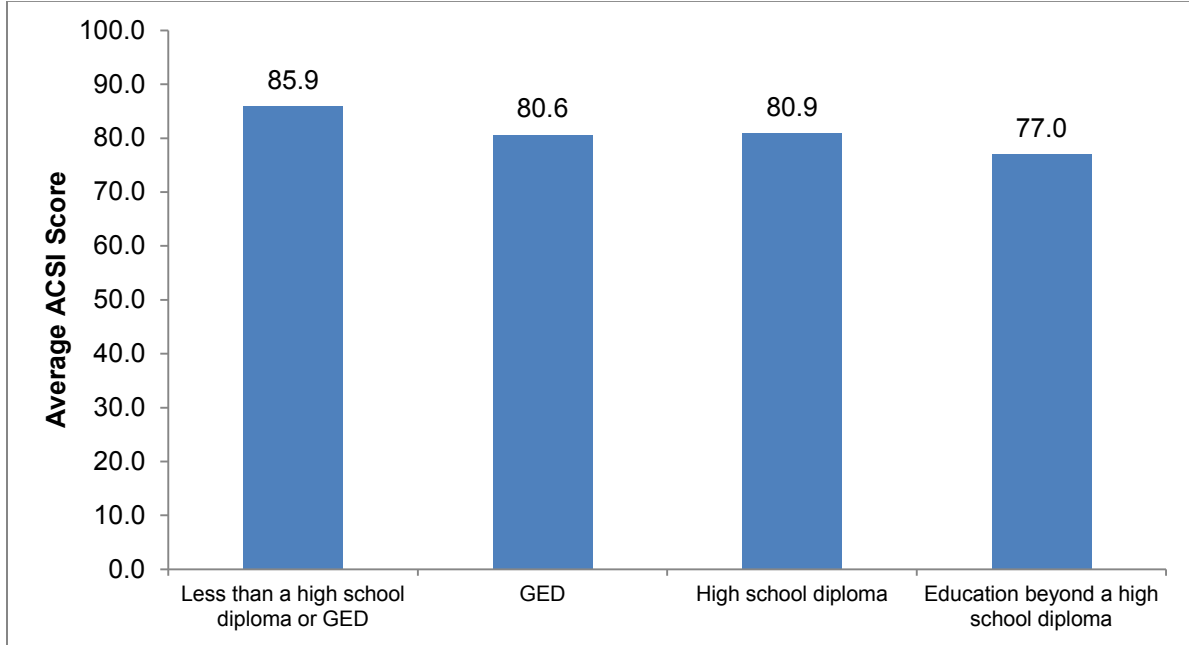
**Exhibit VIII-4:
Average ACSI Score for Age Groups**



Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
N=15,873.

There are several ways to interpret these findings. First, we could attribute this pattern to differences in the expected quality of program services among groups. For example, we might expect respondents with higher schooling to have higher expectations of the program, making them less likely to be satisfied. The qualitative data gathered through focus groups (presented in the second section of this chapter), are consistent with this hypothesis. A second possible explanation is that some respondents have more limited employment and training service options than others, making them more likely to value the services available from the SCSEP program. Older participants and participants with limited English proficiency, both of whom have high average ACSI scores, may be counted in this category, as they are less likely to be served by employment and training services available to the mainstream population.

**Exhibit VIII-5:
Average ACSI Score by Education**



Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
N=15,873.

Another important finding is that program status seems to play an important role in customer satisfaction. Participants who were active in the program at the time when the survey was administered have an average ACSI score (83.9) that is higher than all other program status groups, including exiters who had found an unsubsidized job (80.6 points). The fact that active participants are the most satisfied suggests that many participants value the benefits that they receive during the program (e.g., income stability, social engagement, and satisfaction at providing community service) as much or more than the benefits they experience after leaving SCSEP for unsubsidized employment. An alternative explanation is that exiters are not as pleased with the jobs they find as they had hoped, making former participants value the program less. Charter Oak Group has noted that the exiters employed in the for-profit sector are less satisfied than either current participants or exiters employed in the public or non-profit sectors. Charter Oak Group hypothesizes that the program has been less effective at training participants for and helping participants find jobs in the for-profit sector, causing participants who are

looking for private sector jobs to be comparatively less satisfied.¹¹⁴ This finding is supported by focus group data collected during the research for this study. Several of the participants we interviewed wished the SCSEP program could do more to help them market themselves to private companies.

Certain characteristics of sub-recipients also seem to be associated with customer satisfaction. Customers who are served by small sub-recipients (less than 50 positions) tend to be slightly more satisfied than customers served by medium-sized and large sub-recipients. In addition, customers residing in rural areas tend to be more satisfied than those living in urban areas. These findings suggest smaller projects may be more likely to have “family-like” relationships between staff members and participants, which in turn may result in greater customer satisfaction. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the mean score for the survey item “The Older Worker Program staff understood my employment interests and needs” is significantly higher for respondents living in rural areas and those served by small sub-recipients (see Exhibit VIII-6). Alternatively, customers in rural areas may have more limited job opportunities than customers in urban areas, making the job search assistance provided by SCSEP more valuable from the participant’s perspective.

Finally, only one of the two sub-recipient characteristics included seems to be associated with the ACSI score. Customers who were served by small sub-recipients have a higher mean satisfaction score (82.2) than those served by medium-sized sub-recipients (79.6) and large ones (80.6). By comparison, whether a participant is served by a state or a national grantee does not seem to influence the satisfaction score significantly.

Other Measures of Customer Satisfaction

In addition to the ACSI dimensions, we report customer satisfaction levels for four of the seventeen additional survey items that refer to key facets of a successful SCSEP program experience:

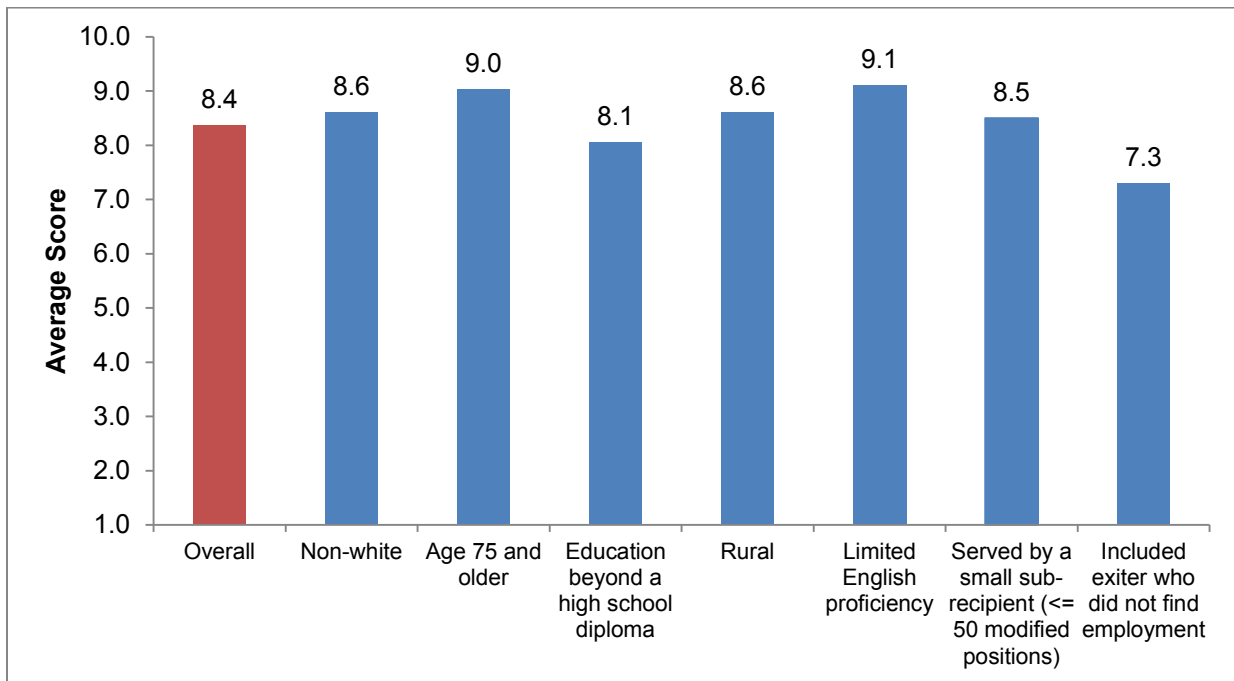
- The Older Worker Program staff understood my employment interests and needs.
- The Older Worker Program helped me obtain a community service assignment that was just right for me.
- My host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful in my assignment.

¹¹⁴ Charter Oak Group, “PY 2010 Participant Customer Satisfaction Survey: Special Analysis of Satisfaction and Employment,” November 12, 2011, unpublished manuscript.

- The Older Worker Program helped me obtain the supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, housing or medical care, that I needed to meet my employment goals.

The first set of data that we analyzed was based on agreement with the statement, “The Older Worker Program staff understood my employment interests and needs.” We believe this item is a good indicator of the initial case management services provided by the program—staff members’ ability to understand the diverse needs of the participants and to respond in a supportive manner to these needs. In contrast to the ACSI score, which was measured on a scale from 1 to 100, all of the other questionnaire items we report on were measured on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). As shown in Exhibit VIII-6, the average score¹¹⁵ for this item was relatively high, exhibiting a pattern similar to the findings for the ACSI score. This suggests that program participants are generally satisfied with the case management practices of the program. All of the differences among subgroups observed for the distribution of the ACSI score can be observed here, as well.

**Exhibit VIII-6:
Average Score for Survey Item “The Older Worker Program staff understood my employment interests and needs.”**

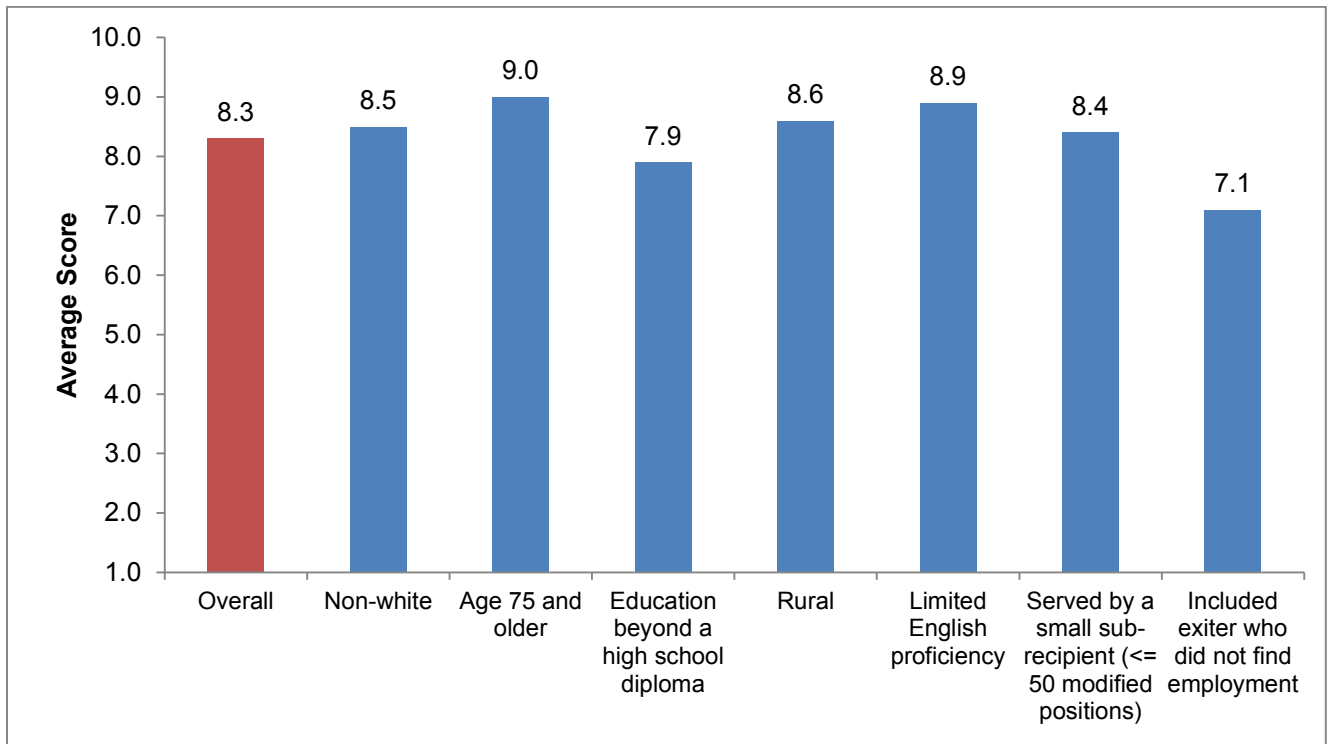


Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
N=15,873

¹¹⁵ “Don’t know” responses were coded as missing to allow the calculation of meaningful values for average values on all questionnaire items.

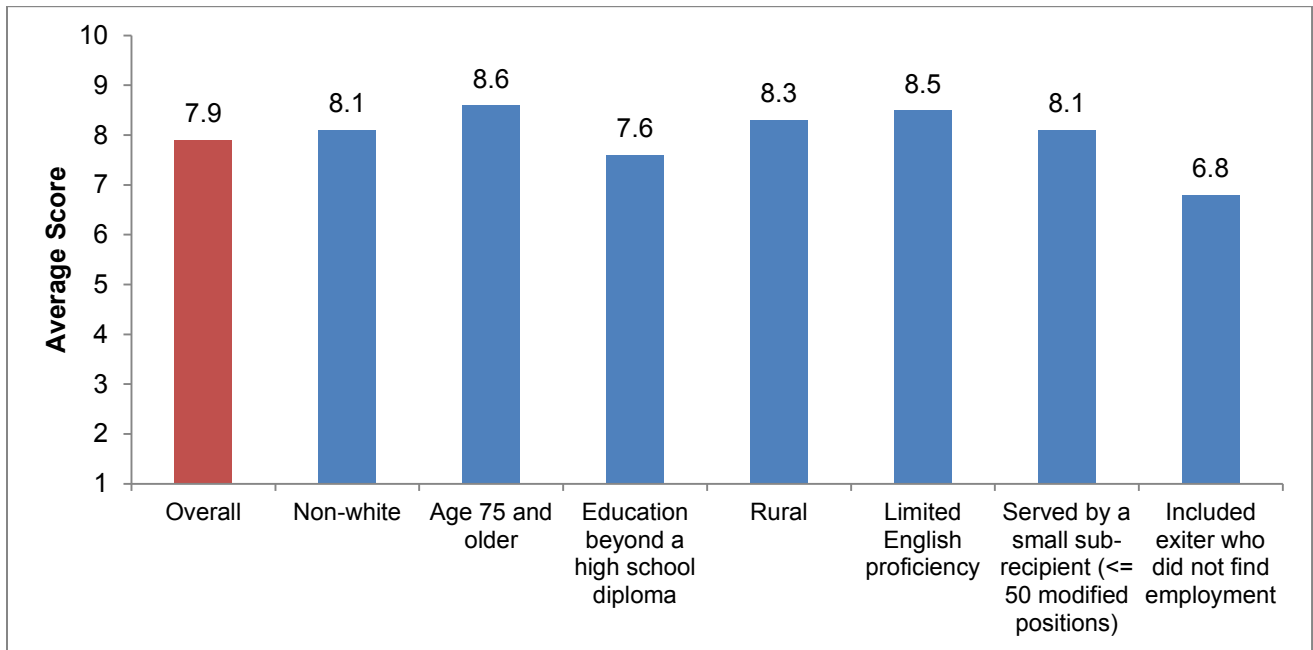
Next, we examined the level of satisfaction vis-à-vis the community service assignments (CSAs) to which participants were sent. In general, participants believed that the SCSEP program staff did a good job in matching their skills with their assignments (see Exhibit VIII-7). We also found that while the respondents tended to be relatively satisfied with the training they received from the host agencies, the level of satisfaction was somewhat lower than satisfaction with the quality of the match itself (Exhibit VIII-8).

**Exhibit VIII-7:
Average Score for Survey Item, “The Older Worker Program helped me obtain a community service assignment that was just right for me.”**



Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
N=15,873.

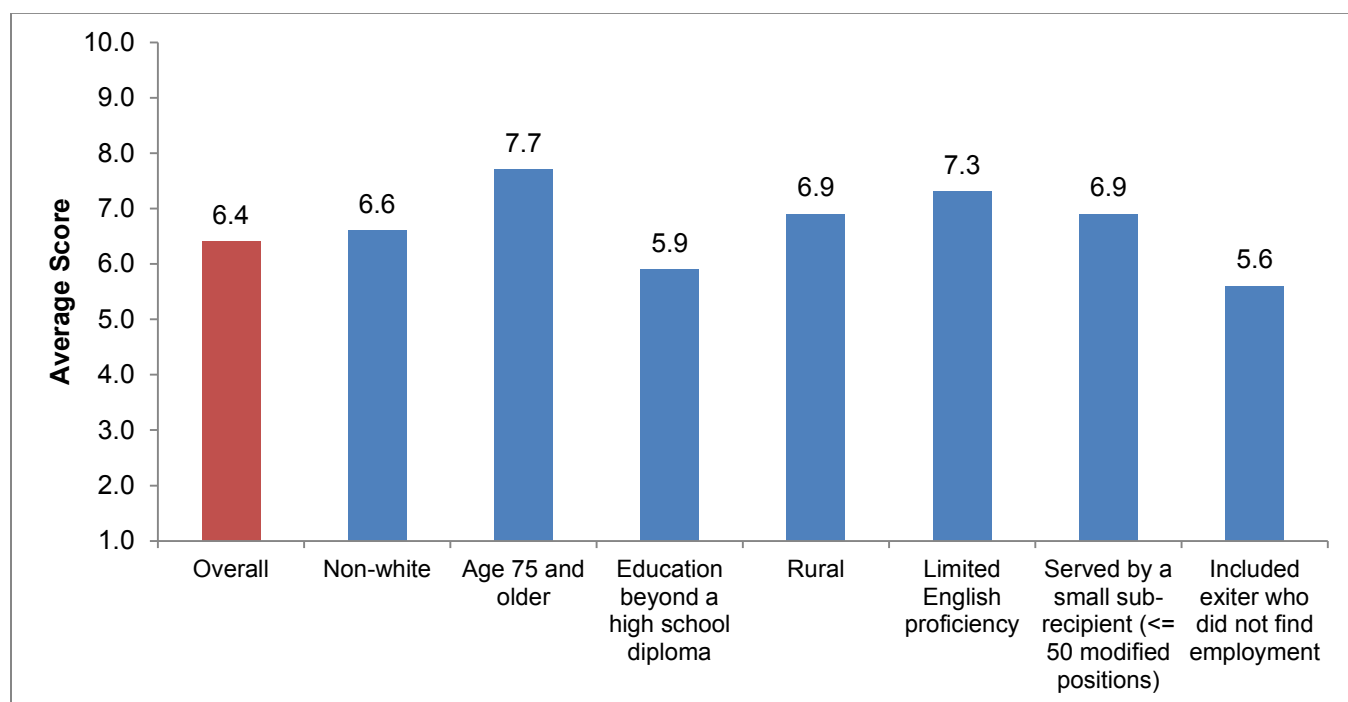
**Exhibit VIII-8:
Average Score for Survey Item, “My host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful in my assignment.”**



Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010
N=15,901.

The last item analyzed was the level of satisfaction with supportive services. What is striking about the distribution of this survey item (Exhibit VIII-9) is not necessarily the differences among subgroups—they remain essentially the same compared to the other items—but the fact that the averages are lower across the board. Simply put, participants are less happy about the program’s ability to arrange for supportive services, such as transportation and housing, than they are about other aspects of SCSEP’s operation. This constitutes an important finding and suggests an area where significant additional improvement is possible. However, funding constraints may limit the ability of local projects to boost the level of supportive services.

**Exhibit VIII-9:
Average Score for Survey Item, “The Older Worker Program helped me obtain the supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, housing or medical care, that I needed to meet my employment goals.”**



Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010)
N=15,873.

Factors Associated with Participant Satisfaction

In addition to the descriptive analysis of the individual survey items presented above, we conducted a multivariate analysis of customer satisfaction outcomes based on survey data in combination with SPARQ data matched to the survey respondents. This analysis supplements the descriptive tables presented above. We regressed the ACSI score on the level of satisfaction with specific components of the program (case management, supportive services, community service assignment, and host agency training), together with a set of individual characteristics such as gender and age, program characteristics such as size of the program (large, medium, and small), location (urban or rural), and the type of grantee.

Regression modeling allows us to see whether there are particular aspects of the program that are more highly correlated with overall customer satisfaction, while controlling for other variables. One question we addressed using the multivariate analysis was how satisfaction with each of the individual components of the program (case management, community service assignment, training, and supportive services) was associated with overall satisfaction as measured by the

ACSI score.¹¹⁶ The regression results presented in Exhibit VIII-10 show that all four components tested were significantly associated with the ACSI score.

**Exhibit VIII-10:
Regression-Adjusted Mean ACSI Score, by Subgroups**

	Regression-Adjusted ACSI score
Satisfaction with Case Management	
Low (score=1-5)	52.1 ^{††}
Medium (score=6-9)	75.2
High (score=10)	87.3
Satisfaction with Supportive Services	
Low (score=1-5)	75.8 ^{††}
Medium (score=6-9)	78.8
High (score=10)	83.7
Satisfaction with Community Service Assignment	
Low (score=1-5)	64.8 ^{††}
Medium (score=6-9)	77.3
High (score=10)	84.2
Satisfaction with Training Offered by Host Agency	
Low (score=1-5)	72.2 ^{††}
Medium (score=6-9)	78.8
High (score=10)	82.6
Gender	
Female	80.3
Male	79.7
Race/Ethnicity	
White Non-Hispanic	79.1 [†]
Black or African-American Non-Hispanic	81.5
Hispanic	81.7
Other race or ethnicity	81.2
Age (Years)	
55 – 59	79.2 [†]
60 – 64	80.5
65 – 69	81.1
70 – 74	82.5
75+	82.4

¹¹⁶ To do this, we created a series of indicator variables that measure the degree of customer satisfaction with specific program components (high if the score was 10, medium if the score was between 6 and 9, and low if the score was 5 or lower). The categories for different levels of satisfaction were created after examining the frequency distributions of the four survey items listed above.

	Regression-Adjusted ACSI score
Education	
Less than High School	81.1
GED	81.4
High School Graduate	80.8
More than High Graduate	79.4
Previously Enrolled in SCSEP	80.6
First Time Enrolled in SCSEP	80.0
Coenrolled in other Employment/Education Program at Intake	80.0
Not Coenrolled	80.2
Receiving Public Assistance	80.2
Not Receiving Other Public Assistance	80.0
Family Income at or Below Poverty	80.1
Family Income above Poverty	79.9
Disabled	80.9
Not Disabled	79.9
Low Literacy Skills	79.7
Not Low Literacy Skills	80.2
Rural	80.1
Not Rural	80.1
Limited English Proficiency	80.6
Not Limited English Proficiency	80.0
Failed to Find Employment after using WIA Title II	80.2
Not Failed under WIA Title II	80.1
Homeless	82.8*
Not homeless	80.0
At Risk of Homelessness	79.6
Not at Risk of Homelessness	80.3
Unemployment Rate in County During Quarter of Exit (Percent)	
< 7	80.1
7 – 9	79.7
9 – 11	80.3
11+	80.3
Government CSA	79.5
Non-profit CSA	80.4
National Grantee	80.4**
State Grantee	78.9
Sub-recipient Size	
Small	80.3
Medium	80.0
Large	80.1

	Regression-Adjusted ACSI score
Sub-recipient Urbanicity	
Rural	81.3
Mixed	80.2
Urban	79.8
Program Status	
Active	81.1 ^{††}
Included exiter who found employment	80.8
Included exiter who did not find employment	76.7
Excluded exiter	77.9
N	14,412

*/** Difference is significant at 95/99% confidence level, two-tailed test. †/†† Differences across all subgroup levels are significant at 95/99% confidence level.

Overall customer satisfaction is particularly sensitive to changes in satisfaction with case management. Exhibit VIII-11 compares the sensitivity of the average predicted ACSI scores to low and high ratings on each of the four program components. As illustrated in Exhibit VIII-10, after controlling for other variables, customers who had a low level of agreement with the statement “staff understood my employment interests and needs” had a predicted average ACSI score of 52.1, the lowest of all average predicted scores in the model. In contrast, the respondents who are highly satisfied with case management have one of the highest average predicted ACSI scores (87.3).

**Exhibit VIII-11:
Sensitivity of Overall ACSI Score to
Variations in Satisfaction on Key Program Components
(From Regression Findings)**

Program Components	Variation in Satisfaction	Range of Regression-Adjusted Mean ACSI Score	Difference in Mean ACSI Score as Satisfaction with Component Varies from Low to High
Case Management	Low to High	52.1 – 87.3	35.2
Community Service Assignment	Low to High	64.8 – 84.2	19.4
Training	Low to High	72.2 – 82.6	10.4
Supportive Services	Low to High	75.8 – 83.7	7.9

These regression results are encouraging because it appears that the program components with which customers are already more satisfied— namely case management and community service assignments (see Exhibits VIII-6 and VIII-7) – are also highly associated with overall satisfaction. By comparison, components with lower satisfaction averages, such as the availability of supportive services and the adequacy of training, do not appear to have a large impact on overall satisfaction. However, the results do suggest important areas for improvement. Whereas the ability to respond to participants’ supportive service needs may be constrained because of staffing and funding limitations, a higher satisfaction with host agency training may be able to significantly improve overall satisfaction – on average, customers who are highly satisfied with the training they received from the host agency register a ten point increase in overall satisfaction over the customers who are dissatisfied with host agency training.

A second question we addressed using the multivariate regression was how variations in individual participant characteristics are associated with variations in customer satisfaction. The regression results confirm the bivariate findings and show that there are significant relationships between most individual participant characteristics and customer satisfaction (Exhibit VIII-10), although it appears that controlling for satisfaction with specific program components reduces the impact of individual characteristics on the average ACSI score. After controlling for other factors, African-American (81.5) and Hispanic (81.7) participants had higher satisfaction scores than white participants (79.1). The ACSI score also increased with the age of the participant. Compared to participants younger than 60—whose regression-adjusted average ACSI score was 79.2 points—participants age 60 to 64 had an average regression-adjusted ACSI score that was higher (80.5). For the oldest participants (age 75 and above), the regression-adjusted ACSI score was almost 2 points higher. As pointed out in a preceding section, this significant and positive association between age and customer satisfaction seems to indicate that the program is particularly well positioned to serve the needs of older participants, but it may also reflect the fact that older workers may have fewer service alternatives available to them.

There was also a significant, but negative, association between customer satisfaction and the participant’s educational attainment. Respondents who had participated in education beyond high school had an average ACSI score that was 2 points lower than participants who had not finished high school. Participants with a GED or high school diploma also had lower satisfaction scores, on average, than did high school non-completers. As previously discussed, this finding indicates that customer satisfaction in SCSEP may be connected to participants’ differing expectations of the program or the differing range of employment opportunities available to participants in the local labor market.

We also examined the relationship between the priority-of-service criteria and customer satisfaction. As shown in Exhibit VIII-10, the results were mixed. Most priority-of-service

criteria, such as low literacy skills, being a veteran, and having low employment prospects, were not significantly associated with participant satisfaction. However, participants identified as homeless showed regression-adjusted levels of satisfaction that were significantly higher than the non-homeless (82.8 compared to 80.0).

Another area of interest was the relationship between SCSEP services and customer satisfaction outcomes. We found no significant difference in satisfaction levels between participants with a CSA placement with a nonprofit and those with a CSA placement with a public agency (Exhibit VIII-10). However, there were significant differences between the regression-adjusted average ACSI scores of participants served by projects operated by national grantees (80.4) versus state grantees (78.9).

The regression results also showed a significant association between program status and customer satisfaction. Participants who were still active in the program at the time of the customer satisfaction survey had a regression-adjusted ACSI score of 81.1. Participants who had exited the program and had found employment had a slightly lower ACSI score of 80.8. Conversely, participants who had exited the program but had not found a job had an average ACSI score of only 76.7.

Lastly, we examined the association between characteristics of the local projects that served the respondents and customer satisfaction. The rationale behind including these variables was that there might be sub-recipient-level factors that affect customer satisfaction. We found that none of these variables was significantly related to the ACSI score after controlling for the other variables.

Conclusion

The quantitative analysis of the SCSEP customer satisfaction survey data enabled us to offer some reflections on the program's accomplishments and challenges. We also briefly discuss some of the policy implications of our findings.

Despite the group-level variations that we have emphasized, the overall level of customer satisfaction with SCSEP is high. SCSEP participants expressed a high level of satisfaction on most of the dimensions that we examined, beginning with the manner in which participants were treated by the program staff, continuing with the process of matching participants to community service assignments, and ending with the training that participants received from the host agencies. This consistently high level of satisfaction can be considered a strength of the program. Among the various aspects of SCSEP that we analyzed, the one dimension that stood out—because of its lower satisfaction score compared to other aspects of the program—was the ability of the SCSEP program to respond to participants' needs for supportive services such as transportation, housing, or medical care. As we pointed out, this suggests an area where

significant additional improvement is possible, although funding availability may be a constraining factor in this regard. Moreover, an increase in satisfaction with host agency training has strong potential to improve customer satisfaction as a whole.

The analysis of the customer satisfaction data also allows us to point to several areas that might merit some attention from policymakers. Our findings suggest that whereas the program does a good job in serving those participants with specific barriers to employment (at least as measured by these participants' satisfaction with the program), the goal of transitioning participants into unsubsidized employment may not be as satisfying for all participants. For all the indicators of customer satisfaction that we tested, participants who were active in the program were more satisfied on average than participants who exited into unsubsidized employment. This suggests that many participants value some of the benefits associated with a stable community service assignment more than they value the benefits of unsubsidized employment. This hypothesis is also supported by data from qualitative interviews held with participants, as noted in the following section.

Findings from Participant Interviews and Focus Groups

This section presents what we learned from the process-study site visits about how participants view the SCSEP program. It includes information about what participants want from the program, how useful SCSEP services are in meeting their needs, how participation in the program changes the quality of their lives, and what recommendations they would make for improving SCSEP services and operational procedures. We collected participant feedback about these matters in two different settings. First, when we visited different host agency work sites at each project, we often had the opportunity to talk informally with individual participants who were at work at the time of our visits. Second, as described in Chapter II, we convened at least one focus group during each of the 29 site visits. Each focus group was attended by three to eight current and former SCSEP participants. (The focus group protocol is included in Appendix C.)

Compared to the customer satisfaction survey, which was highly structured, focus groups provided an opportunity for participants to talk in more personal terms and to tell us whatever they felt was important. For these reasons, the data we collected through the focus groups are more richly detailed and topically broader than the data collected through the customer satisfaction survey.

Below, we organize our summary of participant feedback by dividing it into three categories, one for each “stage” of participation in the SCSEP program.

- Stage 1: Intake, service planning, and case management support
- Stage 2: Community service assignment and training

- Stage 3: Long-term goal setting and transitioning out of the program to unsubsidized employment

We have organized the findings in this section as if we are following customers through the sequence of program services and listening to what they have to say about their SCSEP experiences at each stage.

Views of Intake, Service Planning, and Case Management Support

As participants described their experiences to us, many of them said that they felt they were “in crisis” when they applied for SCSEP services. Application to SCSEP was often the last step in an exhaustive attempt to secure employment through self-led job searches and other community or publicly funded employment programs. One participant said that he felt “desperate after being unemployed for several years” and was “lacking [in] self-confidence.” It was common for participants to say that they ultimately enrolled in SCSEP because they were depressed and emotionally distraught—“crying all the time,” as one participant put it.

Although there is no “typical” SCSEP participant, all participants came to the SCSEP program with life circumstances and/or employment needs that propelled them to seek assistance. The life circumstances that preceded application for SCSEP services were varied. Many had experienced a sudden loss of income because they had been laid off from a job or had lost a spouse who was the primary breadwinner for the household. Others needed to reenter the job market after incarceration or illness, or had immigrated to the U.S. and found themselves without the English-language fluency or the degrees or skills that they needed for employment. Still others applied to the SCSEP program because they could no longer do physically demanding work or needed more stable employment and therefore wanted to change their occupations.

Focus group participants described three things they wanted during the first stage of SCSEP services: (1) help arranging for immediate income to cover living expenses; (2) help getting the social services they needed; and (3) assistance with developing plans for dealing with their employment and income needs. Participants told us about their initial interactions with staff members and how they learned about the services and benefits offered through SCSEP.

One common theme throughout the focus groups was participants expressing gratitude for the encouragement they received from staff and the renewed self-confidence they felt as a result of participating in the program. Another common theme was appreciation for the social connections that participants were able to make; they frequently mentioned making friends and being around “others like me.”

Participants appreciate feeling supported in their times of personal crisis. Although not every participant portrayed SCSEP in an entirely positive light, the vast majority of focus group participants expressed gratitude for program staff members caring about their well-being and

success. At several sites, participants said that staff were always available to answer questions. Some participants were worried about how their SCSEP wages would interact with public benefits such as food stamps, health insurance, and unemployment insurance, but mentioned that staff had helped them to calculate how their income would impact their benefits. One participant said, “[t]he staff feel like family—half the things I call them about aren’t even program issues.” One participant shared the feeling she had that staff members “want you to succeed in the program; there is a heart connection.” Another participant said staff members “helped me start believing in myself.” When discussing the impact of enrolling in SCSEP, participants shared views such as these: “SCSEP saved my life,” “SCSEP has given me a new life and a new passion for giving,” and “I’m actually saving money now.”

The intake and assessment processes provided participants opportunities to identify and prioritize their individual needs and find out about available resources. During assessment and service planning, SCSEP staff members helped participants set short-term goals, identify appropriate CSA placements and additional training offerings, set longer-term goals for unsubsidized employment and, in some cases, plan for eventual retirement. Many participants reported that the assessment provided by SCSEP staff members was helpful. They particularly appreciated the personalized and individualized support they received from SCSEP case managers. Participants reported that job counselors assured them of their ability to be successful in employment, which helped build confidence. The consistent support, in addition to regular meetings and job club activities, gave many participants the sense that they were supported in working towards their goals. Several participants mentioned liking that their case managers were also participants and had “been in [their] shoes.” Some participants also identified strongly with the program staff, making such statements as the following: “they are like family,” “they are very friendly, they make us feel part of a family,” and “they make us feel good.”

Several participants reported that the personalized attention and one-on-one support they received at the SCSEP project was in sharp contrast to the way in which services were provided at a One-Stop Career Center. Although One-Stop Career Centers provide valuable services to individuals seeking employment and are an important partner for most SCSEP programs, many participants expressed the view that staff members at One-Stop Career Centers did not provide the personalized attention and support they needed while they were considering basic and far-reaching life changes. When describing his interaction with the local One-Stop Career Center, one participant stated, “they get you in and get you out; they don’t care; they don’t think anyone over age 55 will have a chance at getting a job.” Participants in one focus group shared that the services offered through the One-Stop were not particularly helpful for older workers; one stated that the resume class “went too fast; it was superficial, I didn’t learn a thing.” For most participants, the SCSEP program was generally thought to provide a more welcoming and supportive environment for aging job seekers than the One-Stop Career Centers.

In general, the focus group data showed that participants felt SCSEP staff members were helpful as they carried out the intake and assessment process. There were, however, several participant recommendations for improvements during this stage. First, some participants expressed a desire to have the assessment and intake process be more targeted to their individual needs. Although most participants felt that SCSEP project staff members were responsive to their individual needs, some focus group participants (particularly those with higher levels of education or previous work experience) felt that program intake procedures were overly standardized and that staff members were not very flexible in adapting the IEP process to the needs of different participants. For example, while some respondents reported that the IEP was a useful service-planning tool, one participant described it as “repetitive” and indicated that it would be better if the IEP process were “a little bit more individualized.”

Some participants feel that SCSEP referrals to social services are responsive to their needs, but others do not. At several sites, participants were happy with how SCSEP project staff members had helped them access other services. At one site, for example, participants described how their project had provided a “financial benefits check-up” at intake, had helped refer participants to needed social services using a community resource directory, and had sponsored monthly participant meetings at which guest speakers made presentations on available community resources. One participant mentioned that he was getting a free cell phone with free, limited minutes per month. However, some participants, particularly those under 65 years of age, said that they had difficulty accessing the services they needed. Participants reported that, in some projects, the focus of SCSEP was strictly on employment and project staff members did not emphasize helping participants receive needed social services. In some cases, participants could not access needed services because they were not yet old enough to qualify for assistance. One participant explained the situation: “We need more comprehensive services; younger seniors may not be eligible for medical benefits, so we need a place to come to get services. It is most difficult for people in between, they are senior citizens but not yet 65, and can’t get the full complement of benefits. Even at the [medical] clinics, they still ask you to pay.”

It appears that some SCSEP projects place more emphasis on attending to participants’ broader health and social needs than do others. Participants served at these projects reported that through SCSEP they had accessed other types of assistance and programs, and that these had been a huge benefit. One participant explained, “[o]ftentimes seniors do not know what’s available to them, or are embarrassed to ask, but program staff are resourceful and have connected those who qualify with these other forms of assistance.” This participant mentioned specifically the assistance the agency has provided in helping seniors who had fallen victim to scams, where the agency has come in and helped put the senior in contact with the appropriate programs.

Participants enjoy the peer support and information-sharing that occurs during group meetings. Focus group participants said they enjoyed the quarterly participant meetings because they provided a forum for feedback, socializing, and networking. Several participants noted that it was helpful to meet peers through SCSEP who were in similar situations. By talking with other older workers, participants realized that they were not the only ones who were experiencing difficulty finding employment.

However, several participants complained about the lack of flexibility in the requirement that all SCSEP participants come together for periodic meetings. One respondent said these meetings were not always useful or relevant. Another participant said that he wished there was more flexibility about attendance at the required meetings, because the meetings were scheduled on the busiest work day at his host agency. “We have like 500 people who come in [to the food bank],” he said, “that’s our busiest day and they [the SCSEP staff members] are just inflexible.”

Views of the Community Service Assignment and Training

Focus group participants told us that after learning about what the SCSEP program had to offer, they were motivated to enroll for a number of different reasons. Some participants were most interested in improving their skills in order to find jobs or prepare for new occupations. For these participants, the most important aspect of the program was access to training, whether it was general, such as English language training or computer skills training, or training that would help them obtain jobs in specific targeted occupations.

Other participants were more focused on finding part-time work to increase household earnings. Many of these participants had not been able to obtain work of any kind even though they had been looking for a long time. For many of these participants, the objective was to find a job that was relatively pleasant and provided supplementary income. (When they found community service assignments that they liked, many of these participants would have been happy to stay in those assignments indefinitely.)

The third reason that many participants chose to enroll in SCSEP was to find an activity that offered them a sense of social engagement, a sense of making a valued contribution to the community, and an opportunity to interact with the public.

For most participants, these three goals were intertwined—they wanted to learn new skills, earn additional income, and feel engaged in life. For some, the most important reason was that it gave them a feeling of purpose. As one respondent indicated, participating in SCSEP gave him a reason to get up in the morning: “It gets you up and out of the house, which I think is good for people too, because people get depressed. They’re not working and have nothing to do. It’s getting you up and going.”

Participants enjoy important emotional and social benefits as a result of participating in the SCSEP program. Although SCSEP is primarily an employment program, many participants also spoke of improved mental and physical health because of their involvement with SCSEP and their community service assignments. As one participant stated, the program “makes you re-envision who you are...helps you bounce back...it’s great to wake up and have somewhere to go.” Participants were also very proud of the work they were doing in their host agencies and this made them feel better emotionally. “I don’t feel so useless,” said one participant. “Having not stopped working is good for my health. Other older people that stop working, moving around, see their health deteriorate.” Another participants said, “[m]y kids are all gone and [without the contact of the community service assignment], I would be alone.” Others shared they felt more energized and that their families were proud of them. One stated that she was using her brain in a way that she hadn’t used it in a long time; in her own words, “part of my brain had shut down... employment rebooted my life.”

An important aspect of this stage of participation in SCSEP is the building of self-confidence and a feeling of belonging; SCSEP ensures that this happens by providing many opportunities for social interactions and for giving back and contributing to the community. As one participant said, “SCSEP is a great program because it gives seniors the opportunity to be their best... I feel like I can be of service and continue helping people.”

Most respondents value the training programs they are participating in because the programs help them learn new skills. At one site, participants talked about courses they were taking in basic Spanish, “customer-service skills,” and computer skills. Participants explained that the Spanish and customer-service trainings were very useful because they helped them understand, in the words of one individual, that “there are different people out there with different points of view, new generations with a different outlook.” Participants were also very enthusiastic about the computer training they received. They explained that the project staff members had a lot of patience when it came to teaching them how to use computers, particularly given that some seniors are intimidated by computers. Participants also explained that the program offers seniors support for overcoming their fears of failure. One respondent—who was placed into a community service position to perform data entry before he even knew how to turn on a computer—found that he was actually motivated by the fact that other people did not believe that he could learn to use computers at his age. “I’ve been around for a long time and I’ve accomplished some nice things and for somebody to tell me that that I can’t do something [bothers me], so I did the classes.” He completed several computer classes at the One-Stop Career Center and received four “diplomas” for his efforts. As he reported, “I learned an awful lot with the computer because I wanted to learn.”

In addition to encouraging groups of participants to participate in relevant training, several projects arranged for participants to pursue particular occupational interests. At one project, a participant wanted to learn about backyard gardening. This participant was very pleased that the SCSEP project helped him connect with the extension program of a local state university and paid for classes there. The participant recommended that other SCSEP participants follow his lead in asking the project for opportunities and funds to attend training in the areas they are interested in. “While [the project]... may not be able to pay for tuition,” he said, “they may be able to pay the participant’s hourly wage for attendance.”

Many well-educated workers laid off as a result of the recession do not feel the program is well designed to meet their needs. Some older workers with higher education degrees and/or lengthy work histories who were laid off due to the recession and found themselves in dire financial straits needed to apply to the SCSEP program for assistance. This new wave of SCSEP enrollees has posed a challenge to some projects that are unaccustomed to meeting the needs of participants seeking training for and employment in more highly skilled and higher-paying jobs. Many of these participants felt that it was not fair that they are not permitted to work part-time jobs in addition to the minimum-wage community service assignments. One participant who had previously worked full-time as an administrative assistant explained, “It’s a big adjustment, going from \$30/hour to \$8/hour.” Another participant, who previously worked as an engineer and has an assignment washing dishes, said that he “didn’t join SCSEP to become a dishwasher.”

More highly skilled respondents requested that SCSEP projects develop new training programs above the basic skills level. While many participants were very satisfied with their host agency positions and felt that they were gaining valuable training and experience, several respondents felt that the community service assignments to which they had been assigned were not stretching their existing skill sets. For example, a former administrative assistant placed in a community service assignment that required data-entry skills felt that most of the skills she needed for her placement were skills she already had from her previous employment. Several respondents indicated that although their community service assignments were not good matches for the occupations in which they ultimately hoped to work, they were still gaining new skills that could be helpful in future jobs.

Participants believe staff members are quick to respond if there is a problem with their community service assignments. Many participants expressed appreciation for the fact that they knew they could call someone at SCSEP if they were having any issues with their community service assignments. One participant explained: “That’s one thing they’re excellent about. If we are assigned somewhere and we feel there might be a little bit of a problem that we’re having with [the host agency], [SCSEP staff members] are very open to trying to find you something else.” Another participant agreed with this sentiment: “I was having a very hard time

when I first came to [SCSEP] but I like the way that they problem-solve—they will protect you if you get into trouble or are not treated right on the job. In my case, they came to the site, and had a conference to see if some decision could be reached, [to find] where the problem lies. I felt protected and able to tell [staff members] about my problem—we are not treated like we are nobody, nothing. They have your back and will stand up for you.”

Participants believe that the SCSEP budget cuts have seriously impacted the ability of the program to meet their community service training and other training needs. Participants mentioned two ways in which the budget cuts have had a particularly negative impact on program services. The first is the reduction in the number of available hours of community service that was in place in most sites at the time of our process study visits. The reduction in weekly income that was a result of the reduced hours was problematic for many of the focus group participants. Although many participants expressed appreciation for the income that they do receive from the SCSEP program, they felt that it would “help tremendously” if the hours for SCSEP participants were restored to the levels that prevailed before the budget cuts. At one site, participants said that the 12 hours a week they are currently allowed to work are no longer sufficient (or barely sufficient) to allow them to support themselves. Several participants said that even with Social Security benefits to supplement the reduced pay they still don’t have adequate incomes to meet their expenses. Another participant shared the fact that it was difficult to survive on the income provided by the reduced hours: “On 17 hours, we could still survive... but on 12 hours, it is very difficult.”

Participants between 55 and 62 years of age—too young to qualify for supplemental funding—were particularly likely to lament that the wages they receive from their community service assignments are not high enough to cover their medical care, housing, food, and other expenses. One participant explained the situation for her and others: “The cuts in the SCSEP program have greatly impacted my life, as well as many that I have been in contact with. This is the only money they have to live on; it’s the difference between eating and going hungry, for some it’s the difference between a place to stay and living in car.”

The second negative impact of the budget cutbacks reported by participants is the reduction in available occupational skills training, which is a result both of decreased hours and decreased budgets for external training. At one site, participants told us that the computer classes that were free in 2010 now cost \$100. Many of these focus group participants, who are immigrants, were worried that newer participants may feel discouraged by the expense of the English and computer courses available and give up. “I took English and computer classes for only a month, until May 2011, when those services were cut,” said one participant. “Before that, I did receive those services at a different place, but even that place usually asked for \$100/month for

computers, and with English fees on top of that, the costs were too high. I have a wife in the program too, and [we] cannot both afford these costs.”

Many respondents strongly urged that the SCSEP program reinstate longer hours and provide free ESL and computer classes as they did before. In addition, some respondents said they thought the period of eligibility should be lengthened to allow for more advanced English and skill building, which would improve participants’ chances of obtaining unsubsidized employment.

Views of the Preparation Received for Transitioning to Unsubsidized Employment

The individuals who participated in the focus groups reported that as they made progress in gaining the skills laid out in their IEPs, project staff began encouraging them to look for unsubsidized employment. At most sites, SCSEP participants are required to search for unsubsidized employment and must submit a record of their efforts. The amount of assistance participants received from SCSEP staff members varied by site, depending on the size of the caseloads individual staff members were serving, and the skills of participant staff.

Most participants appreciate the support that project staff members are able to offer as they look for jobs. Participants indicated that the assistance staff members provided in all phases of their job searches was instrumental in helping them secure unsubsidized employment. Participants explained that staff members helped them discern what skills they had that qualified them for employment. Many participants indicated that program staff members helped them reach their employment goals by giving them encouragement and by helping them recognize their skills and abilities. One participant indicated that she came to the program to have a “cheerleader” because her confidence was low and she “didn’t know how to tell [employers] to hire me.” She said her job developer helped her “understand that I am more valuable than I thought I was.”

Moreover, participants appreciated that staff members helped them to uncover new interests and career possibilities. For example, one man who had previously worked in the telecommunications field developed an interest in social service through a community service assignment at a One-Stop Career Center in which he learned about peer coaching. Another man who had worked as a photographer and journalist came to like warehousing after doing a community service assignment at a food bank. Several participants appreciated the fact that staff members had provided them with relevant job listings and recommended that they apply for jobs or take civil service tests. In addition, participants said they valued the practical support they received in learning how to conduct themselves during interviews and create a resume. One participant described how the job developers “explained how to move around related and

unrelated experience [in my resume] depending on the type of job I'm applying for." Another respondent, who had only worked in two jobs in forty years, said he received help in creating a "sparkling resume."

It was common for participants to say that SCSEP staff members often acted as their allies and advocates during the job search process. "You know you're going to have someone backing you up," said one participant. "You're not just jumping in and saying 'here I am' and you know nothing about nothing. There's always a job monitor there for you." Another participant echoed this sentiment: "So actually, I feel that [my employment specialist and I]... are both trying—I think it's a dual process—we're both trying to get me out there to work."

Overall, feedback from focus group participants indicated that the level of individualized support that project staff members can provide for the job search process varies from project to project. At one site, some respondents said that program staff members can be relatively unhelpful, particularly when they need to communicate with these staff members by phone from an office in a different city. Some participants reported that they had received little or no job search assistance from SCSEP program staff members. Although not all participants in these sites had similar experiences, the participants who reported less helpful experiences felt that their concerns needed to be mentioned for the sake of improving employment opportunities for aging workers. A participant at another site commented that case managers did not usually have enough time to do everything for participants. "Program staff offer opportunities," she said, "but it is up to each individual to go out and make use of them."

Participants often reported that project staff members helped them stay motivated to conduct job searches even when they could not provide as much individualized support as they might want to. Some participants mentioned that having a specific job goal documented in the IEP was helpful. According to one participant, her job coach and her IEP "helped me do something other than just saying oh my gosh I need a job.... They kept me on track of what my goal is." One participant shared, "[Staff members] have been there for me to help keep me clear about what I need to be doing to stay on track with the program... they are gracious about that." Another quipped, "[t]hey are kindly as they kick you in the butt."

At some sites, participants reported that SCSEP staff members were able to help them get interviews and be considered for job openings, because they had good connections with local employers (usually at non-profit organizations and public agencies more than private sector for-profit businesses). One participant stated, "They carry a lot of weight here and know where to go" to find job openings. Another added that working with the job developers gives participants "a better chance than going out alone."

Staff members from some host agencies played integral parts in helping participants find unsubsidized employment. At one host agency, where they are unable to hire volunteers into

unsubsidized employment due to budget restrictions, participants said that staff members helped them tailor their resumes and cover letters to improve their chances of getting interviews elsewhere and provided them with access to fax machines and computers to send out resumes. Another said her community service assignment will help her transition into unsubsidized employment because it allowed her time to “play with the computer.” “You've got time to figure it out and kind of familiarize yourself with the different programs on it, without having somebody watching over you, so you can be comfortable when you do it.”

Not all respondents were satisfied with the ability of the SCSEP staff members to help them navigate the job search process with private for-profit employers. Although many participants would like to be hired on a permanent basis by their host agencies, respondents in some areas pointed out that the government agencies or non-profit organizations that host community service assignments were less likely to hire new workers than for-profit companies. In these areas, where most of the available jobs are with private-sector firms, participants wished the SCSEP program could do more to help them market themselves to private companies. In particular, participants mentioned that they would like the opportunity to do informational interviews with for-profit companies.

Some participants are very concerned that taking a job may cause them to lose access to public benefits that are important to their financial stability and survival. Participants expressed a desire for good information about how accepting unsubsidized employment might change their eligibility for medical benefits, housing subsidies, food stamps, energy assistance, and other financial benefits or services that are important to their well-being. They said that they need help to ensure that they did not lose their entitlements.

While most participants agreed that the goal of participating in SCSEP is to find employment, not all participants accepted this as true for themselves. Some participants admitted that they would prefer to stay in their community service assignments rather than transfer to unsubsidized employment in the private sector. Not all participants want to look for employment; some said that they are simply waiting until they turn 62 and then plan to take early retirement (drawing Social Security benefits).

A number of participants hope that they will be hired as regular employees by their host agencies. They want to stay in a position that has provided stability in their lives and made them feel valued. One current participant said that she is waiting for her host agency to make room in its budget to hire her, and that until then she is happy where she is. Another participant echoed this sentiment when he said he is not actively looking for another job because he feels happy doing what he is doing at his host agency. A former participant who has succeeded in obtaining a permanent job with his host agency stated his satisfaction: “it makes us feel so worthwhile that

we still can continue in our careers. And what a great feeling to still be self-sufficient and giving back. You can't ask for anything more.”

Many participants worry about whether they will ever be successful in finding unsubsidized jobs. Participants expressed varying levels of confidence about whether they will be successful in transitioning to unsubsidized employment. At one site, several participants who expressed the goal of transitioning to unsubsidized employment said they believe their age will hinder them in finding jobs. For example, one respondent stated that employers “want someone younger who they can keep longer and pay less” and that they “don't want to insure older workers.” In one focus group discussion, participants described completing more applications than they could count, and some reported going in for many interviews but never actually being offered jobs. Two participants under the age of 65 were particularly angry about their situations, because they wanted to work and support themselves and not rely on charity and public benefits, but ultimately had to do so because they were unable to find jobs.

At one site, some participants shared their anxiety about the durational limit and transitioning to unsubsidized employment. A participant who had been in the program for two years said, “I wonder...what is next for me? I've talked with supervisors that need receptionists, and I've been taking computer classes at church, getting a lot of training and learning new things. I have already learned what is necessary for my office. What I want to do now is to be able to keep my job.” Although they understand that SCSEP is a temporary program, participants often expressed a desire to stay in the program longer if they are not successful in finding work, particularly if they are not yet old enough to begin collecting Social Security and Medicare benefits.

In contrast, participants from another site sounded very optimistic about employment opportunities, stating that nothing about the program prevents them from achieving their goals because, in the words of one, “the opportunity is never-ending.” Participants at this site reported that they did not feel they experienced much age discrimination; instead, some felt that “most employers prefer seniors because they are more dependable.” One participant even added, half seriously, “Most young kids can't pass a drug test, but we can.”

In summary, even though they are often worried about what the future holds for them, focus group participants are quick to describe their appreciation for the numerous benefits they have enjoyed because of their involvement with the SCSEP program. Among the key benefits they cite are the mental health benefits of working. Statements such as “[SCSEP] keeps your mind occupied” and “[SCSEP] makes you feel like you're useful” were common. One participant said, “Seniors like to keep alert. That way, you don't fade in the background, die off quick.” Another declared, “I just don't feel complete without working.”

Participants are sorry that when they leave the program they will lose access to the training opportunities provided under the SCSEP program. One respondent said he wished these training opportunities could extend beyond program exit—he would like to continue with computer training and be able to come back to brush up on resume writing or interviewing skills. Overall, participants say that the SCSEP program has made a positive overall contribution to their quality of life.

Participants were candid about their SCSEP experiences during the focus groups. As mentioned previously, participants shared ways in which they thought the program could be improved, e.g., by increasing community service and training hours and providing additional supports, such as assistance with finding employment in for-profit companies. Although many participants expressed anxiety about the transition to unsubsidized employment and what would happen after they reached their durational time limits, nearly all participants also expressed great appreciation for the benefits they received from the program, which included training, staff support, and opportunities to increase their self-confidence and improve their quality of life.

IX. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

As documented in previous chapters, SCSEP projects are largely successful in recruiting and enrolling older workers with serious barriers to employment, providing participants with community service assignments at host agencies, and placing nearly half of program exiters who are available for work into unsubsidized jobs. Participants report extremely high levels of satisfaction with the services they receive from the SCSEP program. In focus groups, participants describe SCSEP projects as providing individualized support in a safe and welcoming setting. Although some participants had suggestions for improving program services (e.g., by providing a community service assignment that was better matched to their needs and interests or by offering access to more specialized training), in general participants praised the program and its staff members for being sensitive to their problems and responsive to their needs. These clear accomplishments are worthy of note. At the same time, the evaluation has identified a variety of potential concerns and areas in which there may be room for improvement. In this chapter we try to provide a balanced assessment of the strengths and weaknesses that have emerged from our close examination of local SCSEP operations.

To establish a foundation for further discussion, we begin by outlining some of the key features of the SCSEP program. Next, we review some of the structural and operational challenges that projects face in providing services to older workers throughout the nation. Placing SCSEP in a broader context, we also discuss the urgent need to improve the larger system of services available to older workers. Finally, we summarize what we have learned about designing and operating effective local projects and make some recommendations that may improve the ability of SCSEP to respond to the needs of older workers.

Key Features of SCSEP

SCSEP has a number of features that make the program distinct from other public workforce-investment programs. Taken together, these features make it difficult to assess program success using performance measures that focus narrowly on employment-related outcomes.

1. Priority is given to those most in need.

The SCSEP program is distinctive among public workforce-investment programs in giving priority to individuals with incomes below or near the poverty level¹¹⁷ who also have serious barriers to employment and may suffer from discrimination against older workers. The program also is designed to reach out to individuals who are particularly vulnerable to lack of employment income because they are not eligible for Social Security retirement benefits (e.g. farmers and individuals without a significant work history). Furthermore, as noted in more detail below, the SCSEP program recruits and serves individuals who are nearing the end of their working careers, rather than new labor-market entrants or mid-career workers.

The commitment to serving individuals at serious disadvantage in the labor market has shaped the SCSEP program design and service philosophy in important ways. Because the program tends to serve individuals who have less work experience and lower levels of education and skills than the average worker, the program design emphasizes placing participants into work experience and training positions that build basic workplace skills. As noted in Chapter V, community service assignments commonly involve entry-level and relatively low-skilled tasks including janitorial duties, food preparation or dishwashing, customer service, office reception or filing, or home health aide duties. Most of the jobs that participants secure at the ends of their training periods pay only minimum wage or slightly above minimum wage, and many do not offer health insurance benefits (which would be especially important to those under 65 who do not yet qualify for Medicare).

The general program orientation to individuals with serious employment barriers is a feature of the program that enhances its broader benefits—SCSEP is providing a much-needed source of income to individuals who do not have many other options for earning a living.

2. The SCSEP service model requires paid work experience in a community service setting.

In contrast to some other workforce development programs that draw on a broad menu of services and refer participants to an individualized sequence of services, SCSEP has a standardized service model. All individuals are matched to a community service assignment when they enroll in the program. Although a participant can be paid for participation in additional activities that supplement the community service assignment—such as training classes and workshops provided by the project or participation in a training program offered by an

¹¹⁷ As noted in Chapter I, individuals must have household incomes at or below 125% of the poverty level to be eligible for SCSEP.

outside education or training institution—the community service assignment remains the core service used to prepare participants for transition to unsubsidized jobs.¹¹⁸

3. Local SCSEP projects build strong training partnerships with host agencies.

A hallmark of the program is its use of host agencies as low-cost sources of occupational skills training for participants. SCSEP projects establish mutually beneficial relationships between local host agencies and older workers, each of which benefits from an exchange of valued services. Host agencies—often struggling to make ends meet—agree to provide valuable training and work experience to older workers who have not been successful looking for jobs on their own. In exchange, older workers assigned to community service training positions provide labor at no cost to the host agencies, which helps the agencies carry out their civic or social missions. The success of this mutual exchange is responsible, in large part, for the fact that SCSEP has survived, largely intact, for over 45 years. By reducing the need to purchase occupational skills training from outside sources, the use of host agencies as the primary source of training for participants has enabled SCSEP projects to provide rich services to participants while staying within their operational cost limits. Host agencies also provide great value to the SCSEP program by hiring a significant proportion of the participants placed into community service assignments.

4. SCSEP provides a broad range of benefits to participants and society.

Although SCSEP has been administered by the U.S. Department of Labor since 1967, program legislation and regulations have always acknowledged that the program has broader objectives than many other training or employment programs. The initial legislative objectives included providing income support for unemployed low-income persons with poor employment prospects, supporting non-profit community organizations, and offering low-income older persons a meaningful opportunity to engage in purposeful activity. SCSEP projects were to assist older workers to become employed in private-sector jobs “when appropriate.”¹¹⁹ As noted in Chapter I, the objectives of the program have evolved over time, transforming the view of community service assignments from long-term “jobs” to time-limited training opportunities that result in

¹¹⁸ Once an individual is determined to be job ready, several projects permit the participant to transition to job search activities for all of his or her paid SCSEP hours. Alternatively, a participant may be assigned full-time or part-time to an OJE training position as he or she gets ready to make the transition to unsubsidized employment.

¹¹⁹ *The Senior Community Service Employment Program: Its History and Evolution*. A Report by the National Council on the Aging to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Aging. House of Representatives, One Hundredth Congress, Second Session, U.S. Government Printing Office, December 1988. Downloaded from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED306424&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED306424 on June 15, 2012.

unsubsidized employment leading to economic self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, program descriptions continue to recognize that SCSEP creates a broad stream of benefits both for participants and for society.

Although the scope of this study did not include an examination of the social benefits created by the community service work performed by SCSEP participants, we did look at participants' perceptions about the broader benefits of program participation. As discussed in Chapter VIII, participants are emphatic about the personal social and health benefits of participating in the program. They talk about how the program helped them address feelings of depression and worthlessness, restored their self-confidence, and provided them with activities that have created a positive sense of well-being from belonging to a community and being able to make a social contribution.

The key features of SCSEP described above give the program a strong sense of its unique identity. However, local project operators perceive some tensions among the multiple program objectives, as described below.

Perceived Tensions in the SCSEP Program Model

Local project managers struggle with how to prioritize the different core performance measures established for SCSEP. They also expressed concern about how to further the program's "quality of life" objectives for which there are no available performance measures. Below we describe several of the conundrums with which project managers must grapple.

1. In most cases, the more participants with serious employment barriers a project enrolls, the lower its entered-employment-rate performance measure is likely to be.¹²⁰

Projects are supposed to give priority for SCSEP enrollment to applicants with serious barriers to employment. In general, however, the more serious the employment barriers faced by a SCSEP applicant, the more difficult it will be for a project to place that individual into an unsubsidized job. SCSEP project managers have to work hard to achieve a delicate balance between recruiting and enrolling participants who are most in need and reaching their required employment rate targets.

2. Using participants to staff SCSEP projects fits well with the program model but may lower the overall quality of service.

¹²⁰ As discussed in Chapter VII, the evaluation determined that several of the priority-of-service criteria do *not* have a negative relationship with employment.

SCSEP is distinctive among public workforce development programs in its widespread use of participants as project staff members. This practice has strong support, because it creates a project staff that matches many of the demographic characteristics of the participants being served. It also significantly reduces project operational costs, because— although they are project staff—wages paid to “participant staff” can be counted toward meeting the 75% wage expenditure requirement, rather than counting as program operational costs. Nevertheless, using participants as SCSEP staff members has possible adverse consequences. Although projects tend to recruit “the best and brightest” of their participants for jobs as participant staff, such staff members rarely have formal training in counseling or job coaching skills, and are not generally familiar with community resources (social services or education/training providers) at the time they are designated as SCSEP staff members. This suggests that participant staff members need extensive training before they begin to provide direct services to other SCSEP participants. Most projects do not appear to have the capacity to provide such training, although it is common for a new participant staff person to “shadow” another staff member for a few weeks when he or she is first starting out.

3. The participants that work as SCSEP project staff perform valuable work for the program, but for precisely that reason they are often not encouraged to transition rapidly to unsubsidized employment.

Although many projects pay participant staff members higher wages than other SCSEP participants to recognize the value of the work they perform for the program, project managers have a strong incentive to retain participant staff members in the program for as long as possible, because it is very disruptive to local projects to have to replace and retrain replacement staff members. Although other SCSEP participants are encouraged to find jobs that will more adequately meet their financial needs and employment interests, participant staff members are often too valuable to program operations for managers to encourage their rapid transition to a private-sector job, even if they are the participants that are most likely to be able to find high-quality private sector jobs.

4. The minimum-wage, part-time pay for the SCSEP community service training positions is often insufficient to cover participants’ basic living costs.

Although the minimum-wage pay rate combined with limited number of hours worked per week keep SCSEP program costs under control, these features also tend to make it difficult for participants to cover their basic living expenses during program participation. Because participants are not permitted to work at another part-time job while participating in SCSEP, there are a number of otherwise eligible older workers who cannot afford to participate in the program. Particularly during Program Year 2011, when most projects had to reduce the number of paid hours available to each participant because of over-enrollment—often to 16 hours per

week or less—many participants reported that they were approaching the point at which they would no longer be able to afford to participate in the program.

5. Many SCSEP participants face negative financial consequences from other benefit programs that they depend on if they accept unsubsidized jobs.

Many SCSEP participants need to receive benefits from other sources (e.g., subsidized housing, energy assistance, health benefits) to make ends meet. Although SCSEP wages do not have to be counted as income in determining eligibility for a number of other benefit programs, once an individual takes an unsubsidized job, his/her wages will be counted as income and other benefits may be reduced or eliminated. This possibility (whether real or merely feared) may act as a strong disincentive for participants to move to unsubsidized employment.¹²¹

6. When a participant leaves SCSEP, unsubsidized employment often does not lead to economic self-sufficiency.

An important goal of the SCSEP program is promoting financial independence for older workers living at or near the poverty level. SCSEP emphasizes the importance of gaining unsubsidized employment as the means of securing financial self-sufficiency, when feasible. However, the jobs that SCSEP participants usually obtain (when they obtain them) are low-wage jobs, often without health benefits. Thus many former participants' earned income is not sufficient for economic self-sufficiency, much less financial security.¹²²

7. Not all SCSEP participants look for work upon exit from SCSEP. Particularly if they entered SCSEP near or after typical retirement age, some SCSEP participants decide after participating in SCSEP that they no longer want to have a regular job. Others may no longer be able to work because of health barriers. Although the SCSEP program may have provided many benefits to these individuals while they were enrolled in the program (and they likely provided benefits to their host agencies), those who are physically able to work when they exit are counted

¹²¹ Individuals over the age of 65 (or 66 or 67, depending on their birthdate), who are old enough to qualify for Social Security benefits that do not decrease in response to earned income, can use earned income to supplement Social Security benefits. However, for individuals whose other benefits will decrease in response to earned income, the financial calculations to determine whether they will be better off as a result of working can be very complex.

¹²² Although the average project-level performance on the post-program earnings measure has been increasing over time (*Workforce System Results*, U.S. Department of Labor, http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/quarterly_report/Sept_30_2011/WorkforceRprt_Sept2011_Final_WE_B.pdf), the average annualized earnings for those employed at exit are only slightly above the SCSEP eligibility level, set at 125% of the poverty level.

as unsuccessful exits from the program. This situation is an unavoidable consequence of serving a target population whose members are at or near the ends of their typical working lives.

One implication of the difficulties described above is that SCSEP’s employment-related performance measures do not do an adequate job of reflecting the success of a project in meeting the program’s multiple objectives. Although entering unsubsidized employment is one important measure of success for SCSEP participants, it is not equally achievable for all participants and should not be viewed as the only outcome denoting success. Program managers point out that for some participants with serious employment barriers, a paid job is an unlikely outcome.

Different project managers respond differently to these perceived tensions, resolving the conflict by leaning one way or the other. Among the projects we visited, some managers have adopted a narrow employment focus, while others consciously promote a broader perspective on improving quality-of-life outcomes. One local project manager with whom we talked during the site visits has developed a project culture that encourages staff members to make sure that when SCSEP participants exit the program they are better off overall, in a holistic sense, than when they entered the program, even if they don’t end up transitioning to employment.¹²³ One way of validating such strategies is to recognize that they are, in fact, carefully considered responses to a conflicting set of imperatives and realities.

Other SCSEP Project Challenges

In addition to trying to balance the tensions between competing SCSEP program goals, local projects face several additional challenges imposed, at least in part, by economic factors external to the program.

1. Older workers with higher levels of education and work experience need a different kind of community service assignment than the typical SCSEP participant.

As described in Chapter III, SCSEP serves a wide spectrum of individuals with differing circumstances. Some participants, for example, have only limited or unstable prior histories of paid employment, while others have substantial work experience.¹²⁴ As a result of their differing circumstances, SCSEP participants also have widely varying employment objectives and needs. SCSEP projects are well equipped to serve the needs of a wide range of older workers who seek

¹²³ As described in Chapter V, this project requires all participants to attend a “healthy living” workshop that teaches participants skills for self-management of chronic health problems in addition to requiring them to attend a workshop that teaches job search skills.

¹²⁴ Particularly during periods of high unemployment—when older workers are competing with a larger pool of unemployed job seekers—more older workers with stable work histories experience long-term unemployment and cannot find new jobs on their own.

assistance from the program, as long as part-time employment in a community service training position can be used to address their training and reemployment needs. Dislocated workers—who may have higher levels of education and more substantial work experience than other SCSEP participants—offer particular challenges for projects, because they are often interested in returning to full-time work in relatively well-paying jobs that can provide financial stability.¹²⁵ In serving dislocated workers, SCSEP projects are handicapped by their typical practice of preparing participants for relatively low-skilled and low-paying positions. Some projects find it difficult to develop appropriate service plans and community service assignments that will meet the needs of dislocated workers. We observed several instances in which highly educated SCSEP participants were assigned to community service assignments that did not appear to draw on their more extensive education and skills (e.g., a laid-off engineer assigned to a position where his primary job responsibility was washing dishes in a senior center; an immigrant who worked as a doctor in his country of origin assigned to a position as a custodian).¹²⁶ However, we also learned about positive instances in which SCSEP case managers were successful in matching dislocated workers to community service assignments that provided meaningful training opportunities and prepared them for reemployment in jobs that could draw on their prior skills and experience.

2. During periods of high unemployment, SCSEP projects find it harder to place as many participants into unsubsidized jobs.

Even during times of vigorous economic growth and low unemployment, securing jobs for older workers with barriers to employment is—almost by definition—a challenge. The difficult economic conditions of the last several years have thus intensified the challenges faced by SCSEP grantees and their local project sites as they continue to prioritize service to those most in need while simultaneously trying to maintain adequate entered-employment rates for their included exiters. In a context of high unemployment, SCSEP participants not only have fewer job opportunities, they face mounting competition from younger workers willing to take jobs that are less desirable than those they might otherwise consider in a better economy. Moreover, in a tight job market, the negative stereotypes of older workers held by many employers may come to the surface more readily and affect hiring decisions. ETA responded to this difficulty by lowering the national goal for entered employment from 47% to 43% between Program Year 2010 and Program Year 2011.

¹²⁵ Dislocated workers often meet one or more of the formal priority-of-service criteria, because many live in an area of persistently high unemployment and are assessed as having severely limited employment prospects.

¹²⁶ This problem was frequently observed in a project that serves recent immigrants with advanced degrees in their native country, who cannot meet the licensing requirements to practice their original professions in the U.S.

3. *Dramatic shifts in SCSEP funding levels pose serious operational challenges to local project operators.*

As described in previous chapters, local SCSEP project operators have encountered serious operational challenges stemming from major funding volatility. The rapid and dramatic changes in program funding between Program Year 2008 and Program Year 2011 forced project operators to make major adjustments within short periods of time. In Program Years 2009 and 2010, as SCSEP received major funding infusions to support older workers at the beginning of the recession, project operators had to gear up for increased recruitment and enrollment and expand their capacity to serve more participants. Then, as the recession wore on and the federal budget tightened, project operators were abruptly required to change course and scale back their operations. At the time we conducted the process study site visits, it was apparent that the sharp reduction in SCSEP funding levels between Program Years 2010 and 2011 had dramatically interrupted “normal” program operations and forced projects to freeze enrollments, accelerate efforts to place existing participants into unsubsidized employment, and cut back on additional skill training outside the community service assignment. In addition, projects have had to pare back the number of regular unsubsidized employees. Increasingly, their limited operational budgets are not sufficient to pay for significant numbers of professional staff members. As a result, most projects must depend on participant staff to provide direct services to other participants, which exacerbates the challenges associated with the use of participant staff members discussed above.

4. *Budget cutbacks in the public and non-profit sectors have reduced the capacity of host agencies to hire SCSEP participants.*

Across the case study sites, estimates of the proportion of all participants who are permanently hired by their host agencies range from a high of 85 percent to a low of 10 percent. In nearly half of the case study sites, host agencies are estimated to be the largest source of employment for participants who exit the program. Some project managers report that the ability of host agencies to hire SCSEP participants is declining in the current fiscal environment, because of budget cutbacks within the non-profit organizations and public agencies that participate as host agencies.

5. *SCSEP projects find it difficult to draw on the resources of American Job Centers to support participants in finding jobs.*

Although SCSEP projects require all participants to register for services at American Job Centers and encourage participants to take advantage of core job search training and job search tools available at Centers, SCSEP project managers report that SCSEP participants perceive these services as being unresponsive to their needs. We were told by many SCSEP staff members that

American Job Center staff members refer all workers over 55 to local SCSEP projects, whether or not they are eligible for SCSEP.¹²⁷ Many participants we talked with also reported that many American Job Center staff members are not welcoming to older workers. Although this perception may not be totally accurate—WIA adult and dislocated worker programs do enroll a significant number of older workers,¹²⁸—it is true that American Job Centers do not have sufficient staff members to provide the personalized attention and one-on-one staff support that many SCSEP participants want, especially in core services that rely heavily on computers for job searching. SCSEP participant-respondents consistently told us they were not comfortable using computers and preferred personal attention from a case manager. It may also be the case that some American Job Center staff members do not perceive SCSEP participants as being good job candidates because of their characteristics or do not view them as being serious about finding jobs if their goal is part-time employment. Whatever the reason, in the absence of good coordination linkages with American Job Centers, SCSEP staff members often have to take responsibility for training participants on how to search for jobs effectively as well as providing individualized support to help participants find jobs.

We observed some notable exceptions to this discouraging pattern in a few of the process study sites. As described in Chapter V, some projects co-locate SCSEP case management and job development staff members within American Job Centers, encourage participants to use the core services available within Centers, and/or require participants to attend job search training workshops available within American Job Centers. In a number of cases, staff members and participants reported that these workshops were valuable.

Practices Used by High-Performing Projects

Given the substantial variation in performance levels on the entered-employment rate across local projects, as discussed in Chapter VII, we were interested in finding out whether certain features of local service designs and organizational arrangements are more effective than others

¹²⁷ Because the SCSEP qualitative evaluation design did not call for interviews with American Job Center staff in every site, we cannot report on how American Job Center staff members perceive SCSEP participants overall. In sites where we did talk with American Job Center staff members, they did not seem hostile to older workers as much as understaffed and unable to respond to any customers seeking individualized job search assistance. SCSEP staff and participants may be interpreting the emphasis on self-service for customers receiving core services as hostility to older workers.

¹²⁸ As referenced in Chapter III, the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs served about 3 times as many older workers as the SCSEP program during the study period. Individuals over 55 made up slightly more than 12% of the WIA exiters during this period. Entered-employment outcomes for older workers served by WIA, though less than the entered-employment rate for all adults and dislocated workers, are significantly higher than the average entered-employment rate for SCSEP.

in supporting the program’s entered employment outcomes. Unfortunately, the SPARQ data provides little descriptive information on project service designs or service delivery practices. Although we collected detailed information from the 29 local case study sites about variations in project organization, staffing, services, and performance management strategies, with only 29 observations, we cannot test statistically whether certain practices are associated with improved entered-employment outcomes. Using the data recorded in individual case studies, however, we looked for differences in the practices used by the ten highest-performing process study sites and the practices used by the remaining, lower-performing sites. To define “highest performing,” we used the findings from the project-level regression model described in Chapter VII.¹²⁹ We computed the difference between the actual entered-employment rate achieved by the 29 case study projects for Program Years 2009 and 2010 and the entered employment rate predicted by the model, which controls for participant characteristics and contextual variables. The difference between these two can be thought of as that part of a project’s performance that is due to unmeasured factors associated with project design and operational practices. A project whose actual performance was higher than its predicted performance based on the factors included in the regression model is a high performer. A project whose actual performance was lower than its predicted performance is a low performer.¹³⁰

For purposes of analysis, we ordered all 29 case study projects along a performance axis based on the measure of high vs. low performance just described and drew an arbitrary line that separated the ten highest performing projects from the remaining nineteen. As shown in Exhibit IX-1, we found that the ten highest-performing projects were somewhat more likely than the other projects to engage in the following practices:

- Station some or all SCSEP direct service staff members at an American Job Center.
- Rotate participants to a new CSA after six months or less.
- Directly provide job search instruction or job clubs. (As shown in Figure IX-1, the high-performing projects were no more likely than other projects to require participants to participate in job search instruction or job clubs; merely to offer these services to interested participants).

¹²⁹ The sub-recipient-level regression model described in Chapter VII measured how the entered employment rate outcome at the project level was influenced by participant characteristics and contextual variables, including local unemployment rate, urban versus rural character of the project’s service area, and the size of the project in modified positions funded.

¹³⁰ There was a high correlation between having a high un-adjusted performance on the entered-employment measure and having a high performance on the adjusted performance measure. Eight of the ten highest performers using the adjusted measure were also in the top ten projects on the “un-adjusted” entered-employment outcomes, and all 10 were “above average” in their performance on the entered-employment rate.

These ten projects also were more likely than the others to report that SCSEP participants used the core services available at American Job Centers and found these services useful. These findings are highly speculative and, given the small numbers of observations, are not statistically significant. However, they offer some hypotheses that could be tested in future studies.

Exhibit IX-1
Frequency of Practices used by the Highest-performing Projects
Compared to the Other Case Study Projects

Practice	Highest-performing Sites n=10	Remainder of Sites n=19
Directly provides job search instruction or job clubs	70%	42%
Arranges for many participants to use American Job Center job search services	60%	42%
Stations some direct service staff members at American Job Centers	30%	21%
Rotates participants to new CSAs after six months or less	30%	16%
Requires participation in job search instruction or job clubs	20%	36%

Not surprisingly, four of the five practices used more extensively by the highest-performing projects than by the other projects are related to the features of the job search and job placement services that are available to SCSEP participants. Taken together, these findings suggest that it is important for SCSEP projects to help participants look for and find other jobs if they do not receive job offers from their host agencies. They also suggest that it is more effective to make job search support services attractive than to make participation mandatory.

The fifth practice—the policy of encouraging relatively frequent rotation of participants from one community service assignment to another—is described by a number of projects as an effort to keep host agencies and participants alike from getting “too comfortable” with particular community service assignments and to remind both parties that the community service assignment is intended to be temporary training opportunity rather than a permanent job.

Recommendations for Program Improvement

The findings of the evaluation—particularly as summarized in this chapter—suggest a number of strategies that might be used to improve the Senior Community Service Employment Program. The following changes, implemented at the grantee or local project level, may help to raise the quality of the services provided to SCSEP participant staff and other SCSEP participants:

- To respond to the challenges associated with the use of participant staff, including the findings that many projects provide little formal training to participant staff members and that projects have difficulty responding to turn-over among participant staff, projects could do the following:
 - Provide formal training to prepare the participant staff members who provide case management, job development, and/or job search support services to SCSEP participants. This training could draw on training modules developed and provided at the grantee level, arrangements for participant staff members to take relevant training courses at local educational institutions, or formal on-the-job training provided by experienced SCSEP staff members.
 - Develop a schedule for recruiting new participant staff members on a regular basis and help existing participant staff members find unsubsidized jobs that build on the skills they have gained by working as SCSEP staff members.
- In response to the identified difficulties in providing appropriate community service assignments to dislocated workers who come to the program with higher levels of formal education and work experience, projects could invest staff time and energy to develop community service assignments and supplementary training that would be effective in developing relevant skills for this segment of SCSEP participants.
- To respond to the finding that SCSEP participants perceive that American Job Centers are not “friendly” to older workers, including SCSEP participants, projects could develop closer relationships with American Job Center managers and pool energy and resources to develop job search training workshops and job clubs that will better meet the needs of older workers.

Because local program managers said that they perceive a tension between different core performance measures and do not have any guidelines for furthering additional “quality of life” goals for participants, ETA and national and state grantees can help clarify program policies and improve the guidance provided to local project operators in the following ways:

- Reaffirm and clarify how to prioritize the different SCSEP program objectives.
- Provide additional guidance on how to use the employment-related core performance measures to guide program design and operations, without minimizing the importance of other program objectives.
- Help local projects identify appropriate trade-offs between helping participants obtain unsubsidized employment and helping them plan for their long-term financial stability and eventual retirement.
- Encourage local projects to provide participants with detailed information that will enable them to make informed choices about the various sources of support available to them (e.g., Social Security benefits, financial assistance for low-

income individuals, social services in the local community) and to make informed decisions about their employment goals.

Finally, because of the perceived difficulties in coordinating SCSEP and WIA/American Job Center resources on behalf of older workers, ETA may want to focus attention and make specific investments to improve the responsiveness of the services available to older workers within American Job Centers. There are several reasons why we believe it is essential for the SCSEP program and American Job Centers to pool their expertise and resources to improve services for all older workers. The first is the fact that the SCSEP program does not have the capacity to serve more than a tiny percentage of the older workers with employment barriers who are currently unemployed and having difficulty finding reemployment in a tough labor market. SCSEP project managers received an indication of the large demand for SCSEP services during Program Year 2011, when projects had to stop enrolling new participants because they started the year with more participants than their budgets could sustain. Most projects initiated wait lists, which often grew so long that they exceeded the annual service capacity of their programs. The demand for services by older workers is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years as the U.S. workforce continues to age.

The second reason for pooling the expertise and resources of American Job Center staffs and SCSEP staffs is that American Job Centers need help in developing effective strategies to support older job seekers. The most impressive effort along these lines that we learned about during the process study site visits was the development of a job club for older workers (using WIA funds) that was co-led by the SCSEP training coordinator and a staff member of the local American Job Center. This intensive three-week-long 60-hour job club allowed small groups of older workers (both SCSEP participants and other older workers) to receive services that included videotaped mock interviews, the sharing of job leads, and mutual support. Participants were very positive about the experience and both the SCSEP and WIA program staff members considered this a win-win proposition.¹³¹ In addition to this effort, we observed promising efforts in several sites to assign SCSEP participants as resource room staff members within American Job Centers and have them assist older workers in using available core services. Arranging for SCSEP staff members or SCSEP participants to provide individualized support to older workers within American Job Centers would benefit both SCSEP participants and the general public. Although it is not clear where funding to support coordinated efforts by SCSEP and WIA will come from in the current budget environment, the need for more effective services for older workers is compelling.

¹³¹ This innovative practice had to be sharply reduced in scope and time allotted during Program Year 2011 because of WIA funding cutbacks.

Conclusion

The current study identifies a number of strengths of the SCSEP service model: individual service plans are developed to meet the particular needs of each participant; strong and productive relationships arise between SCSEP projects and host agencies; case management and monitoring services are provided in ways that ensure that each participant is developing job-relevant skills; and SCSEP staff make sure that participants learn how to look for jobs and receive assistance in finding jobs that are well-matched to their financial needs and job-related skills.

To realize the program's multiple goals, local projects should draw on the potential of SCSEP services to help participants realize their employment potential while continuing to recruit and serve the most-in-need among the older worker population.

The evaluation has identified a number of the factors that influence the ability of local projects to achieve their performance goals; these include local unemployment levels, the ages and education levels of participants, and the extent to which participants possess individual employment barriers. The evaluation has also suggested that employment outcomes reflect only one aspect of the program's objectives, which also include increasing the overall quality of life of low-income elders who are having difficulty meeting their financial needs.

The recommendations we offer are intended to strengthen the design and operation of SCSEP services provided to participants at the local project level. We also encourage ETA to draw on SCSEP experience in serving older workers to improve the ability of the larger system of public workforce investment services to meet the needs of older workers.

APPENDIX A. TOPIC GUIDE FOR SCSEP NATIONAL GRANTEE INTERVIEW

Introduction

Hi, my name is ___ and I am with _____. As you may know, Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA) is under contract with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration to conduct a process and outcomes study of the SCSEP. Mathematica Policy Research serves as SPRA’s subcontractor on this study.

At this stage we would like to ask for *your perspectives on national program management*. This interview should not take more than 90 minutes and will be a valuable part of the information collection process for our study while also helping us to refine our research questions for planned visits to local programs as well as for outcome data analysis. During our conversation we hope to learn *what you consider to be the most important features of the SCSEP, how you define and measure success, and the different ways in which you interact with your local programs*.

Please be candid and forthcoming in your responses. We will maintain your confidentiality within the limits of the law and in no case will reveal the content of our discussions in a manner that identifies you or your organization to the Department of Labor or other parties external to our research team.

If you are comfortable with me doing so, I would like to tape-record our conversation for my notes only—the tape will not be used by anyone outside the research team. If you would like me to turn off the tape recorder at any point, please let me know.

A. Program Context

1. Grantee Philosophy and Goals

- Please describe the *philosophy and goals of your larger organization*. How does the SCSEP program fit into these larger organizational goals?
- *Do you manage other programs for this population?* What is their relationship with your SCSEP program?
- What do you consider to be the *philosophy and goals of the SCSEP program?* How would you arrange the SCSEP goals in order of priority? Have they

changed over time? If so, how? How and where are they articulated (probe: a mission statement, promotional materials, trainings)?

- Please discuss your view of the *roles of the U.S. Department of Labor/ETA, state governments, your national organization management, your sub-recipients, and local stakeholders (including agencies on aging)* in the establishment and interpretation of these goals.
- Do you perceive any *tensions between the goals* of community service assignment, attainment of self-sufficiency, and preparing participants for competitive employment? Please elaborate. If so, how do you reconcile the competing pressures?

2. Influence of Local Conditions

Please discuss some of the important ways in which your program is *affected by specific local conditions* in the different communities where your sub-recipients operate.

3. History of Grantee's SCSEP Involvement and Grantee Structure

- *How long have you been a SCSEP grantee?* How has your program evolved over this period?
- Please discuss how your *relationships with the local programs* emerged and developed.
- How would you characterize your *program structure*? Is it uniform across local sites?
- What are some important aspects that *distinguish your SCSEP program from others?* (Prompt: training approach, industry focus, intensity and length of services, organizational structure...) How do you explain these differences?

4. Influence of National SCSEP Program and Program Office

- What guidance and technical assistance have you received from the national SCSEP office?
- In what ways has ETA's program office helped you clarify program priorities, develop and apply promising practices, or build capacity?
- What activities have been helpful (probe: Webinars, TEGs)? How? What activities have been less helpful and why?
- How have various legislative and regulatory considerations affected your program?
 - Requirement to give priority to individuals with barriers to employment
 - 48-month time limits for individuals; 27 month average time limit for programs (and possibility of requesting exemptions)
 - Equity of service requirements
 - Emphasis on helping participants transition to unsubsidized employment

- Emphasis on training in skills in demand in the regional economy
- Coordination with WIA programs

B. Activities of National Grantee

1. Influence on Local Program Operations

- Discuss your organization's approaches to *choosing host service agencies*.
- Discuss your *influence on local recruitment and service delivery procedures*: organization's approaches to recruitment, assessment, establishment of individual employment plans, and training of participants.
- Discuss your organization's approaches to *job development and placing participants in jobs*.
- *How do you gauge your success as a program? What metrics and benchmarks do you use?* Discuss your continuous improvement activities.

2. Relationship with Local Programs

- How and how often do you communicate with your local affiliates/sub-grantees?
- What topics do these communications address? Who sets the agenda?
- How do you communicate your national policies, procedures, practice recommendations and priorities pertaining to host service agency selection and matching, participant recruitment and assessment, and job development to the local programs? Discuss the frequency and modalities of such communication.
- *Which programmatic areas are largely the province of the national office and which ones are left to local programs' discretion? Why? How has this division of labor changed over time? What changes do you anticipate making, if any, and why?*
- To what extent does your national office serve as a *source of guidance and technical assistance for local programs*? To what degree does it perform this role directly or through facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, whether in-person or virtual? Why?
- What do you look at to determine *whether a local SCSEP program operator is doing a good job*?
 - (Prompts: Characteristics of participants served; types of host agencies used; extent of training/skills development for participants; performance outcomes (which ones))
- What strategies do you use as a national grantee to support/ monitor your local sites and improve their effectiveness?
- When you identify a *need for improvement* at the local level, what strategies do you use to influence local operations (e.g., corrective action plan, technical assistance)?
- What *challenges* do you encounter *in improving local program performance*?

C. Local Site Operations

Front-End Services: Recruitment, Orientation, Assessment

- How do your local programs tend to *recruit* participants? How does this vary across sites?
- What is the format of the *orientation* provided? Is it *standardized*?
- How are *assessments carried out and IEPs* established? To what extent is the process individualized? What commonalities and differences are there across your local programs?
- How do the programs determine *whether someone is “job-ready”*? Where are such customers referred?

Training

- Please tell me more about how your local sites structure *the skills training activities* provided to local SCSEP participants:
 - Types of training offered (skills and levels)
 - To whom training is offered
 - How training is linked to the community service assignment
 - Training offered on-site vs. off-site
 - How local sites work with host agencies to develop curricula
 - How you assess whether participants have learned the desired skills
 - Other training providers you work in addition to host agencies
- Tell me about your experiences with *on-the-job experience (OJE)* to date.
 - Frequency of OJE placements and types of employers and OJE positions
 - Success of OJE placements
 - Main barriers or challenges encountered in using OJE
 - Ideas to improve quality and/or frequency of OJE placements

Working with Individuals with Serious Employment Barriers.

- Tell me about your experiences working with individuals with serious employment barriers.
- How do the rules about the *hardest-to-serve* influence recruitment and enrollment?
- Under what circumstances can local program operators decide that someone is *not capable of filling a community service job*? What would happen to such a person?
- What different *types of services are needed* to work with individuals with serious employment barriers?

- What types of *outcomes are achievable* for individuals with serious employment barriers?

Linkages with Other Organizations

How do your local SCSEP sites collaborate with and provide linkages to other organizations, including organizations that serve older Americans and other public workforce development programs (e.g., One-Stop Career Centers)?

- What types of linkages have you established with these organizations (e.g., to create SCSEP community service positions)?
- How is the SCSEP program strengthened by its linkages with other agencies and programs?
- What are the major barriers or challenges to coordinating SCSEP services with other local programs and providers?

D. Wrap-Up

- What would help your organization better meet the needs of aging workers?
- As part of this evaluation, we will be analyzing SPARQ data and customer satisfaction data for PY 2009. Are there specific questions you would like to have us address with the outcome analysis?
- Is there anything we haven't discussed that you think the study team should be aware of?

APPENDIX B. STATE SCSEP DIRECTOR TOPIC GUIDE

Introduction

Social Policy Research Associates is conducting a national study of SCSEP for the U.S. Department of Labor. (I can send you a description of the study.) Because the SCSEP national grantees account for the largest share of the SCSEP funds, our study has conducted structured discussions with the national offices of all 18 national grantees and will be visiting 24 local projects representing 13 different national grantees.

However, it is important for us to also understand the role played by the states, including how you help coordinate all SCSEP operators in your counties (e.g. through your state SCSEP coordination and equitable services plan) as well as how you select local programs to operate SCSEP services under your state grant, and how you help shape the services provided by those grantees. Thus we have identified five state-funded local projects to visit in four states: California, Indiana, Michigan, and Florida.

I am calling you to describe the study to you and answer any questions you may have and let you know that we would like to arrange a visit to a state-contracted local SCSEP project in _____ . I would also like to spend about half an hour on the phone with you discussing the role played by the state grantee in supporting local program operators, shaping the design of the services provided by your subcontractors and overseeing the program as a whole.

Our interest is in finding out what you think are the most important features of the SCSEP program, how you would assess program success, and what you think are important strategies that you can use at the state SCSEP director level to promote successful local programs.

Background and Context

1. Describe the history of your involvement with SCSEP program.
 - a. How long has your state been a SCSEP grantee?
 - b. Has your SCSEP program changed (e.g. in your philosophy or organizational structure) over the time that you've been receiving funding? If so, how?
2. Please tell me more about the context in which your program operates:
 - a. What do you think are the main challenges facing older workers right now?

- b. How are local program operators influenced by variations in local economies and in particular the economic downturn?
- 3. What do you think the role of SCSEP is in addressing the challenges faced by older workers in the current economy?
 - a. What do you think is the role of SCSEP in improving participant skills?
Obtaining unsubsidized employment?
 - b. What are the most important features of your SCSEP program?
 - c. Have you received technical assistance from the national SCSEP office in the U.S. Department of Labor to build your capacity to fill that role?
 - d. Have regulatory considerations affected your ability to fill that role (priority to individuals with barriers, 48 month time limits for participants, equity of service, etc.)

Relationship with Local Sites

- 4. How have you selected local program operators for the state SCSEP grants—what types of organizations are they and how do you contract with them for the delivery of SCSEP services? How much variation is there across the state?
 - a. What does this structure mean for how you communicate with them and how much influence you have over their operations?
 - b. How many staff are associated with the SCSEP program in your state office? What kind of skills and training do your state office staff have? How are these different, if at all, from the skills and training local site managers have?
- 5. How do you monitor your local program operators?
 - a. What do you look at to determine whether a local SCSEP program is doing a good job?
 - b. If monitoring reveals a need for improvements at the site level, do you establish a corrective action plans?
 - c. What are the major challenges you face as a state SCSEP director in monitoring your local sites?
 - d. What types of guidance or technical assistance do you offer local projects?
- 6. What kind of a relation do you have with the local projects operated by national grantees within your state?
 - a. How often do you communicate with national grantees or their projects and about what topics? (How common is it for multiple grantees to be operating SCSEP programs within the same county? What issues arise in this situation?)
 - b. How would you describe the relationship between the state and the national grantees?

- c. How would you describe the relationships among the national grantees?

Local Site Operations

7. We would like to visit one of the state-funded SCSEP projects in _____ County for a local site visit, because we have already selected a local project operated under a national grant to _____ for a site visit. Based on the information available to us, we think that you have designated _____ to operate the SCSEP program in this county. Is that correct?

Are there any reasons you think this would not be a good site for us to visit?

We are interested in looking at as many different ways of organizing and operating SCSEP services as possible. We will not release any information that is tied to any specific state or local project. (All findings from the case studies will be summarized across all 29 different local projects we are visiting.)

8. We would like your assistance in contacting the project in _____ to arrange for a two-day site visit that will include interviews with project administrators and staff who work directly with SCSEP participants, visits to several host agencies and discussions with host agency representatives, and focus groups with selected SCSEP program participants. Can you help us by: (1) alerting local sites to the fact that we will be calling them soon; and (2) providing us with contact information for the key person we should contact at each site?

Wrap-Up

9. What would help your organization better meet the needs of aging workers?
10. As part of this evaluation, we will be analyzing outcome data from SPARQ. Are there specific outcomes you would be interested in seeing analyzed in our report?
11. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you think the study team should be aware of?

APPENDIX C. PROTOCOLS FOR SCSEP LOCAL SITE VISITS

3-A. Discussion Guide for Local SCSEP Program Staff

3-B. Discussion Guide for Visit to Host Agency Representative

- Note: This includes an “observation checklist” to use if you observe SCSEP participant at work
- Note: This includes some probes to use for a brief conversation with SCSEP participant(s) at the host agency site

3-C. Discussion Guide for Participant Focus Group

3-D. Discussion Guide for Employer

- Note: This includes an “observation checklist” to use if you observe the former SCSEP participant at work.

3-A. Discussion Guide for Local SCSEP Program Staff

1. Economic/Labor Market Background

Based on your pre-visit data review, ask the following:

- How have local/regional economic conditions and the labor market shaped the program goals, operations, and outcomes?
- How has the recession altered
 - Participant needs and expectations?
 - Program policies, operations, and outcomes?

2. Staffing and Organizational Issues

Staffing

- How many local staff work on the SCSEP project?
 - Regular employees
 - Participant staff

- What are the different roles played by different staff?

E.g. recruiting participants, eligibility determination, assessment/reassessment, pre-employment training, recruitment and working with host agencies, developing jobs/ supporting job search, budgeting, entering data into SPARQ

- What are kind of education and work experience do case management staff (including participant staff) have?

3. Coordination within the SCSEP Program

National Program Relationships

- What is the organizational relationship of the local program to the national grantee? Is it a local affiliate of the grantee or a contractor?
- How much flexibility do you have in local operations (developing the procedures you use for recruiting host agencies, guiding the development of community service jobs, monitoring host agencies)?
 - How much do grantees influence the services offered by their local program operators?
 - Do the local program goals differ in any way from those of the national program?
- Have you used the waiver-for-training provision?

- How are you affected by funding cutbacks to SCSEP (staff, funded slots, ability to manage program)?

Coordination with Other SCSEP Grantees

- What other SCSEP operators are in your area?
- Describe any coordination with the other SCSEP grantees/operators with regard to recruiting, host agencies, participant shifting, or other aspects of your operation.

Coordination with Other Participant-Serving Agencies

For each of the following sections on the systems with which SCSEP may work: One-Stop Career Center, aging, and other social service, you should get a brief understanding of the following:

- Structure of the system
- Basic linkages between the local operator and those agencies
- Relationships that are in progress or might be beneficial to the SCSEP program.

One-Stop Career Centers

- How does your program and other SCSEP operators coordinate with services available through One-Stop Career Centers?
- If SCSEP participants are regularly placed in community service assignments with One-Stop Career Centers, how, if at all, does this promote access to One-Stop services for older workers?
- What proportion of SCSEP participants are co-enrolled in Workforce Investment Act services? *What is the expected level and what factors explain that expected level or any departure, high or low, from that level?*
- Do you refer particular categories of SCSEP participants to core services at One-Stop Career Centers to support search for unsubsidized jobs? (Probes: at entry, if they are job ready; throughout to search for employment; etc.)
- How does the level of coordination/co-enrollment in WIA services influence the rate of placement in unsubsidized employment (both for individual participants and at aggregate levels)?

Aging System

- How do you coordinate with area agencies on aging? What programmatic, planning and operational interactions do you have? Does your program work to link SCSEP participants with other services from which participants could benefit, e.g., other programs authorized by the Older Americans Act? If so, what types of participants, and with what services?
 - Do participants obtain other aging services on their own?

Other Social-Service Agencies

- What agencies or organizations are do you work with?
- Discuss any other connections or synergies you may have with social service agencies in the communities where your programs operate.

3. Participant Recruiting

Participant Characteristics

Review the outcome data from SPARQ data before site visit for anomalies and significant departures from grantee and national program norms. Question the respondent on any significant variation above or below the norm.

Recruitment Goals and Strategy

- Do you receive any recruiting goals from the national grantee?
- How is your recruiting affected by working with other SCSEP grantees/operators?
- Do you seek to recruit participants with particular characteristics? If so, what are they? To what extent do you believe your program is addressing demand for SCSEP-type services in the communities you serve?
- What other programs or initiatives provide similar services? What sets your program apart?
- How do you ensure that applicants will be suitable for the program (are some applicants “too job ready” are others “not job ready enough/, are there too many barriers, or other)? *Make sure to cover both policy and how they operationalize the policy. This includes a discussion of those who meet your suitability test, but still have serious employment barriers.*

If the respondent begins to discuss the general program strategy and services for the hardest-to-serve, gather that here and make sure to cover all the service topics.

Recruiting Operation

- Describe recruiting methods and tools.
- How do you ensure the maximum number of individuals participate
 - *If the site has slots in both urban and rural areas:* What are the differences in your recruitment activities between rural and urban areas? Do you have sufficient staff to recruit host agencies and manage participants in your rural slots? What challenges do you face in serving participants in rural areas? Are you currently using all of your rural slots?
 - Estimated number and percent of participants who come in through referrals from the One-Stop system? from the aging systems?
- How do you meet the requirements for giving priority to most-in-need participants?
- Do you use a wait list? Why or why not? Who is placed on it? How often are you able to serve individuals on the wait list? How long can an individual remain on the wait list?
- Do you over-enroll participants assuming they will drop out?

- The number of funded slots is based on an assumption of an average of 20 hours a week of CSA training per slot. In light of budget cuts, are you currently enrolling more participants with the expectation that they will work less than 20 hours, or are you trying to stop enrolling anybody new until you have a small enough caseload that everyone can work 20 hours per week?
- What challenges do you experience in recruiting?

4. Participant Services

A typical sequence of services at the front end of the program after recruitment is enrollment, orientation, assessment, referral to a community-service assignment, and placement in unsubsidized employment. Independent training, supportive services, or other social services may be incorporated. Make sure to understand the structure, sequence, and timing of these services. A good method of getting this information is asking the respondent to walk you through the service sequence for a typical participant. Then review the questions in the rest of the section for details and probes that were not covered.

Make sure to cover any special provision (if any) that local operators make for the hardest to serve in each of the service topics.

Intake, Assessment, and Service Planning

At the front end of program participation, make sure to understand how services are provided: group/individual, order, timing (frequency of appointments, amount of time at each appointment, and gaps between appointments and steps in the process.

- Describe the content of the orientation:
 - Project goals, community service assignments available, free physical, rights and responsibilities, supportive services, training opportunities, permitted and prohibited political activities.
- What proportion of participants takes advantage of the medical exam?
- Describe the assessment process. *If any form used. **Collect a copy of the assessment form.***

Use the checklist below during the interview, as useful to take notes on the assessment practices used by the local program.

Component	Used (Y/N)	Describe how conducted
Work history	--	--
Talents	--	--
Physical capabilities	--	--
Aptitudes	--	--
Needs for supportive services	--	--
Occupational preferences	--	--
Training needs	--	--
Potential for performing community service assignments	--	--
Potential for transition to unsubsidized employment	--	--

- If there is any specific assessment tool to gather any of the above components, explore in detail and get a copy if there is a form?
- How do programs assess whether SCSEP participants have a realistic potential for securing unsubsidized employment? Are such assessments driven by their interests, attributes, etc?
- Process of developing an Individual Employment Plan? ***Collect a copy of the IEP form. If possible, this should be a filled-out copy with the name blacked out, as some of the IEP forms are pretty open-ended and won't tell us much is they are blank.***
 - Frequency of follow-up on an IEP:
 - How frequently do you review participant's potential for transition to unsubsidized employment (required twice every 12 months)?
- Is there any exchange of information with One-Stop partners for the assessment?
- What factors affect the amount of time spent with participants (staff caseload, participant need)?

Community-Service Assignments

Referral Process

- How are participants matched to particular community service jobs?
- How do local operators shape SCSEP job assignments so that they provide opportunities for meaningful community service?
- How difficult is it for the local operator to find a placement for participants in the community in which they reside or in a neighboring community?

- Is there any difference in referring those with serious employment barriers? *This is an opportunity to review*

Compensation for Community Service

- Average wage rate for all participants
 - Percent of participants paid at the minimum wage (Federal or state)
 - Percent of participants paid at the host’s prevailing rate

Use the checklist below, if useful, to collect information on the SCSEP wage rates paid for typical community service assignments.

	Position	Host	Wage Rate	Basis for Wage (minimum/prevaling)
1.	--	--	--	--
2.	--	--	--	--
3.	--	--	--	--
4.	--	--	--	--
5.	--	--	--	--

- Availability of flexibility in hours of work so participants can take off but make up hours later?
- What happens as a participant approaches the 48-month maximum duration of SCSEP participation?

Training

- Do you offer training to participants? If so, who provides it, who receives it, and what criteria govern the process?
- Is training primarily directed at preparing participants for community-service assignments or unsubsidized employment?
 - If the former, do host agencies play any role in design or delivery?
- Have you used the add-on waiver for extra funds to provide training?
- What is the frequency and extent of training before or during community service assignments?
 - ~ Community service assignment training methods:
 - ~ Training deliverer
 - ~ Training duration
 - ~ Compensation during training period
 - ~ Typical duration of the training for common assignments
- What is the content, frequency, and extent of training that the local program operator provides that parallels or supplements community-service assignments?

- How does this training assist participants in moving toward unsubsidized employment?

Placement in Unsubsidized Employment

Placement Process

- What proportion of participants start with expectation that they will be placed in unsubsidized employment?
- How do programs assess whether SCSEP participants have a realistic potential for securing unsubsidized employment? Are such assessments driven by their interests, attributes, etc.? When are the assessments performed and revised?
- Do participants express concerns about loss or reduction of benefits (e.g. Medicaid, housing assistance, SSDI) if they transition to unsubsidized employment?
- How does the program assist participants in moving toward unsubsidized employment?
 - Number of job developers on staff
 - Frequency of hosts hiring participants into unsubsidized employment
 - How do programs develop and modify individual employment plans? How helpful are these?
- What interactions with the host agencies take place in connection with facilitating employment transitions?
- At what point does the program steer the participants to a specific industry or occupation for placement?
- What challenges do grantees experience in promoting participant transition to unsubsidized employment (for example, program features facilitating or obstructing placements at unsubsidized employers)
- What happens as a participant approaches the 48-month maximum duration of SCSEP participation?
- What role does occupational or other formal training play in securing unsubsidized placements?
- If you have used OJE: me about your experiences with to date.
 - Frequency of OJE placements and types of employers and OJE positions?
 - Success of OJE placements?
 - Main barriers or challenges encountered in using OJE?
 - Ideas to improve quality and/or frequency of OJE placements?

Placement Outcomes

- What is the local unsubsidized employment rate
- How appropriate are the local occupations that are designated as “demand occupations” to the abilities and interests of older workers?

- Is it realistic to try to prepare SCSEP participants for jobs in “demand occupations” in the local economy? (Can you train now for occupations that are expected to expand as the economy improves?)
- Distribution of placements at unsubsidized employers
 - What proportion of placements occurs at the host agencies? Are certain host agencies especially likely to employ participants?
 - Types of industries and occupations

Use the checklist below, if useful, to take notes on the wages paid to recent SCSEP participants as they transition to unsubsidized employment.

	Occupation	Employer/Industry	Wage Rate	Benefits (Y/N)
1.	--	--	--	--
2.	--	--	--	--
3.	--	--	--	--
4.	--	--	--	--
5.	--	--	--	--

5. Host Agencies

Recruiting

- What is the local strategy for recruiting and retaining hosts?
 - Is there any direction or strategy from the national grantee?
 - How could DOL work with programs to improve the recruitment of host agencies and the design of community service jobs?
- *How do you think host agencies perceive the SCSEP positions?*
 - What are the typical costs accruing to host agencies, such as training (formal or informal), supervision, administration, and
 - Is it difficult to overcome their cost concerns?
- Given funding cutbacks, have you had to eliminate some host agencies entirely or cut back on the number of slots they have? How did you determine which agencies to retain; which types of placements to retain?
- What training and technical assistance is provided to host agencies and their staff on working with SCSEP participants? Are these provided only to new agencies or also to incumbent ones periodically?
- How much turnover is there among agencies that host SCSEP participants?
- Number of current hosts and any changes from past several program years

Use the chart below, if useful, to take notes on the changes in the numbers of host over recent program years.

# of Hosts	PY 08	PY 09	PY 10
--	--	--	--

- Distribution of community-service assignments at your hosts (for example, concentrated in a few geographic areas or few hosts, rural/urban)? **Ask for list of host agencies (if list not available, try to get total number of host agencies, total number with current participants, and examples of host agencies with number with multiple participants.)**
 - Is there any emphasis on elderly-serving agencies?
 - Extent of concentration of slots at largest hosts?
 - Can you characterize the types of services that your existing hosts provide to the community?

Work Experience and Training Provided by Host Agencies to Participants

- What types of duties do SCSEP participants perform?
- What training is typically provided? Does it differ in any way from training to regular employees?
- How do local operator monitor whether the community service jobs offer opportunities for skills enhancement or training?
- Are the skills that participants develop in their community-service assignments transferrable to jobs in the unsubsidized labor market?

Duration/turnover

- What policies, if any, do local operator have for the maximum duration of a service placement or the rotation of participants through multiple placements?

Monitoring

- How do local operator monitor the host agencies?
- What criteria do you use to determine whether the host agency is doing a good job in general and whether a particular host agency placement is a good match for an individual participant?

6. Outcomes and Performance

Review the outcome data from SPARQ data before site visit for anomalies and significant departures from grantee and national program norms. Question the respondent on any significant variation from the norms.

Outcomes for Participants

- Are there any outcomes that you follow apart from the required measures (for example, training certifications or other competencies, number taking medical exam or other health-related indicators, number or types of host agencies),
- What were the measured outcomes in PY 10?
- What do you think are the major factors that affect your organization's performance, especially on the Common Measures?
- What physical or mental health and cognitive benefits do participants realize from their civic engagement? What evidence do you have for these (e.g., surveys, anecdotes)?

Other Outcomes

- What tangible or intangible benefits to host agencies come from participation in the SCSEP program? What tangible or intangible benefits to community come from program (for example, expansion of existing service, maintenance of services that would otherwise not be available, etc)?

7. Program Management of Performance

- What outcome or process measures are most important to you for managing the program?
- How do you use them for ongoing management and continuous improvement?
 - What steps do you take to improve those outcomes?
 - How do you use customer satisfaction measures?
- Are you expected to improve your performance from year to year on the outcome measures? Do your performance expectations change from year to year? How does this influence your program activities?
- Is the performance measurement system fair and effective? Why?
- How have performance standards affected the way you operate the program?
 - Participant selectivity
 - Service design
 - Host agency recruiting/selection
 - Placement staffing or practices
- Is there negotiation or adjustment of standards with local programs? If so:
 - Did the negotiation recognize local conditions or program needs?
 - How did the negotiated levels affect program operations?
 - Do you perceive the negotiation process for the setting of performance goals as fair and helpful?

- How have you performed in meeting your goals (either negotiated local goals or the national grantee goals)? How concerned are you about whether they will meet their goals.
- Which measures are perceived as most important, appropriate, and meaningful?

8. Potentially Promising Practices

- Have you developed any practices that you think are particularly effective in any of the areas that we have discussed?

9. Background Information About Several Participants Invited to Focus Group (and Participant Hired by Employer Selected for Interview)

- Participant Characteristics
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Race/Ethnicity
 - Education level
 - Work history (condensed version)
 - Skills
 - Barriers to training or employment
- Participant Goals
 - Training
 - Employment
 - Other (income, social-emotional, etc.)
- Services Received and Service Provider
 - Community service assignment
 - Additional training
 - On-the-job experience (different from CSA)
 - Job search/placement
 - Wraparound services
- Current Status
 - In training? If so, prospects for transition to unsubsidized employment

- Employed? If so, details on part-time/full-time, wage, benefits, satisfaction
- Social-emotional well-being
- Other

3-B. Discussion Guide for Host Agency Staff

1. Organizational and Administrative Issues

- If it is not apparent, ask about the agency's mission.
- How did you learn about SCSEP?
- How long has the agency been involved with the program?
- Why do you participate in SCSEP (e.g., interest in supporting the elderly worker, upon recommendation of other business associates who were already participating in the program, low or no-cost way of obtaining workers, or something else)?
- What is the alternative to using SCSEP participants?
- What are the typical costs accruing to host agencies, such as training (formal or informal), supervision and feedback, administration, and monitoring?
- What are the challenges outside of costs (productivity, orientation and training of employees, attending SCSEP orientation or meetings for hosts, monitoring, etc.)?
 - Are there any observed difficulties/barriers in hosting seniors 65 and older? If so, how do you address these?
- What are the benefits to your organization and community from the SCSEP program?

2. Community-Service Assignments

- What community-service assignments are provided?
 - Number and types of participants and the number of sites
 - Level of turnover
 - Average duration of a community-service assignment for any individual?
- What is the screening processes that are used to select participants, including skills required, education level, previous work experience?
- Are community-service assignments structured specifically for SCSEP participants? If yes, explain.
- What interactions do you have with the SCSEP program?

3. Services Offered to Participants

- What training is offered to participants, if any? Explain in detail any training to perform the initial assignment or to enhance skills after assignment begins.
- Do you provide any supportive services offered by the host agency, including lunch, transportation, and access to host agency's benefits
- What are the opportunities for advancement within the community-service assignment for participants in terms of skills developed or wage increase?

4. Host Agency Staff Perceptions of Participants

- How long does it take for a SCSEP participant to become fully functional in the community-service assignment?
- How are SCSEP workers received by other staff?

5. Outcomes

- How many/what percentage of participants became regular unsubsidized employees?
 - What factors affect a decision to hire (participant skills/attitudes/performance, budget available)?

6. Details About Host Agency's Specific Experiences with Several Current or Recent SCSEP Participants

- Participant's skill level at the beginning of the SCSEP placement
- Training provided as part of SCSEP community service position
- Benefits to participant: skills obtained; current level of performance/job readiness
- Quality of work performed for host agency

7. Add-on: Observation of/Conversation with SCSEP Participant

Observation of the Work Site

As you enter the work site (a brief tour would be helpful if time permits) and conduct the host agency interview and brief discussion with participant, note the following characteristics of the physical and social setting of the work site and how the participant fits in. Use your observations in the write-up, to the extent that they are applicable and feasible:

- *Physical characteristics of building and work station*
- *Does SCSEP participant have his/her own work station (e.g. with his/her own personal belongings/decorations)?*
- *Segregation/integration of SCSEP worker and other workers.*
- *Social interactions with supervisor, mentor, co-workers, and customers (as applicable)*
- *Do work activities appear to be comfortable for SCSEP participant (standing/sitting, level of energy required)*
- *Any evidence of use of computers or other technical tools that should be important in the participant's work experience*

Conversation with SCSEP Participant

I'm here visiting (host agency) to learn about the SCSEP program (use local name) and how it helps older workers improve their job skills through part-time work at public and non-profit agencies. I wonder if you could spend a few minutes with me talking about your community service job here and what you have learned since you started working in this position.

Possible probes:

- Can you tell me (show me) what you do as part of your job?
- How long have you worked at this agency? How many hours a week do you work here?
- What are some of the things you've learned while you have been working here?
- Do you think you could use these skills in another job?
- What do you enjoy about your job?
- What is your ultimate employment goal? What kind of job would you like to obtain?
- How does your counselor at _____ (name of SCSEP program operator) assist you in preparing for your goal?

3-C. Discussion Guide for Participant Focus Group

Instructions to Plan and Set Up for Focus Group

- Work closely with the local program operator to invite participants who have participated in SCSEP for at least three months to attend the focus group, which can be held at the local program office or in some other appropriate location (e.g. a host agency, or local public library). The goal is to have at least 4 focus group participants. We recommend inviting 8 participants to achieve this goal. Invitees should include some placed in unsubsidized employment. A \$15 stipend to defray transportation expenses will be provided to all attendees.
- Before the focus group, we plan to arrange for site visitors will review the case files or talk with program staff familiar with these participants, to orient us to their characteristics and history of SCSEP services.
- Duration: 60 to 90 minutes
- Site visitors will arrange for refreshments, as appropriate.

Informed Consent:

The following information should be conveyed to participants at the time of invitation. It can be in writing or orally (verbatim reading is not required).

I am inviting you to participate in a focus group that is part of a national study of the SCSEP program funded by the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. The focus group should take 60-90 minutes. Your participation in this focus group is completely voluntary. Your identity and the information that you provide during the session will be kept strictly confidential and will not be given to anyone. If you have any questions about participating, please let me know, and I will pass this along to the study team. Your attendance at the session will indicate your consent. We are able to offer you \$15.00 for participating in this focus group to help defray your transportation expenses. To receive this stipend, you must attend the focus group and sign a form documenting that you have received the stipend.

Topics for Focus Group Discussion

1. What were your reasons for enrolling in the SCSEP program?
2. Do you have any other expectations about what services or benefits you will enjoy from participating in the program? *(Direct the discussion towards income, interest in subsidized or unsubsidized employment, expected duration at host agency and SCSEP program as a whole, if these topics are not adequately covered in Q#1.)*

3. Do you have an individual employment plan? How helpful is it?
4. How often do you meet with program staff? What about the beginning of the program?
5. What assessments did you take?
6. Have you used services available at One-Stop Career Centers? Why or why not?
7. How did you get assigned to a particular community-service placement? (*Cover assessment, service planning*).
 - a. Do you think this position is or was a good match for your interests and skills?
 - b. In what ways? Would you have preferred a different type of placement?
8. How has the program helped you with any of your goals (through your community-service assignment or other services)? Direct discussion to:
 - a. *Income*. Has the SCSEP wage met your need for income?
 - b. *Training*. What skills training and work experience have you received as a SCSEP participant (either at your community service assignment or in a separate training activity)? Has the training been sufficient for you to perform adequately in your present job? Do you feel like you are gaining skills that will help you find another job after you complete your time as a SCSEP participant?
 - c. *Unsubsidized job*. Is the program helping you find a job or improving your own strategies for job searching? (Who is helping and how are they helping?)
 - d. *Health*. Has the program helped with your health or sense of well-being?
9. Are you satisfied with your SCSEP experience, including your community-service assignment?
 - a. How could your community service experience be/have been improved?
 - b. Did you develop a personal relationship with any of the SCSEP program staff? What kinds of help did you get from local SCSEP staff members? How often did you meet with/talk to this person/ these persons?
 - c. What feature(s) of the SCSEP program have helped you the most to achieve your goals?
 - d. What feature(s) of the SCSEP program have been an obstacle to achieving your goals?

Dismiss the people who are still in a community-service assignment and ask the following questions to those who are in unsubsidized jobs.

10. Describe how you found the job.
11. How did the SCSEP program help you find this job? *Direct the questioning to services at the SCSEP program itself, the host agency, or other.*
 - a. Are you using any of the skills you learned at the community-service assignment?
 - b. Is the job satisfying?
12. Do you have any suggestion for SCSEP to improve services that help participants find jobs?

3-D. Discussion Guide for Employer

For use with unsubsidized employer that is not host agency.

Obtain the following information from program staff about the participant hired by this unsubsidized employer, PRIOR TO DISCUSSION WITH EMPLOYER

- 1. How the participant found the job; how long employed at the business.*
- 2. Preceding community-service assignments.*
- 3. A general understanding of the participant/employee's situation including, age, education level, barriers, and other factors that may contribute to a participant outcome.*

Observation of the Work Site

As you enter the work site (a brief tour would be helpful if time permits) and conduct the employer interview, note the following characteristics of the physical and social setting of the work site and how the participant fits in. Use your observations in the write-up, to the extent that they are applicable and feasible:

- Physical characteristics of building and work station*
- Does former SCSEP participant have his/her own work station (e.g. with his/her own personal belongings/decorations)?*
- Segregation/integration of former SCSEP worker and other workers.*
- Social interactions with supervisor, mentor, co-workers, and customers (as applicable)*
- Do work activities appear to be comfortable for former SCSEP participant (standing/sitting, level of energy required)*
- Any evidence of use of computers or other technical tools that should be important in the participant's work experience*

Organization and Background

- If it is not apparent, ask about the employer's business:*
 - Sector*
 - Number of employees at location and overall*
- How many employees are in the business and this location*
- Have you previously hired SCSEP participants? If so, describe the relationship to SCSEP.*

Hiring Process

- How did you learn about SCSEP or the former participant?*

- Did the hiring process for this employee differ in any way from the process used to hire other employees for the same or similar job? If so, explain.
- Are your expectations for the employee any different from expectations for other employees?
- What factors in the SCSEP participant's background or training led to the hire?
This is the opportunity to explore whether the CSA played on any role.

Participant/Employee Job

- Describe the job: duties, skills required, wage.
- Are there any accommodations because of age or other employee characteristics that were made?
- How long did it take (or do you expect it to take) for the employee to become fully functional in the job?
- Overall, how satisfied are you with this employee?
- Would you consider hiring another SCSEP participant in the future? Why or why not?

APPENDIX D. PROCESS STUDY SITE VISIT WRITE-UP TEMPLATE

Organization:

National Grantee, if applicable:

Location:

Site Visitor(s):

Site Visit Dates:

Summary

Please include an introductory paragraph that describes the geographic area served, the number of funded slots and two or three distinctive features about the program. Please use “SCSEP” to refer to the program throughout this write-up, for consistency across sites, even if your program has a different name.

1. Economic/Labor Market Background

2. Organizational Coordination and Staffing

A. Coordination with National SCSEP Program

B. Coordination with Other SCSEP Grantees

C. Coordination with Other Participant-Serving Agencies

- **One-Stop Career Centers**
- **Aging System**
- **Other Social-Service Agencies**

D. Staffing

3. Participant Recruiting

A. Participant Characteristics

Please use SPARQ data here to give report writers a sense of the distinguishing characteristics. If you notice any particularly interesting deviations from other subgrantees, charts or other visual displays would be helpful. See the Detroit write-up for an example.

B. Recruitment Goals and Strategy

B. Recruiting Operation

4. Participant Services

A. Intake, Assessment, and Service Planning

B. Community-Service Assignments

C. Training

D. Placement in Unsubsidized Employment

5. Host Agencies

A. Recruiting

B. Work Experience Provided

C. Training Experience Provided

D. Duration/turnover

E. Monitoring

F. Host Agency Feedback

6. Outcomes and Performance

A. Outcomes for Participants

B. Other Outcomes

7. Participant Experience

A. Feedback From Focus Groups

B. Participant Stories

This section should describe two individuals who were served by the program, including a little bit more on background work experience, age, financial situation, in addition to CSA experience and support from case manager. If this type of variation exists in the conversations you had, it would be helpful to have one mini-case study of an individual who needs a lot of employment readiness skills and the other of an individual who is coming in with more stable work history and employment skills.

8. Program Management of Performance

9. Promising Practices

Appendix A: Host Agency, Employer and Staff Respondents

Please include a list of respondents, alphabetized by last name, with name, title, organization, phone number and e-mail. Collect business cards at each interview so that you have this information, in case we need to follow up on anything later.

Appendix B: Intake, Assessment and IEP Forms

Please insert copies of these forms as appendices, if they are Word documents. If they are PDFs, upload to the project's shared desktop and include a link to the file.

APPENDIX E. TECHNICAL APPENDIX ON QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SPARQ DATA

Table E-1 Fixed Effects Logistic Model Results..... E-5
Table E-2 Estimated Coefficients from Sub-Recipient Models..... E-7

The quantitative analysis presented in Chapter III—on participants served, services provided, and participation patterns—and Chapter VII—on participant and project-level outcomes— is based on existing data drawn from the SCSEP Performance and Results Quarterly Progress Report (SPARQ) data system used by SCSEP grantees. This data as reported in the SCSEP Quarterly Progress Report (QPR) provides the SCSEP program office with an indication of how grantees and sub-recipients are performing on a set of measures mandated by statute.¹³² This appendix describes the data sources and the regression model used to examine the associations between participants’ characteristics, sub-recipient characteristics, and employment.

Data

The quantitative analysis used SPARQ administrative data from Program Years 2009 and 2010 to ensure that the focus of the analysis was on the most recently available outcome data. While SPARQ data were available from as early as Program Year 2004, we have chosen not to use data from prior years to assess program performance. As described in Chapter I, The SCSEP program has undergone significant evolution in policy direction since 2004, and analysis of the most current data ensured that we analyzed outcomes that reflected the current policy environment. In addition, prior to 2009, significant changes were made to SCSEP reporting and eligibility requirements, making it difficult to compare performance across years. For example,

¹³² Because performance expectations are negotiated and monitored at the grantee level, grantee level summaries are the primary data source for national program monitoring and performance review. To support the internal management of performance at the sub-recipient-level, each national and state grantee has identified individual reporting units, which may be based on the different organizations with which the grantee contracts for the delivery of local SCSEP services, or—for grantees that operate SCSEP programs directly—the local or regional administrative units around which service delivery is organized. These units may vary in size and geographic scope from grantee to grantee. We refer to these units as sub-recipients in this report.

changes in the method of determining income eligibility resulting from the 2006 amendments to the Older Americans Act (OAA) required changes in reported income variables for participants. The introduction of data validation procedures for key eligibility data has also had an influence on SPARQ data quality. Cross-year comparisons between Program Year 2009 and Program Year 2010 data are especially appropriate because reporting requirements for the two program years are identical.

The SPARQ data are drawn from the automated data collection and reporting system that is used to generate the SCSEP Quarterly Performance Reports (QPRs), and is collected at the participant level and aggregated by grantee and sub-recipient in the QPR. For our descriptive analysis of participant experiences while in the program, we considered both SPARQ participants and included exiters in Program Years 2009 and 2010. For the analysis of post-SCSEP employment outcomes, we included only participants who have exited the program “eligibly” as the QPR system does. Participants who exited for reasons that preclude employment outcomes--such as ill health, institutionalization, or the need to care full-time for a family member--were excluded from the outcome analysis. Additionally, participants who exit the program and reenroll or reenters within 90 days were excluded. Included exiters refer to program exiters for whom achieving an unsubsidized employment outcome is considered a possibility. Summaries of program performance are based only on these individuals.

The core performance measure of *entered employment* tracks whether an individual was employed anytime during the first quarter after program exit. Thus, for example, for participants who exited the SCSEP program during Program Year 2009, the entered employment outcome draws on employment data from the last three quarters of Program Year 2009 and the first quarter of Program Year 2010. The core performance measure of *employment retention* tracks whether an individual was employed during both the second and the third quarter after program exit. For participants who exited the SCSEP program during Program Year 2009, the employment retention outcome draws on employment data from the last two quarters of Program Year 2009 and the first two quarters of 2010.¹³³

SCSEP operates in such a way that participants are permitted to reenroll in the program after exit until the total length of their participation reaches the 48-month durational limit. During Program Year 2009 and 2010, 15 percent of participants had more than one enrollment spell. At the beginning of each enrollment spell, the sub-recipient generates a new record for participants, thereby creating multiple records for a single participant. For the purpose of this analysis,

¹³³ These core performance measures for SCSEP use the Common Measures as defined for a number of other federal workforce development programs, including the Workforce Investment Act, Wagner-Peyser (Employment Services), and the Veterans Employment Service (VETS).

participant level data was used in calculations of characteristics that were not expected to change between enrollment spells, such as race, and education.¹³⁴ Furthermore for age, we take the oldest age while active in Program Years 2009 or 2010 because age only changes in predictable ways and we wanted the age distribution to reflect the population SCSEP serves rather than the distribution being biased downward (or upward) if younger (or older) participants were more likely to have more than one enrollment spell. Characteristics likely to change, such as whether a person was a former SCSEP participant, their family income, and barriers to employment, were measured at the intake point for each enrollment. Therefore, with regard to these measures, participants with more than one enrollment in the program will appear in the data multiple times.

In addition to the participant-level SPARQ data, we used Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in the regression analysis of post-SCSEP employment outcomes in the quarter of a participant's exit. We also used the U.S. Census Bureau to determine the size of the area served by each sub-recipient. These data were linked to participants according to the county of residence.

Individual-Level Regression Model

The SCSEP Evaluation was not designed to measure the impacts of services on employment outcomes or the causal relationship between program characteristics and employment outcomes, but we used a regression model to look at associations among the participant characteristics, local economic conditions, service receipt, and the employment outcomes.

In particular, we used a regression model to examine the relationships between post-SCSEP employment and:

- participant characteristics, including barriers to employment
- the type of CSA
- the local economic conditions

We estimated participant spell-level models using fixed effects. In our model, the unit of observation is an individual's enrollment spell and the dependent variable is an individual's employment outcome.¹³⁵ We used a fixed effects model to take into consideration that participants are clustered into sub-recipients. We also estimated robust standard errors that

¹³⁴ In the event that such characteristics do change, a participant's race was set to "other," and their education was recorded at their lowest level of educational attainment. Among the 20,828 participants with more than one enrollment spell, 5 percent changed educational categories.

¹³⁵ Our actual unit of observation is an individual's SCSEP spell. We observe a few participants who exit from the SCSEP program more than once during Program Years 2009 and 2010.

account of for this clustering. Since employment is a binary outcome, we use a fixed effects logistic model and present the marginal effects on the probability of each outcome for our main results.

We estimated the following model:

$$Employ_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ij} + \beta_2 CSA_{nonprofit_{ij}} + \eta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

where $Employ_{ij}$ is the outcome indicator of whether participant i in sub-recipient j is employed in the first quarter following exit, X_{ij} is a vector of participant-level characteristics potentially influencing the employment outcome including indicators for barriers to employment and the unemployment rate in an individual's county, $CSA_{nonprofit_{ij}}$ is an indicator for having a CSA assignment at a non-profit during the enrollment spell, η_j is the sub-recipient-level fixed effect, and ε_{ij} is a participant-level error term.

Since we have no reason to assume a linear relationship between employment and the unemployment rate, we used a series of indicator variables for different levels of unemployment. The cut-offs for the unemployment rate categories were chosen to be near the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of the distributions of all sub-recipients.

Although we chose to estimate a fixed effects model, we could have estimated a random effects model which would have allowed us to look at the relationship between sub-recipient characteristics (like size and urbanicity) and employment by assuming that the sub-recipient's random effect is uncorrelated with other covariates. However, the random effects specification we considered failed the Hausman test, suggesting this assumption is not appropriate. The Hausman test compares the coefficients from a fixed effects model and a random effects model. Since the fixed effects estimator is assumed consistent, large differences between the fixed effects and random effects estimates are cause for concern.

Control Variables

As described above, our regression model included participant demographics, barriers to employment, program services, and local unemployment. The participant characteristics and barriers to employment were from the SPARQ data and included:

- Female
- Race: Hispanic, Black or African-American Non-Hispanic, and Other (White non-Hispanic omitted from model)
- Age: 60 – 64, 65 – 69, 70 – 74, and 75 and older (Under 60 omitted from model)
- Education: No high school diploma or GED, GED, and High School Diploma (No high school diploma or GED omitted from model)

- Former SCSEP participant
- Co-enrolled in other employment services/adult education at intake
- No other public assistance at intake
- Family income at or below poverty
- Priority of Service Indicators: disabled, low literacy skills, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), rural, veteran (or eligible spouse), low employment prospects, failed to find employment after using WIA Title I, homeless, and at risk of homelessness

The model also included indicators for the quarter of exit and whether a participant had ever had a CSA at a non-profit during the enrollment spell. Since 17 percent of participants had more than one CSA recorded in the SPARQ data during a single enrollment spell, we created constructs that looked across all CSAs during the spell.

We also controlled for the unemployment rate in the county in which a participant resides. The unemployment measure comes from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS). We linked the unemployment data to the participant-level data according to the county of residence of individual participants. We chose to measure the unemployment rate during the quarter of program exit. While the unemployment rate in the quarter of exit may be most important for the post-SCSEP employment outcomes, underlying economic conditions may also affect the timing of program exit. In a small share of cases, we were not able to match on the county-level and used the state level unemployment rate instead.

Individual-Level Regression Results

For ease of interpretation, Chapter VII discusses regression adjusted employment rates from the fixed effects logistic regression. The estimated coefficients and standard errors are presented below.

**Table E-1
Fixed Effects Logistic Model Results**

	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error
Dependent Variable = Employed in 1st quarter after Exit		
Female	0.153**	0.023
African-American, Non-Hispanic	-.198**	0.032
Hispanic	.028	0.047
Other Race or Ethnicity	-.154*	0.066
Age 60 to 64	-0.259**	0.024
Age 65 to 69	-0.533**	0.034

	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error
Age 70 to 74	-0.819**	0.040
Age 75 and older	-1.297**	0.048
GED	.122**	0.040
High School Graduate	.189**	0.033
More than High School Graduate	.237**	0.033
Former SCSEP participant	-0.177**	0.034
Co-enrolled in other employment services/adult education (at intake)	0.069	0.043
No other public assistance (at intake)	0.340**	0.021
Family income at or below poverty (at intake)	-0.130**	0.034
Disabled	-0.360**	0.035
Low literacy skills	-0.079*	0.040
Limited English proficiency	0.030	0.057
Rural	-0.035	0.035
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	-0.013	0.030
Low employment prospects	0.037	0.041
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title I	0.096*	0.041
At risk of homelessness	.482**	0.047
Not at risk of homelessness	.371**	0.049
Unemployment rate in county, 7 – 9 Percent	-0.034	0.048
Unemployment rate in county, 9 - 11 Percent	-0.098	0.060
Unemployment rate in county, 11 Percent or Higher	-0.158*	0.070
Had Community Service Assignment (CSA) placement in non-profit	-0.016	0.030
Number of Included Exiters	54,581	

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010). Unemployment rate from BLS LAUS.

Models also include dummy variables for quarter and year of exit from SCSEP. Reference categories are male, white, non-Hispanic, age 55 to 59, not having a high school diploma or GED, living in a county with an unemployment rate below 7 percent, and never having had a non-profit CSA. All definitions of Barriers to Employment are in the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>.

* Statistically significant at 5% level, **statistically significant at 1% level.

Sub-Recipient Model

We also estimated a sub-recipient model to examine what portion of variation in entered employment rates across sub-recipients was due to observed variation in participant and sub-recipient characteristics. We examined the relationship between the entered employment rate and each of the following:

- average participant demographics including gender, race, age, and education
- average participant characteristics including barriers to employment, coenrollment, and receipt of public assistance
- sub-recipient characteristics and local economic conditions
- SCSEP program factors including CSA characteristics and program exit rates.

In our sub-recipient models, we added groups of covariates in a stepwise fashion to allow us to examine how much of the variation in employment outcomes is accounted for by different types of covariates. For our analysis, we limited our sample to sub-recipients with at least 15 included exiters during Program Years 2009 and 2010 to avoid focusing on variations in entered employment rates that could be entirely due to a small sample at sub-recipients. The estimated coefficients are reported in Table E-2. For each model, we reported the R-square and the Adjusted R-Square. The Adjusted R-Square is the measure of interest, since the R-Square will increase mechanically as more covariates are added to the model.

Table E-2
Estimated Coefficients from Sub-Recipient Models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Dependent Variable = Entered Employment Rate				
Demographic Characteristics				
Percent Female	0.168*	0.164*	0.118	0.141
Percent Hispanic	0.011	-0.090	-0.040	-0.019
Percent African-American, Non-Hispanic	-0.115**	-0.078*	-0.009	-0.010
Percent Other Race or Ethnicity	-0.094	-0.221**	-0.216**	-0.194**
Percent Age 60 to 64	-0.471**	-0.305*	-0.254*	-0.276*
Percent Age 65 to 69	-0.356*	-0.307*	-0.336*	-0.324*
Percent Age 70 to 74	-0.669**	-0.417**	-0.386**	-0.377*
Percent Age 75 and older	-0.898**	-0.657**	-0.644**	-0.639**
Percent with no high school diploma or GED	-0.026	-0.118	-0.236**	-0.250**
Percent with GED	-0.100	0.337*	0.290	0.315*
Percent with high school diploma	0.028	-0.007	-0.016	-0.007
Barriers to Employment and Other Participant Characteristics				
Percent Co-enrolled (at intake)	--	0.000	-0.003	-0.004
Percent with no other public assistance (at intake)	--	0.283**	0.259**	0.256**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Percent with family income at or below poverty (at intake)	--	0.158	0.156	0.167
Percent Disabled	--	0.085	0.079	0.069
Percent with low literacy skills	--	0.130*	0.141*	0.161*
Percent with limited English proficiency	--	0.157	0.183*	0.155
Percent Veteran (or eligible spouse)	--	0.066	0.044	0.092
Percent with low employment prospects	--	0.156**	0.166**	0.186**
Percent who failed to find employment after using WIA	--	0.094**	0.104**	0.102**
Percent Homeless	--	-0.466**	-0.469**	-0.439**
Percent at risk of homelessness	--	0.115**	0.112**	0.136**
Sub-Recipient Characteristics				
Percent in county with unemployment rate of 7 – 9 Percent	--	--	-0.022	-0.022
Percent in county with unemployment rate of 9 – 11 Percent	--	--	-0.075	-0.076
Percent in county with unemployment rate of 11 Percent or higher	--	--	-0.020	-0.021
State Sub-recipient	--	--	-0.004	-0.002
Sub-recipient has between 51 and 150 slots	--	--	-0.009	-0.013
Sub-recipient has more than 151 slots	--	--	0.003	-0.002
Sub-recipient is rural	--	--	0.030	0.033
Sub-recipient is urban	--	--	-0.047*	-0.043*
Percent former SCSEP participants	--	--	--	-0.094
Percent with Community-Service Assignment (CSA) in non-profit	--	--	--	0.006
Sub-recipient Exit Rate, 54 – 61 Percent	--	--	--	-0.021
Sub-recipient Exit Rate, 61 – 70 Percent	--	--	--	-0.003
Sub-recipient Exit Rate variables, 70+ Percent	--	--	--	-0.046

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
R-Square	0.159	0.359	0.397	0.405
Adjusted R-Square	0.139	0.329	0.347	0.349
Number of Sub-Recipients	487	487	487	487

Source: SPARQ data (Program Years 2009 and 2010). Unemployment rate from BLS LAUS.

Sample is limited to sub-recipients with at least 15 included exiters in Program years 2009 and 2010. Models 3 and 4 also include the share of participants exiting SCSEP in each quarter and year. Reference categories are percent male, percent white non-Hispanic, percent age 55 to 59, percent having some education beyond a high school diploma or GED, percent living in a county with an unemployment rate below 7 percent, and percent never having had a non-profit CSA. For sub-recipient variables, the reference categories are run by a national grantee, having less than 50 slots, being a sub-recipient in a mixed urban/rural area, and being a sub-recipient with an exit rate less than 54 percent. All definitions of Barriers to Employment are in the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>.

* Statistically significant at 5% level, **statistically significant at 1% level.

APPENDIX F. TABLES FROM QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SPARQ DATA

Table F-1 Counts of Grantees, Sub-recipients, and Participants by Program Year.....	2
Table F-2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Included Exiters.....	3
Table F-3 Correlations between Barriers to Employment.....	6
Table F-4 Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Variation across Sub-recipients.....	7
Table F-5 Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Variation across Grantees.....	9
Table F-6 Demographic Characteristics of Participants by Type of Sub-recipient: Percentage of Total Participants.....	11
Table F-7 Community Service Assignments (CSA), Training, and On-the-job Experience (OJE): Overall, by Program Year.....	14
Table F-8 Community Service Assignments (CSA), Training, and On-the-job Experience (OJE): Variation across Sub-recipients.....	14
Table F-9 Community Service Assignments (CSA), Training, and On-the-job Experience (OJE): Variation across Grantees.....	15
Table F-10 Community Service Assignments (CSA), Training and On-the-job Experience (OJE): Sub-recipient Averages by Type of Sub-recipient.....	15
Table F-11 Length of Time in Program: Overall, by Program Year.....	16
Table F-12 Length of Time in Program: Variation across Sub-recipients.....	17
Table F-13 Length of Time in Program: Variation across Grantees.....	17
Table F-14 Length of Time in Program by Type of Sub-recipient.....	18
Table F-15 Exiters and Earnings by Program Year.....	19
Table F-16 Variation across Sub-recipients: Exiters and Earnings.....	20
Table F-17 Variation across Grantees: Exiters and Earnings.....	21
Table F-18 Exiters and Earnings by Sub-recipient Type.....	22

**Table F-1
Counts of Grantees, Sub-recipients, and Participants by Program Year**

	PY 2009	PY 2010
Total number of grantees	74	74
Number of national grantees	18	18
Number of state grantees	56	56
Mean # of participants per grantee	1,500	1,418
Median # of participants per grantee	391	372
Min # of participants per grantee	43	47
Max # of participants per grantee	23,263	20,937
Total number of sub-recipients	618	607
Percent with 50 or fewer slots	39	40
Percent with between 51 and 150 slots	38	37
Percent with more than 150 slots	23	23
Percent with more than 75% of participants urban	51	51
Percent with between 25 to 75% of participants urban	29	28
Percent with less than 25% of participants urban	21	21
Mean # of participants per sub-recipient	180	173
Median # of participants per sub-recipient	109	105
Max # of participants per sub-recipient	1,477	1,429
Total number of national sub-recipients ^a	303	298
Percent with 50 or fewer slots	9	9
Percent with between 51 and 150 slots	50	49
Percent with more than 150 slots	42	42
Percent with more than 75% of participants urban	58	60
Percent with between 25 to 75% of participants urban	32	30
Percent with less than 25% of participants urban	10	10
Mean # of participants per national sub-recipient	292	279
Median # of participants per national sub-recipient	257	227
Max # of participants per national sub-recipient	1,477	1,429
Total number of state sub-recipients ^a	316	310
Percent with 50 or fewer slots	69	69
Percent with between 51 and 150 slots	26	26
Percent with more than 150 slots	5	5
Percent with more than 75% of participants urban	44	43
Percent with between 25 to 75% of participants urban	25	26
Percent with less than 25% of participants urban	30	31
Mean # of participants per state sub-recipient	73	72
Median # of participants per state sub-recipient	43	42
Max # of participants per state sub-recipient	1,451	1,209

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

^a One sub-recipient was affiliated with both a state and national grantee. Therefore, the number of state and national sub-recipients sums to more than the total number of sub-recipients.

**Table F-2
Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Included Exiters**

	Percent of Participants in PY 2009	Percent of Participants in PY 2010	Percent of Participants in PY 2009 and 2010	Percent of Included Exiters^a in PY 2009 and 2010
Participant Characteristics				
Female	64.9	64.7	64.2	61.6
Hispanic	11.8	11.6	11.6	11.6
African-American, Non-Hispanic	31.8	32.3	31.7	30.8
White, Non-Hispanic	49.3	49.0	49.6	50.6
Other Race/Ethnicity	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.0
Age 55 to 59	31.9	29.7	31.1	37.8
Age 60 to 64	28.9	30.7	30.4	30.8
Age 65 to 69	18.2	18.7	18.3	16.3
Age 70 to 74	11.3	11.2	10.8	8.8
Age 75 and older	9.7	9.7	9.4	6.3
Average Age	64.0	64.2	64.0	62.8
Less than a high school diploma/GED	22.7	22.0	21.8	19.1
GED	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.8
High school diploma	31.3	31.4	31.3	30.8
Education beyond a high school diploma	38.3	38.8	39.1	42.3
Former SCSEP participant	12.1	11.3	11.5	11.0
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	31.3	33.6	32.5	31.4
No other public assistance (at intake)	54.5	51.5	53.1	57.6
Family income at or below poverty	87.9	87.2	87.7	88.4
In a priority of service category ^b	97.5	97.8	97.6	97.0
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^c	40.1	43.5	47.2	43.4
Barriers to Employment^d				
Frail ^e	0.7	0.8	1.2	1.0
Disabled ^f	14.9	14.7	14.7	12.9
Severely disabled ^g	1.4	1.7	2.5	1.8
Limited English proficiency	10.1	10.2	9.8	8.6
Low literacy skills	20.0	20.7	19.6	18.3
Rural	30.6	30.9	30.5	27.5
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	13.4	13.1	13.6	14.8

	Percent of Participants in PY 2009	Percent of Participants in PY 2010	Percent of Participants in PY 2009 and 2010	Percent of Included Exiters^a in PY 2009 and 2010
Low employment prospects ^h	87.5	87.9	87.7	87.4
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ⁱ	12.9	15.6	22.7	21.9
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title I	14.7	15.9	15.6	14.7
Homeless	5.1	5.1	5.4	6.3
At risk of homelessness	27.2	28.8	28.8	30.3
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	1.2	1.6	2.2	2.0
Average number of barriers	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.5
Number of participants or included exiters	110,999	104,948	140,878	54,385
Number of participant spells	128,133	106,266	162,727	55,639

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

- ^a Participants who have exited for reasons such as ill health, and are therefore not eligible for performance measurement, are excluded from this analysis.
- ^b Priority of service areas are: age 65 or over, homeless or at risk of homelessness; rural; Limited English Proficiency (LEP); low literacy skills; veteran (or qualified spouse); disability; failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I; and low-employment prospects.
- ^c Conditions qualifying for waiver of durational limit are: severe disability; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment; and age 75 and over. In addition, LEP and low literacy skills, included in the priority of service areas, also qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit.
- ^d All definitions of Barriers to Employment footnoted below are from the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>. Note that being age 75 or older at time of enrollment, included in this table as a participant characteristic, is also a barrier employment to that counts towards a program's "most-in-need" measure.
- ^e Frail means that an individual (1) is determined to be functionally impaired because of inability to perform at least two activities of daily living without substantial human assistance such as verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision or (2) requires substantial supervision because, due to a cognitive or other mental impairment, the individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to him- or herself or to another individual. Frailty must be documented by a qualified professional.
- ^f Disabled means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Older Americans Act (OAA) definition of disability that is used by SCSEP for determining eligibility, priority of service, or waiver of the durational limitation provides a specific, restrictive list of "major life activities" that includes self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; cognitive functioning; and emotional adjustment.
- ^g Severe disability means a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitation in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and

expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-sufficiency. Severe disability must be documented by a physician and is counted separately from the disabled classification for the most-in-need measure.

- ^h Low employment prospects means that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.
- ⁱ Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment is a classification with two separate requirements—severely limited employment prospects and residence in an area of persistent unemployment. Severely limited employment prospects means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An area of persistent unemployment means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

**Table F-3
Correlations between Barriers to Employment**

	Severe disability	Frail	Age 75 and older	Old enough for but not receiving Social Security Title II	Severely limited employment prospects in areas of persistent unemployment	Limited English proficiency	Low literacy skills	Disabled	Rural	Veterans (or spouses)	Low employment prospects	Failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II	Homeless or at risk of homelessness
Barriers to Employment													
Severe disability	1.00	0.21	-0.02	0.02	0.02	-0.03	-0.01	0.23	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.00	-0.01
Frail	0.21	1.00	0.08	0.05	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	-0.01
Age 75 and older	-0.02	0.08	1.00	0.04	-0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.06	0.07	0.03	-0.01	-0.04	-0.13
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security Title II	0.02	0.05	0.04	1.00	0.05	0.13	0.06	-0.03	-0.03	-0.02	-0.03	0.01	-0.03
Severely limited employment prospects in areas of persistent unemployment	0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.05	1.00	0.05	0.04	-0.04	0.09	-0.01	0.05	0.05	-0.03
Limited English proficiency (LEP)	-0.03	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.05	1.00	0.39	-0.09	-0.09	-0.11	0.05	-0.04	-0.06
Low literacy skills	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.04	0.39	1.00	-0.04	-0.09	-0.06	0.11	-0.02	0.09
Disabled	0.23	0.06	-0.06	-0.03	-0.04	-0.09	-0.04	1.00	0.03	0.04	0.06	-0.01	-0.03
Rural	0.01	0.00	0.07	-0.03	0.09	-0.09	-0.09	0.03	1.00	0.01	-0.02	-0.05	-0.12
Veterans (or spouses)	0.01	0.00	0.03	-0.02	-0.01	-0.11	-0.06	0.04	0.01	1.00	0.00	0.01	0.05
Low employment prospects	0.02	0.01	-0.01	-0.03	0.05	0.05	0.11	0.06	-0.02	0.00	1.00	0.05	0.16
Failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II	0.00	0.00	-0.04	0.01	0.05	-0.04	-0.02	-0.01	-0.05	0.01	0.05	1.00	0.04
Homeless or at risk of homelessness	-0.01	-0.01	-0.13	-0.03	-0.03	-0.06	0.09	-0.03	-0.12	0.05	0.16	0.04	1.00

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

**Table F-4
Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Variation across Sub-recipients**

	Percentage of Participants with Characteristic		
	10th Percentile	50th Percentile	90th Percentile
Participant Characteristics			
Female	54.1	67.0	82.5
Hispanic	0.0	2.1	22.1
African-American, Non-Hispanic	0.0	20.6	74.1
White, Non-Hispanic	8.2	54.6	92.5
Other Race/Ethnicity	0.0	2.5	16.3
Age 55 to 59	15.0	28.5	40.3
Age 60 to 64	20.8	30.2	38.5
Age 65 to 69	12.1	18.9	26.5
Age 70 to 74	5.7	11.1	19.5
Age 75 and older	3.4	9.4	18.6
Average Age	62.2	64.4	67.3
Less than a high school diploma or GED	7.5	18.4	35.9
GED	0.6	7.4	14.3
High school diploma	18.8	31.8	45.1
Education beyond a high school diploma	21.4	38.5	58.2
Former SCSEP participant	0.3	11.8	23.1
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	0.1	23.2	97.8
No other public assistance (at time of intake)	30.4	51.2	71.1
Family income at or below poverty	75.0	87.6	95.5
In a priority of service category ^a	88.6	99.5	100.0
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^b	15.1	40.4	86.5
Barriers to Employment^c			
Frail ^d	0.0	0.1	4.7
Disabled ^e	2.5	12.5	28.9
Severely disabled ^f	0.0	1.3	8.1
Limited English proficiency	0.0	1.5	22.2
Low literacy skills	0.0	9.3	41.0
Rural	0.0	22.2	95.8
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	3.9	13.0	24.2
Low employment prospects ^g	42.3	91.9	99.8
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ^h	0.0	8.6	74.2
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title I	0.0	4.8	56.1
Homeless	0.0	2.9	11.1
At risk of homelessness	0.0	8.4	59.0
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	0.0	0.5	9.6
Average number of barriers	1.5	2.4	3.4

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

The columns show three distributional points (the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles) for each characteristic. They do not represent a single sub-recipient.

^a +

**Table F-5
Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Variation across Grantees**

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Participants with Characteristic		
	10th Percentile	50th Percentile	90th Percentile
Participant Characteristic			
Female	57.4	66.2	76.1
Hispanic	0.6	4.3	25.7
African-American, Non-Hispanic	1.0	27.3	54.9
White, Non-Hispanic	15.5	50.4	85.4
Other Race/Ethnicity	1.3	4.3	25.0
Age 55 to 59	20.4	28.5	36.8
Age 60 to 64	26.1	30.8	34.8
Age 65 to 69	15.0	19.3	23.7
Age 70 to 74	7.1	11.1	16.2
Age 75 and older	6.1	9.9	14.7
Average Age	62.9	64.4	65.8
Less than a high school diploma or GED	10.4	20.0	38.1
GED	4.2	8.2	11.6
High school diploma	21.9	30.8	39.9
Education beyond a high school diploma	25.6	38.2	51.0
Former SCSEP participant	6.1	11.9	18.9
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	5.0	25.1	85.4
No other public assistance (at time of intake)	34.4	49.2	66.9
Family income at or below poverty	79.6	87.2	93.4
In a priority of service category ^a	92.0	98.1	100.0
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^b	21.7	47.3	67.2
Barriers to Employment^c			
Frail ^d	0.0	1.0	4.2
Disabled ^e	6.3	12.8	27.3
Severely disabled ^f	0.3	2.7	6.9
Limited English proficiency	0.3	4.4	35.4
Low literacy skills	4.6	11.5	37.9
Rural	5.3	35.3	77.0
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	6.7	13.2	20.7
Low employment prospects ^g	47.8	82.8	95.6
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ^h	0.4	17.8	45.4
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title II	1.9	9.1	39.2
Homeless	0.9	4.7	9.3
At risk of homelessness	2.7	11.0	37.5
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	0.0	1.6	7.2
Average number of barriers	1.8	2.4	3.0

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

The columns show three distributional points (the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles) for each characteristic. They do not represent a single grantee.

- ^a Priority of service areas are: age 65 or over, homeless or at risk of homelessness; rural; Limited English Proficiency (LEP); low literacy skills; veteran (or qualified spouse); disability; failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I; and low-employment prospects
- ^b Conditions qualifying for waiver of durational limit are: severe disability; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment; and age 75 and over. In addition, LEP and low literacy skills, included in the priority of service areas, also qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit.
- ^c All definitions of Barriers to Employment footnoted below are from the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>. Note that being age 75 or older at time of enrollment, included in this table as a participant characteristic, is also a barrier employment to that counts towards a program's "most-in-need" measure.
- ^d *Frail* means that an individual (1) is determined to be functionally impaired because of inability to perform at least two activities of daily living without substantial human assistance such as verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision or (2) requires substantial supervision because, due to a cognitive or other mental impairment, the individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to him- or herself or to another individual. Frailty must be documented by a qualified professional.
- ^e *Disabled* means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Older Americans Act (OAA) definition of disability that is used by SCSEP for determining eligibility, priority of service, or waiver of the durational limitation provides a specific, restrictive list of "major life activities" that includes self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; cognitive functioning; and emotional adjustment.
- ^f *Severe disability* means a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitation in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-sufficiency. Severe disability must be documented by a physician and is counted separately from the *disabled* classification for the most-in-need measure.
- ^g *Low employment prospects* means that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.
- ^h *Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment* is a classification with two separate requirements—severely limited employment prospects *and* residence in an area of persistent unemployment. *Severely limited employment prospects* means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An *area of persistent unemployment* means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

**Table F-6
Demographic Characteristics of Participants by Type of Sub-recipient:
Percentage of Total Participants**

	Type		Size ^a			Urbanicity ^b		
	State	National	Large	Medium	Small	Urban	Rural	Mixed
Participant Characteristic								
Female	68.8	63.0	63.2	64.5	69.5	61.4	68.5	66.7
Hispanic	10.3	11.9	13.2	10.5	4.3	16.4	7.2	6.2
African-American, Non-Hispanic	29.4	32.3	31.0	34.1	26.4	40.9	17.8	22.8
White, Non-Hispanic	51.2	49.2	49.1	48.0	60.2	34.6	67.5	65.5
Other Race/Ethnicity	9.1	6.6	6.7	7.3	9.1	8.2	7.5	5.4
Age 55 to 59	27.7	32.0	31.3	31.8	27.1	32.5	26.9	30.4
Age 60 to 64	30.2	30.4	30.2	30.9	29.6	31.3	28.9	29.5
Age 65 to 69	19.8	17.9	18.1	18.1	20.0	17.9	19.8	18.3
Age 70 to 74	11.9	10.5	10.9	10.3	12.6	9.8	12.5	11.7
Age 75 and older	10.4	9.2	9.6	8.8	10.7	8.4	11.9	10.1
Average Age	64.6	63.9	64.1	63.8	64.8	63.7	64.9	64.3
Less than a high school diploma or GED	20.9	22.1	23.2	20.1	19.3	21.3	27.1	20.9
GED	8.3	7.7	7.8	7.7	8.7	6.6	9.0	9.3
High school diploma	31.4	31.2	30.6	32.0	32.5	31.5	30.8	31.1
Education beyond a high school diploma	39.5	38.9	38.3	40.2	39.4	40.6	33.0	38.7
Former SCSEP participant	12.6	11.2	11.6	11.1	12.6	11.9	11.5	10.9
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	37.4	31.3	33.2	29.7	40.0	37.3	26.9	27.4
No other public assistance (at intake)	50.9	53.7	53.7	52.7	50.5	50.9	55.1	55.6
Family income at or below poverty level	85.9	88.1	88.6	87.0	83.9	89.9	84.5	85.5
In a priority of service category ^c	96.0	98.1	97.9	97.7	95.9	97.1	99.5	97.8
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^d	45.7	47.6	48.6	45.9	42.6	51.4	51.1	40.0
Barriers to Employment^e								
Frail ^f	1.6	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.8	1.3	1.0	1.1
Disabled ^g	13.8	15.0	15.2	13.8	14.9	12.7	15.6	17.4
Severely disabled ^h	3.3	2.3	2.6	2.1	3.2	2.3	2.4	2.8
Limited English proficiency	9.0	10.0	10.8	9.2	5.1	14.3	8.9	3.7
Low literacy skills	15.1	20.8	19.3	22.5	9.2	25.5	15.7	12.4
Rural	35.7	29.1	34.9	20.4	42.6	4.5	88.9	49.8
Veteran (or	13.4	13.6	13.3	13.9	14.4	12.9	13.2	14.7

	Type		Size ^a			Urbanicity ^b		
	State	National	Large	Medium	Small	Urban	Rural	Mixed
eligible spouse)								
Low employment prospects ^c	76.5	90.7	88.6	89.5	74.2	89.3	83.4	86.9
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ^d	23.7	22.4	24.3	19.5	24.6	21.7	32.9	20.9
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title I	19.6	14.5	15.4	15.2	18.9	16.9	12.4	14.7
Homeless	4.7	5.5	5.7	5.2	3.7	6.3	2.7	4.8
At risk of homelessness	16.4	32.1	30.1	30.6	12.2	31.1	18.8	28.5
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	3.1	2.0	2.4	1.5	3.8	3.0	2.4	1.1
Average number of barriers	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.4	3.0	2.6
Number of participants	29,732	112,349	81,263	49,213	11,664	73,457	15,676	52,452
Number of participant spells	33,922	128,805	92,563	56,927	13,237	85,057	17,859	59,811

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

- ^a We consider sub-recipients small if they had 50 or fewer funded CSA positions or slots in PY 2009, medium if they had between 51 and 150, and large if they had more than 150 slots in PY 2009.
- ^b We consider sub-recipients urban if over 75 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas by the Census Bureau, rural if less than 25 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas, and “mixed” otherwise.
- ^c Priority of service areas are: age 65 or over, homeless or at risk of homelessness; rural; Limited English Proficiency (LEP); low literacy skills; veteran (or qualified spouse); disability; failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I; and low-employment prospects
- ^d Conditions qualifying for waiver of durational limit are: severe disability; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment; and age 75 and over. In addition, LEP and low literacy skills, included in the priority of service areas, also qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit.
- ^e All definitions of Barriers to Employment footnoted below are from the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>. Note that being age 75 or older at time of enrollment, included in this table as a participant characteristic, is also a barrier employment to that counts towards a program’s “most-in-need” measure.
- ^f *Frail* means that an individual (1) is determined to be functionally impaired because of inability to perform at least two activities of daily living without substantial human assistance such as verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision or (2) requires substantial supervision because, due to a cognitive or other mental impairment, the individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to him- or herself or to another individual. Frailty must be documented by a qualified professional.
- ^g *Disabled* means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Older Americans Act (OAA) definition of disability that is used by SCSEP for determining

eligibility, priority of service, or waiver of the durational limitation provides a specific, restrictive list of “major life activities” that includes self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; cognitive functioning; and emotional adjustment.

- ^h *Severe disability* means a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitation in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-sufficiency. Severe disability must be documented by a physician and is counted separately from the *disabled* classification for the most-in-need measure.
- ⁱ *Low employment prospects* means that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.
- ^j *Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment* is a classification with two separate requirements—severely limited employment prospects *and* residence in an area of persistent unemployment. *Severely limited employment prospects* means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An *area of persistent unemployment* means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

Table F-7
Community Service Assignments (CSA), Training, and On-the-job Experience (OJE):
Overall, by Program Year

	CSA Placement in PY 2009	CSA Placement in PY 2010	CSA Placement PY 2009 and 2010	Included Exiters^a in PY 2009 and 2010
Average quarterly hours of CSA	233.4	242.3	235.9	223.5
Standard deviation	66.6	61.9	62.7	69.3
Average quarterly hours of training	9.3	16.5	12.8	12.2
Standard deviation	29.8	37.6	34.0	35.7
Types of CSA^b				
% Government	33.9	33.5	33.2	32.2
% Not-for-profit	66.1	66.5	66.8	67.8
% with OJE training	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.5
Total number of CSAs	91,264	89,575	142,583	54,474

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

^a Participants who exited for any of a variety of reasons such as ill health, and are therefore excluded from performance measurement, are not included in this analysis.

^b CSA types labeled as for-profit are not included.

Table F-8
Community Service Assignments (CSA), Training, and On-the-job Experience (OJE):
Variation across Sub-recipients

	Distribution of Sub-recipient Averages		
	10th Percentile	50th Percentile	90th Percentile
Average quarterly hours of CSA	216.3	240.2	268.3
Average quarterly hours training	1.3	13.0	66.5
Types of CSA^a			
% Government	8.0	31.5	63.4
% Not-for-profit	36.6	68.5	92.0
% with OJE training	0.0	0.0	5.4

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

The columns show three distributional points (the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles) for each characteristic. They do not represent a single sub-recipient.

^a CSA types labeled as for-profit are not included.

**Table F-9
Community Service Assignments (CSA), Training, and On-the-job Experience (OJE):
Variation across Grantees**

	Distribution of Grantee Averages		
	10th Percentile	50th Percentile	90th Percentile
Average quarterly hours of CSA	225.3	243.0	266.3
Average quarterly hours training	1.9	11.6	41.3
Types of CSA^a			
% Government	16.4	32.2	56.6
% Not-for-profit	43.4	67.8	83.6
% with OJE training	0.0	0.7	8.5

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

The columns show three distributional points (the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles) for each characteristic. They do not represent a single grantee.

^a CSA types labeled as for-profit are not included.

**Table F-10
Community Service Assignments (CSA), Training and On-the-job Experience (OJE):
Sub-recipient Averages by Type of Sub-recipient**

	Type		Size ^a			Urbanicity ^b		
	State	National	Large	Medium	Small	Urban	Rural	Mixed
Average quarterly hours of CSA	243.6	236.1	236.2	240.2	243.6	239.3	245.0	240.4
Standard deviation	25.1	16.9	18.0	19.4	26.4	20.8	23.7	25.1
Average quarterly hours training	19.0	37.1	30.0	30.5	21.7	36.5	15.4	15.1
Standard deviation	37.1	40.5	45.4	28.3	44.0	39.6	39.3	34.5
Types of CSA^c								
% Government	39.0	30.5	33.0	31.1	39.5	28.7	42.9	40.1
% Not-for-profit	61.0	69.5	67.0	68.9	60.5	71.3	57.1	59.9
% with OJE training	4.5	1.3	1.0	1.7	5.2	1.9	6.4	2.3
Total number of CSAs	29,593	112,714	83,518	47,264	11,525	73,441	16,207	52,659

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

^a We consider sub-recipients small if they had 50 or fewer funded CSA positions or slots in PY 2009, medium if they had between 51 and 150, and large if they had more than 150 slots in PY 2009.

^b We consider sub-recipients urban if over 75 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas by the Census Bureau, rural if less than 25 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas, and “mixed” otherwise.

^c CSA types labeled as for-profit are not included.

**Table F-11
Length of Time in Program: Overall, by Program Year**

	Participants in PY 2009	Participants in PY 2010	Participants in PY 2009 and 2010	Included Exiters^a in PY 2009 and 2010
Average total months	16.8	19.9	19.4	13.7
Standard deviation	21.0	21.7	21.1	16.7
Median total months	10.4	13.0	13.4	8.7
Average months in last enrollment spell	14.6	19.7	16.8	12.7
Standard deviation	20.3	21.7	20.2	16.7
Median months in last enrollment spell	7.4	12.8	10.9	7.1
Average total months before exit to unsubsidized employment	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	10.6
Standard deviation	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	13.4
Median total months before exit to unsubsidized employment	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	6.2
Median total months at CSA by type^b				
Government	10.7	12.1	11.3	9.8
Not-for-profit	9.8	11.6	10.6	9.2

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

^a Participants who exited for any of a variety of reasons such as ill health, and are therefore excluded from performance measurement, are not included in this analysis.

^b CSA types labeled as for-profit are not included.

**Table F-12
Length of Time in Program: Variation across Sub-recipients**

	Distribution of Sub-recipient Averages		
	10th Percentile	50th Percentile	90th Percentile
Median total months			
All participants	9.3	14.2	23.2
In last enrollment spell, all participants	7.4	11.3	15.4
All included exiters	5.6	9.8	18.5
Before exit to unsubsidized employment	3.7	6.9	17.0
At CSA by type, all exiters^a			
Government	7.2	10.8	26.2
Not-for-profit	7.5	10.3	21.9

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

The columns show three distributional points (the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles) for each characteristic. They do not represent a single sub-recipient.

^a CSA types labeled as for-profit are not included.

**Table F-13
Length of Time in Program: Variation across Grantees**

	Distribution of Grantee Averages		
	10th Percentile	50th Percentile	90th Percentile
Median total months			
All participants	10.8	14.7	20.3
In last enrollment spell, all participants	8.6	11.6	14.4
All included exiters	7.2	10.6	14.4
Before exit to unsubsidized employment	4.6	7.4	13.7
At CSA by type, all exiters^a			
Government	8.1	11.0	16.8
Not-for-profit	8.5	10.8	15.6

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

The columns show three distributional points (the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles) for each characteristic. They do not represent a single grantee.

^a CSA types labeled as for-profit are not included.

Table F-14
Length of Time in Program by Type of Sub-recipient

	Type		Size ^a			Urbanicity ^b		
	State	National	Large	Medium	Small	Urban	Mixed	Rural
Average total months, all participants	21.7	18.9	20.1	18.1	20.8	19.0	19.2	22.1
Standard deviation	25.9	19.6	21.5	19.9	22.9	20.1	20.4	26.8
Median total months, all participants	14.6	13.2	14.1	12.4	14.3	13.0	13.5	15.0
Average months in last enrollment spell, all participants	18.7	16.3	17.5	15.4	17.9	16.4	16.8	19.2
Standard deviation	24.9	18.8	20.7	19.0	22.0	19.3	19.6	25.7
Median months in last enrollment spell, all participants	11.4	10.8	11.5	10.0	11.2	10.6	11.1	12.0
Average total months, all included exiters	16.6	13.0	14.2	12.5	16.3	13.0	14.2	16.2
Standard deviation	21.4	15.2	17.2	15.3	19.0	15.8	16.9	20.4
Median total months, all included exiters	10.6	8.4	9.2	7.8	10.8	8.1	9.3	10.7
Average total months before exit to unsubsidized employment	12.3	10.1	10.9	9.6	12.9	9.9	10.9	12.7
Standard deviation	15.7	12.8	13.5	12.5	16.1	12.6	13.3	16.7
Median total months before exit to unsubsidized employment	7.1	6.0	6.5	5.6	7.3	5.8	6.5	7.8
Median total months at CSA by type, all exiters^c								
Government	11.5	10.2	10.8	9.5	12.0	9.9	10.8	11.3
Not-for-profit	11.0	9.4	9.8	9.2	10.9	9.4	9.9	11.3

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

- ^a We consider sub-recipients small if they had 50 or fewer funded CSA positions or slots in PY 2009, medium if they had between 51 and 150, and large if they had more than 150 slots in PY 2009.
- ^b We consider sub-recipients urban if over 75 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas by the Census Bureau, rural if less than 25 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas, and “mixed” otherwise.
- ^c CSA types labeled as for-profit are not included.

**Table F-15
Exiters and Earnings by Program Year**

	PY 2009^a	PY 2010^b	PY 2009 and 2010^c
Number of exits	37,445	41,870	79,315
Number of included exits	25,660	29,979	55,639
Percent included	68.5	71.6	70.1
Percent employed in 1st quarter after exit	46.1	46.7	46.4
Average starting hourly wage rate	\$9.81	\$10.04	\$9.94
Number of still included in 2nd quarter after exit	25,407	29,835	55,242
Percent employed in 2nd quarter after exit	34.8	30.5	32.5
Average earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$3,598	\$3,689	\$3,644
Standard deviation of earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$2,555	\$2,566	\$2,561
Median earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$3,120	\$3,240	\$3,169
Number of still included in 3rd quarter after exit	25,380	29,813	55,193
Percent employed in 3rd quarter after exit	32.5	28.6	30.4
Average earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$3,683	\$3,787	\$3,736
Standard deviation of earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$2,761	\$2,772	\$2,767
Median earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$3,150	\$3,300	\$3,240

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

Percent employed is out of those included in performance measures. Participants who exited for reasons such as ill health that preclude placement in unsubsidized employment are not included in this analysis. A small number of excluded exiters enter unsubsidized employment after exiting the program, but only included exiters are included. Average earnings include only those employed in quarter and are adjusted to 2010 dollars.

- ^a Includes exits that occurred among participants who were active between quarter four of PY 2008 and quarter three of PY 2009.
- ^b Includes exits that occurred among participants who were active between quarter four of PY 2009 and quarter three of PY 2010.
- ^c Includes exits that occurred among participants who were active between quarter four of PY 2008 and quarter three of PY 2010.

**Table F-16
Variation across Sub-recipients: Exiters and Earnings**

	<u>10th percentile</u>	<u>50th percentile</u>	<u>90th percentile</u>
Number of exits	9	71	323
Number of included exits	7	52	228
Percent included	52.1	74.5	89.9
Percent employed in 1st quarter after exit	17.6	43.7	69.6
Average starting hourly wage rate	\$8.18	\$9.85	\$12.10
Number still included in 2nd quarter after exit	7	52	227
Percent employed in 2nd quarter after exit	10.0	30.1	51.9
Average earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$2,173	\$3,447	\$4,989
Standard deviation of earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$956	\$1,936	\$3,296
Median earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$1,885	\$3,098	\$4,582
Number still included in 3rd quarter after exit	7	52	227
Percent employed in 3rd quarter after exit	9.8	28.1	50.0
Average earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$2,190	\$3,516	\$5,076
Standard deviation of earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$976	\$1,950	\$3,643
Median earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$1,905	\$3,120	\$4,665

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

The columns show three distributional points (the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles) for each characteristic. They do not represent a single sub-recipient. Percent employed is out of those included. Participants who exited for reasons such as ill health that preclude placement in unsubsidized employment are not included in this analysis. A small number of excluded exiters enter unsubsidized employment after exiting the program, but only included exiters are included. Average earnings include only those employed in quarter and are adjusted to 2010 dollars. All sub-recipients are included regardless of size.

Table F-17
Variation across Grantees: Exiters and Earnings

	<u>10th percentile</u>	<u>50th percentile</u>	<u>90th percentile</u>
Number of exits	79	284	2,024
Number of included exits	54	181	1,320
Percent included	58.1	73.4	85.8
Percent employed in 1st quarter after exit	19.8	38.3	60.0
Average starting hourly wage rate	\$8.81	\$10.02	\$11.76
Number still included in 2nd quarter after exit	53	178	1,311
Percent employed in 2nd quarter after exit	14.8	26.3	46.9
Average earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$2,828	\$3,635	\$4,510
Standard deviation of earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$1,530	\$2,177	\$3,481
Median earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$2,460	\$3,168	\$3,873
Number still included in 3rd quarter after exit	53	178	1,311
Percent employed in 3rd quarter after exit	12.2	25.4	44.8
Average earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$2,954	\$3,655	\$4,611
Standard deviation of earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$1,546	\$2,278	\$3,631
Median earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$2,490	\$3,170	\$3,900

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

The columns show three distributional points (the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles) for each characteristic. They do not represent a single grantee. Percent employed is out of those included. Participants who exited for reasons such as ill health that preclude placement in unsubsidized employment are not included in this analysis. A small number of excluded exiters enter unsubsidized employment after exiting the program, but only included exiters are included. Average earnings include only those employed in quarter and are adjusted to 2010 dollars. All grantees are included regardless of size.

**Table F-18
Exiters and Earnings by Sub-recipient Type**

	Type		Size ^a			Urbanicity ^b		
	State	National	Large	Medium	Small	Urban	Mixed	Rural
Number of exits	15,561	63,754	43,670	29,635	6,010	42,314	29,450	7,551
Number of included exits	11,269	44,370	29,244	21,809	4,586	31,260	19,278	5,101
Percent included	72.4	69.6	67.0	73.6	76.3	73.9	65.6	67.6
Percent employed in 1st quarter after exit	40.8	47.8	48.1	45.8	38.8	43.2	50.1	52.2
Average starting hourly wage rate	\$10.07	\$9.91	\$9.93	\$9.96	\$9.86	\$10.31	\$9.58	\$9.14
Number still included in 2nd quarter after exit	11,210	44,032	28,961	21,710	4,571	31,167	19,051	5,024
Percent employed in 2nd quarter after exit	28.8	33.5	34.2	31.7	25.9	29.9	35.4	37.7
Average earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$3,692	\$3,633	\$3,633	\$3,725	\$3,302	\$3,872	\$3,492	\$3,178
Standard deviation of earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$2,445	\$2,587	\$2,461	\$2,759	\$2,194	\$2,779	\$2,330	\$2,213
Median earnings in 2nd quarter after exit	\$3,160	\$3,175	\$3,222	\$3,201	\$2,784	\$3,480	\$3,107	\$2,671
Number still included in 3rd quarter after exit	11,198	43,995	28,940	21,684	4,569	31,147	19,028	5,018
Percent employed in 3rd quarter after exit	27.4	31.1	32.1	29.4	24.0	27.7	33.3	35.9
Average earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$3,770	\$3,728	\$3,681	\$3,886	\$3,384	\$4,010	\$3,551	\$3,186
Standard deviation of Earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$2,526	\$2,822	\$2,580	\$3,083	\$2,394	\$3,073	\$2,420	\$2,335
Median earnings in 3rd quarter after exit	\$3,250	\$3,240	\$3,250	\$3,289	\$2,803	\$3,480	\$3,132	\$2,652

Source: SPARQ data (PY 2009 and 2010)

Percent employed is out of those included. Participants who exited for reasons such as ill health that preclude placement in unsubsidized employment are not included in this analysis. A small number of excluded exiters enter unsubsidized employment after exiting the program, but only included exiters are included. Average earnings include only those employed in quarter and are adjusted to 2010 dollars.

^a We consider sub-recipients small if they had 50 or fewer funded CSA positions or slots in PY 2009, medium if they had between 51 and 150, and large if they had more than 150 slots in PY 2009.

^b We consider sub-recipients urban if over 75 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas by the Census Bureau, rural if less than 25 percent of their participants live in areas designated as metropolitan statistical areas, and "mixed" otherwise.

APPENDIX G. SCSEP ANNUAL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY PROTOCOL

Survey Questionnaire: OLDER WORKER CUSTOMERS

Older Worker Program, also known as the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), wants to provide the highest quality services to its customers. You can help us improve our services by answering the following questions. Please be completely honest. Your answers will be strictly confidential. No one in the agency will see your individual responses.

Choose the number on the scale below each question that best represents your opinion. Thank you in advance for your help.

1. Utilizing the scale of 1 to 10 below, what is your overall satisfaction with the services provided by the Older Worker Program? (Choose one number)

Very dissatisfied										Very satisfied	Didn't receive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	90	

2. Considering all of the expectations you may have had about the services of the Older Worker Program, to what extent have the services met your expectations? (Choose one number)

Falls short										Exceeds	Didn't receive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	90	

3. Now, think about the ideal services for people in your circumstances. How well do you think the services you received compare with the ideal services? (Choose one number)

Not at all close										Very close	Didn't receive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	90	

ETA-9124 – Part A
(June 2004)

Please continue on other side 

Your responses are confidential, and we appreciate your time and assistance. This voluntary information has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget under OMB approval number 1205-0040, expiring 06/30/2007. Without this approval, we would not be able to conduct this survey. The time needed to complete the survey is estimated to average ten (10) minutes. If you have any comments regarding this estimate or any other aspect of this survey, including suggestions for reducing this burden; please send them to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of National Programs, Room C-4312, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20210 (Paperwork Reduction Project 1205-0040).

4. The Older Worker Program staff told me everything I needed to know about how the program worked. (Choose one number)

Strongly disagree										Strongly agree	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10	90

5. The Older Worker Program staff understood my employment interests and needs. (Choose one number)

Strongly disagree										Strongly agree	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10	90

6. The Older Worker Program helped me obtain the supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, housing or medical care, that I needed to meet my employment goals. (Choose one number)

Strongly disagree										Strongly agree	Didn't need any
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10	90

7. Before your community service assignment with your host agency, how much of the training you needed to meet your employment goals did the Older Worker Program give you? (Choose one number)

None of the training										All of the training	Didn't need any
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10	90

8. The Older Worker Program helped me obtain a community service assignment that was just right for me. (Choose one number)

Strongly disagree										Strongly agree	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10	90

9. I understand that I have the right to ask for a different community service assignment if I don't like the one the Older Worker Program gave me. (Choose one number)

Strongly disagree										Strongly agree	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10	90

10. Given your transportation situation, was your community service assignment convenient to where you live? (Choose one answer)

Yes No Don't know

11. There is someone in the Older Worker Program I can talk to when I need to. (Choose one number)

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly agree 10 Doesn't apply 90

12. During my community service assignment, my host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful in my assignment. (Choose one number)

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly agree 10 Didn't need any 90

13. I feel comfortable at my community service assignment. (Choose one number)

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly agree 10 Don't know 90

14. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, would you say your physical health is better, worse, or about the same? (Choose one number)

1 Better 2 Worse 3 About the same 9 Don't know

15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life? (Choose one number)

1 Much more negative 2 A little more negative 3 About the same 4 A little more positive 5 Much more positive 9 Don't know

16. The pay I receive from the Older Worker Program has made a substantial difference in the quality of my life. (Choose one number)

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly agree 10 Don't know 90

17. During my community service assignment, the Older Worker Program pressured me, before I was ready, to leave my community service assignment for unsubsidized employment. (Choose one answer)

Yes No Don't know

If you have an unsubsidized job, answer Questions 18, 19 and 20, and continue with the rest of the survey. If you do not have an unsubsidized job, skip to Question 21.

18. How much help did Older Worker Program staff give you in finding an unsubsidized job?
(Choose one number)

No help A great deal Don't
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 90

19. How much of the skills and training you need for your current job did you gain from your community service assignment? (Choose one number)

None of the skills and training Nearly all of the skills and training Don't know
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 90

20. Overall, how helpful was your community service assignment(s) in preparing you for success in your current unsubsidized job? (Choose one number)

Not at all helpful Extremely helpful Don't know
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 90

21. Would you recommend the services of the Older Worker Program to other older workers?
(Choose one number)

Definitely no Definitely yes Don't know
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 90

22. What do you think is most valuable about the Older Worker Program?

23. What part of the Older Worker Program do you think is most in need of improvement?

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey

APPENDIX H. TECHNICAL APPENDIX AND TABLES FOR CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY ANALYSIS

Table H-1 Characteristics of Customer Satisfaction Survey Respondents by Survey Year: Percentages	H-3
Table H-2 The Mean American Customer Satisfaction Score (ACSI) by Participant and Program Characteristics	H-6
Table H-3 The Mean Score for the Survey Item, “The Older Worker Program staff understood my employment interests and needs” By Participant and Program Characteristics.....	H-9
Table H-4 The Mean Score for the Survey Item, “The Older Worker Program helped me obtain the supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, housing or medical care, that I needed to meet my employment goals” By Participant and Program Characteristics	H-12
Table H-5 The Mean Score for the Survey Item, “The Older Worker Program helped me obtain a community service assignment that was just right for me” By Participant and Program Characteristics	H-15
Table H-6 The Mean Score for the Survey Item, “During my community service assignment, my host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful in my assignment” By Participant and Program Characteristics	H-18
Table H-7 Correlations between Scores on Customer Satisfaction Items.....	H-21
Table H-8 Regression Adjusted Mean ACSI Score, by Subgroups.....	H-22

Appendix H provides supplementary information to accompany the findings from the analysis of the SCSEP customer satisfaction survey presented in Chapter VIII.

Survey Methodology

The analysis of customer satisfaction was based on data from a nationwide survey conducted in October 2010 – January 2011. 25,477 surveys were mailed to randomly selected participants who had been active in SCSEP at any time between July 1, 2009, and September 30, 2010. Participants who did not respond to the first mailing received a second mailing and, if necessary, a third mailing in an effort to achieve a 70% response rate. The final response rate was 66.9%.

Sampling

For each state and national grantee, at least 370 participants were selected for surveying. If a grantee had fewer than 370 eligible participants, all eligible participants were included. If a grantee had more than 370 participants, a random sample of 370 was drawn.

Weighting

The survey data were weighted such that the proportion of the program participants served by all state and national grantees in the survey sample would be the identical to the one from the population (SPARQ data). In addition, the data were weighted to correct for non-response bias on gender, race, age, education, program status, and residence (rural/urban).

Tables from Customer Satisfaction Analysis

Table H-1
Characteristics of Customer Satisfaction Survey Respondents
by Survey Year: Percentages

Participant Characteristic	Unweighted survey data	SPARQ (PY 2009 and Q1 of PY 2010)
Female	70.1	64.6
Hispanic	8.1	11.8
African-American, Non-Hispanic	29.5	31.7
White, Non-Hispanic	53.4	49.6
Other	9.1	6.9
Age 55 to 59 (PY 2009)	26.6	33.1
Age 60 to 64 (PY 2009)	28.6	28.8
Age 65 to 69 (PY 2009)	20.2	17.9
Age 70 to 74 (PY 2009)	13.2	10.9
Age 75 and older (PY 2009)	11.5	9.2
Average Age (at the end of Q1, PY2010)	65.2	64.2
Less than a high school diploma or GED	21.2	22.3
GED	7.8	7.6
High school diploma	32.4	31.3
Education beyond a high school diploma	38.6	38.8
Former SCSEP participant	13.4	12.0
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	32.1	31.7
No other public assistance (at time of intake)	53.0	54.0
Family income at or below poverty level	85.0	87.8
In a priority of service category ^a (PY 2009)	96.7	97.6
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^b (PY 2009)	36.8	38.8
Barriers to Employment^c (PY 2009)		
Frail ^d	0.7	0.6
Disabled ^e	15.3	14.9
Severely disabled ^f	1.4	1.2
Limited English proficiency	9.0	10.1
Low literacy skills	15.8	20.6
Rural	38.6	30.9
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	13.0	13.5
Low employment prospects ^g	80.6	87.8
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ^h	10.5	10.6
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title I	14.2	14.8
Homeless	3.3	5.1
At risk of homelessness	17.5	27.8
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	1.2	1.0
Number of barriers		
0-2	57.2	52.4
3 or more	42.8	47.6

	Unweighted survey data	SPARQ (PY 2009 and Q1 of PY 2010)
Program Status (as of October 1st, 2010)		
Active participant	69.6	60.4
Exiter included in performance measures who found employment	12.5	14.8
Exiter included in performance measures who did not find employment	9.8	12.9
Exiter not included in performance measures	8.0	11.9
Participated in OJE	2.7	1.7
Type of Grantee Serving Respondent		
State	44.7	20.3
National	55.3	79.7
Size of Subgrantee Serving Respondent		
Small (≤50 modified positions in PY09)	22.8	7.8
Medium (51-150 modified positions in PY09)	38.7	35.2
Large (>150 modified positions in PY09)	38.5	57.1
Type of Community Service Assignment (CSA)		
Government	33.3	32.2
Not-for-profit	64.9	66.3
Total number of respondents	16,943	121,327

Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010).

- ^a Priority of service areas are: age 65 or over, homeless or at risk of homelessness; rural; Limited English Proficiency (LEP); low literacy skills; veteran (or qualified spouse); disability; failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I; and low-employment prospects
- ^b Conditions qualifying for waiver of durational limit are: severe disability; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment; and age 75 and over. In addition, LEP and low literacy skills, included in the priority of service areas, also qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit.
- ^c All definitions of Barriers to Employment footnoted below are from the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>. Note that being age 75 or older at time of enrollment, included in this table as a participant characteristic, is also a barrier employment to that counts towards a program's "most-in-need" measure.
- ^d Frail means that an individual (1) is determined to be functionally impaired because of inability to perform at least two activities of daily living without substantial human assistance such as verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision or (2) requires substantial supervision because, due to a cognitive or other mental impairment, the individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to him- or herself or to another individual. Frailty must be documented by a qualified professional.
- ^e Disabled means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Older Americans Act (OAA) definition of disability that is used by SCSEP for determining eligibility, priority of service, or waiver of the durational limitation provides a specific, restrictive list of "major life activities" that includes self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; cognitive functioning; and emotional adjustment.
- ^f Severe disability means a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitation in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-

sufficiency. Severe disability must be documented by a physician and is counted separately from the disabled classification for the most-in-need measure.

- ^g Low employment prospects means that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.
- ^h Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment is a classification with two separate requirements—severely limited employment prospects and residence in an area of persistent unemployment. Severely limited employment prospects means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An area of persistent unemployment means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

Table H-2
The Mean American Customer Satisfaction Score (ACSI)
by Participant and Program Characteristics

	ACSI score (0-100)
Average score	80.4
Average score by participant characteristic	
Gender	
Male	79.8
Female	80.7
Race/Ethnicity	
White, Non-Hispanic	77.8 ^{††}
African-American, Non-Hispanic	83.1
Hispanic	83.6
Other	80.7
Age(Years)	
55 to 59	77.2 ^{††}
60 to 64	79.0
65 to 69	82.0
70 to 74	85.0
75 and older	88.2
Education	
Less than a high school diploma or GED	85.9 ^{††}
GED	80.6
High school diploma	80.9
Education beyond a high school diploma	77.0
Previously Enrolled in SCSEP	80.8
First Time Enrolled in SCSEP	80.3
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	80.0
Not Co-enrolled	80.6
Receiving Other Public Assistance	80.2
Not Receiving Other Public Assistance	80.5
Family income at or below poverty level	80.1 [*]
Family income above poverty	82.1
In a priority of service category ^a	80.5 ^{**}
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^b	82.7
Barriers to Employment^c	
Frail ^d	78.0
Disabled ^e	79.9
Severely disabled ^f	78.4
Limited English proficiency	86.4 ^{**}
Low literacy skills	82.3 ^{**}
Rural	83.3 ^{**}
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	80.5
Low employment prospects ^g	80.3

	ACSI score (0-100)
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ^h	79.4
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title II	79.1
Homeless	79.6
At risk of homelessness	76.7**
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	83.0
Number of barriers	
0-2	79.8
3 or more	81.0
Program Status	
Active participant	83.9 ^{††}
Included exiter who found employment	80.6
Included exiter who did not find employment	68.6
Excluded exiter	74.2
Participated in OJE	
Yes	86.1**
No	80.3
Type of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
State	80.4
National	80.3
Size of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
Small (≤50 modified positions in PY09)	82.2 [†]
Medium (51-150 modified positions in PY09)	79.6
Large (>150 modified positions in PY09)	80.6
Type of Community Service Assignment (CSA)	
Government	81.2
Not for profit	80.0
Total number of respondents	15,873

Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010).

*** Difference is significant at 95/99% confidence level, two-tailed test. †/†† Differences across all subgroup levels are significant at 95/99% confidence level

^a Priority of service areas are: age 65 or over, homeless or at risk of homelessness; rural; Limited English Proficiency (LEP); low literacy skills; veteran (or qualified spouse); disability; failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I; and low-employment prospects

^b Conditions qualifying for waiver of durational limit are: severe disability; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment; and age 75 and over. In addition, LEP and low literacy skills, included in the priority of service areas, also qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit.

^c All definitions of Barriers to Employment footnoted below are from the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>. Note that being age 75 or older at time of enrollment, included in this table as a participant characteristic, is also a barrier employment to that counts towards a program's "most-in-need" measure.

- ^d Frail means that an individual (1) is determined to be functionally impaired because of inability to perform at least two activities of daily living without substantial human assistance such as verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision or (2) requires substantial supervision because, due to a cognitive or other mental impairment, the individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to him- or herself or to another individual. Frailty must be documented by a qualified professional.
- ^e Disabled means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Older Americans Act (OAA) definition of disability that is used by SCSEP for determining eligibility, priority of service, or waiver of the durational limitation provides a specific, restrictive list of “major life activities” that includes self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; cognitive functioning; and emotional adjustment.
- ^f Severe disability means a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitation in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-sufficiency. Severe disability must be documented by a physician and is counted separately from the disabled classification for the most-in-need measure.
- ^g Low employment prospects means that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.
- ^h Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment is a classification with two separate requirements—severely limited employment prospects and residence in an area of persistent unemployment. Severely limited employment prospects means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An area of persistent unemployment means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

Table H-3
The Mean Score for the Survey Item,
“The Older Worker Program staff understood my employment interests and needs”
By Participant and Program Characteristics

	Q5 (1 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)
Average score	8.4
Average score by participant characteristic	
Gender	
Male	8.3
Female	8.4
Race/Ethnicity	
White, Non-Hispanic	8.1 ^{††}
African-American, Non-Hispanic	8.6
Hispanic	8.8
Other	8.4
Age (Years)	
55 to 59	8.1 ^{††}
60 to 64	8.3
65 to 69	8.5
70 to 74	8.6
75 and older	9.0
Education	
Less than a high school diploma or GED	8.9 ^{††}
GED	8.4
High school diploma	8.4
Education beyond a high school diploma	8.1
Previously Enrolled in SCSEP	8.4
First Time Enrolled in SCSEP	8.3
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	8.3
Not Co-enrolled	8.4
Receiving Other Public Assistance	8.4
Not Receiving Other Public Assistance	8.4
Family income at or below poverty level	8.3
Family income above poverty	8.5
In a priority of service category ^a	8.4
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^b	8.6 ^{**}
Barriers to Employment^c	
Frail ^d	8.0
Disabled ^e	8.2
Severely disabled ^f	7.8
Limited English proficiency	9.1 ^{**}
Low literacy skills	8.6 ^{**}

	Q5 (1 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)
Rural	8.6**
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	8.3
Low employment prospects ^g	8.4
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ^h	8.4
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title II	8.2
Homeless	8.2
At risk of homelessness	8.0**
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	8.5
Number of barriers	--
0-2	8.3
3 or more	8.4
Program Status	
Active participant	8.7 ^{††}
Included exiter who found employment	8.4
Included exiter who did not find employment	7.3
Excluded exiter	7.9
Participated in OJE	
Yes	9.1**
No	8.4
Type of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
State	8.5**
National	8.3
Size of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
Small (≤50 modified positions in PY09)	8.5 ^{††}
Medium (51-150 modified positions in PY09)	8.2
Large (>150 modified positions in PY09)	8.4
Type of Community Service Assignment (CSA)	
Government	8.4
Not for profit	8.3
Total number of respondents	15,873

Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010).

** Difference is significant at 95/99% confidence level, two-tailed test. †/†† Differences across all subgroup levels are significant at 95/99% confidence level

^a Priority of service areas are: age 65 or over, homeless or at risk of homelessness; rural; Limited English Proficiency (LEP); low literacy skills; veteran (or qualified spouse); disability; failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I; and low-employment prospects

^b Conditions qualifying for waiver of durational limit are: severe disability; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment; and age 75 and over. In addition, LEP and low literacy skills, included in the priority of service areas, also qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit.

- ^c All definitions of Barriers to Employment footnoted below are from the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>. Note that being age 75 or older at time of enrollment, included in this table as a participant characteristic, is also a barrier employment to that counts towards a program's "most-in-need" measure.
- ^d Frail means that an individual (1) is determined to be functionally impaired because of inability to perform at least two activities of daily living without substantial human assistance such as verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision or (2) requires substantial supervision because, due to a cognitive or other mental impairment, the individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to him- or herself or to another individual. Frailty must be documented by a qualified professional.
- ^e Disabled means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Older Americans Act (OAA) definition of disability that is used by SCSEP for determining eligibility, priority of service, or waiver of the durational limitation provides a specific, restrictive list of "major life activities" that includes self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; cognitive functioning; and emotional adjustment.
- ^f Severe disability means a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitation in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-sufficiency. Severe disability must be documented by a physician and is counted separately from the disabled classification for the most-in-need measure.
- ^g Low employment prospects means that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.
- ^h Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment is a classification with two separate requirements—severely limited employment prospects and residence in an area of persistent unemployment. Severely limited employment prospects means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An area of persistent unemployment means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

Table H-4
The Mean Score for the Survey Item,
“The Older Worker Program helped me obtain the supportive services,
such as assistance with transportation, housing or medical care,
that I needed to meet my employment goals”
By Participant and Program Characteristics

	Q6 (1 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)
Average score	6.4
Average score by participant characteristic	
Gender	
Male	6.6**
Female	6.3
Race/Ethnicity	
White, Non-Hispanic	6.3 ^{††}
African-American, Non-Hispanic	6.5
Hispanic	6.6
Other	6.9
Age(Years)	
55 to 59	6.0 ^{††}
60 to 64	6.3
65 to 69	6.9
70 to 74	6.9
75 and older	7.7
Education	
Less than a high school diploma or GED	7.1 ^{††}
GED	6.5
High school diploma	6.6
Education beyond a high school diploma	5.9
Previously Enrolled in SCSEP	6.5
First Time Enrolled in SCSEP	6.3
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	6.5
Not Co-enrolled	6.4
Receiving Other Public Assistance	6.5
Not Receiving Other Public Assistance	6.4
Family income at or below poverty level	6.4
Family income above poverty	6.6
In a priority of service category ^a	6.5*
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^b	6.7**
Barriers to Employment^c	
Frail ^d	6.6
Disabled ^e	6.3
Severely disabled ^f	5.7

	Q6 (1 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)
Limited English proficiency	7.3**
Low literacy skills	6.8**
Rural	6.9**
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	6.6
Low employment prospects ^g	6.4
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ^h	6.3
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title II	6.1*
Homeless	5.9*
At risk of homelessness	5.9**
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	6.1
Number of barriers	
0-2	6.4
3 or more	6.5
Program Status	
Active participant	6.7 ^{††}
Included exiter who found employment	6.4
Included exiter who did not find employment	5.6
Excluded exiter	6.1
Participated in OJE	
Yes	6.6
No	6.4
Type of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
State	6.7**
National	6.4
Size of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
Small (≤50 modified positions in PY09)	6.9 ^{††}
Medium (51-150 modified positions in PY09)	6.4
Large (>150 modified positions in PY09)	6.4
Type of Community Service Assignment (CSA)	
Government	6.5
Not for profit	6.4
Total number of respondents	15,873

Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010).

** Difference is significant at 95/99% confidence level, two-tailed test. †/†† Differences across all subgroup levels are significant at 95/99% confidence level

^a Priority of service areas are: age 65 or over, homeless or at risk of homelessness; rural; Limited English Proficiency (LEP); low literacy skills; veteran (or qualified spouse); disability; failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I; and low-employment prospects

^b Conditions qualifying for waiver of durational limit are: severe disability; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent

unemployment; and age 75 and over. In addition, LEP and low literacy skills, included in the priority of service areas, also qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit.

- ^c All definitions of Barriers to Employment footnoted below are from the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>. Note that being age 75 or older at time of enrollment, included in this table as a participant characteristic, is also a barrier employment to that counts towards a program's "most-in-need" measure.
- ^d Frail means that an individual (1) is determined to be functionally impaired because of inability to perform at least two activities of daily living without substantial human assistance such as verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision or (2) requires substantial supervision because, due to a cognitive or other mental impairment, the individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to him- or herself or to another individual. Frailty must be documented by a qualified professional.
- ^e Disabled means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Older Americans Act (OAA) definition of disability that is used by SCSEP for determining eligibility, priority of service, or waiver of the durational limitation provides a specific, restrictive list of "major life activities" that includes self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; cognitive functioning; and emotional adjustment.
- ^f Severe disability means a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitation in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-sufficiency. Severe disability must be documented by a physician and is counted separately from the disabled classification for the most-in-need measure.
- ^g Low employment prospects means that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.
- ^h Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment is a classification with two separate requirements—severely limited employment prospects and residence in an area of persistent unemployment. Severely limited employment prospects means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An area of persistent unemployment means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

Table H-5
The Mean Score for the Survey Item,
“The Older Worker Program helped me obtain a community service assignment
that was just right for me”
By Participant and Program Characteristics

	Q8 (1 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)
Average score	8.3
Average score by participant characteristic	
Gender	
Male	8.2
Female	8.3
Race/Ethnicity	
White, Non-Hispanic	8.1 ^{††}
African-American, Non-Hispanic	8.5
Hispanic	8.5
Other	8.2
Age(Years)	
55 to 59	7.9 ^{††}
60 to 64	8.2
65 to 69	8.5
70 to 74	8.7
75 and older	9.0
Education	
Less than a high school diploma or GED	8.8 ^{††}
GED	8.2
High school diploma	8.4
Education beyond a high school diploma	7.9
Previously Enrolled in SCSEP	8.3
First Time Enrolled in SCSEP	8.3
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	8.2
Not Co-enrolled	8.3
Receiving Other Public Assistance	8.3
Not Receiving Other Public Assistance	8.3
Family income at or below poverty level	8.2
Family income above poverty	8.4
In a priority of service category ^a	8.3
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^b	8.4 ^{**}
Barriers to Employment^c	
Frail ^d	7.7
Disabled ^e	8.3
Severely disabled ^f	7.8
Limited English proficiency	8.9 ^{**}

	Q8 (1 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)
Low literacy skills	8.5**
Rural	8.6**
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	8.2
Low employment prospects ^g	8.3
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ^h	8.1
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title II	8.0 ⁺
Homeless	7.9
At risk of homelessness	7.9**
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	8.2
Number of barriers	
0-2	8.2
3 or more	8.3
Program Status	
Active participant	8.7 ^{††}
Included exiter who found employment	8.1
Included exiter who did not find employment	7.1
Excluded exiter	7.7
Participated in OJE	
Yes	8.8**
No	8.3
Type of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
State	8.2
National	8.3
Size of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
Small (≤50 modified positions in PY09)	8.4
Medium (51-150 modified positions in PY09)	8.2
Large (>150 modified positions in PY09)	8.3
Type of Community Service Assignment (CSA)	
Government	8.4
Not for profit	8.2
Total number of respondents	15,901

Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010).

^a Priority of service areas are: age 65 or over, homeless or at risk of homelessness; rural; Limited English Proficiency (LEP); low literacy skills; veteran (or qualified spouse); disability; failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I; and low-employment prospects

^b Conditions qualifying for waiver of durational limit are: severe disability; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment; and age 75 and over. In addition, LEP and low literacy skills, included in the priority of service areas, also qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit.

- ^c All definitions of Barriers to Employment footnoted below are from the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>. Note that being age 75 or older at time of enrollment, included in this table as a participant characteristic, is also a barrier employment to that counts towards a program's "most-in-need" measure.
- ^d Frail means that an individual (1) is determined to be functionally impaired because of inability to perform at least two activities of daily living without substantial human assistance such as verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision or (2) requires substantial supervision because, due to a cognitive or other mental impairment, the individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to him- or herself or to another individual. Frailty must be documented by a qualified professional.
- ^e Disabled means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Older Americans Act (OAA) definition of disability that is used by SCSEP for determining eligibility, priority of service, or waiver of the durational limitation provides a specific, restrictive list of "major life activities" that includes self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; cognitive functioning; and emotional adjustment.
- ^f Severe disability means a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitation in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-sufficiency. Severe disability must be documented by a physician and is counted separately from the disabled classification for the most-in-need measure.
- ^g Low employment prospects means that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.
- ^h Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment is a classification with two separate requirements—severely limited employment prospects and residence in an area of persistent unemployment. Severely limited employment prospects means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An area of persistent unemployment means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

Table H-6
The Mean Score for the Survey Item,
“During my community service assignment, my host agency gave me the training I
needed to be successful in my assignment”
By Participant and Program Characteristics

	Q12 (1 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)
Average score	7.9
Average score by participant characteristic	
Gender	
Male	7.9
Female	7.9
Race/Ethnicity	
White, Non-Hispanic	7.7 ^{††}
African-American, Non-Hispanic	8.2
Hispanic	8.1
Other	8.0
Age(Years)	
55 to 59	7.6 ^{††}
60 to 64	7.8
65 to 69	8.2
70 to 74	8.3
75 and older	8.6
Education	
Less than a high school diploma or GED	8.5 ^{††}
GED	7.9
High school diploma	8.0
Education beyond a high school diploma	7.6
Previously Enrolled in SCSEP	7.9
First Time Enrolled in SCSEP	7.9
Co-enrolled in other employment services or adult education (at intake)	7.9
Not Co-enrolled	7.9
Receiving Other Public Assistance	7.9
Not Receiving Other Public Assistance	8.0
Family income at or below poverty level	7.9
Family income above poverty	8.1
In a priority of service category ^a	7.9 [*]
Would qualify for waiver of individual time limit ^b	8.1 ^{**}
Barriers to Employment^c	
Frail ^d	7.4
Disabled ^e	8.0
Severely disabled ^f	7.4
Limited English proficiency	8.5 ^{**}

	Q12 (1 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)
Low literacy skills	8.1**
Rural	8.3**
Veteran (or eligible spouse)	7.8
Low employment prospects ^g	7.9
Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment ^h	7.7
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title II	7.8
Homeless	7.4*
At risk of homelessness	7.6**
Old enough for but not receiving Social Security benefits	8.4
Number of barriers	
0-2	7.9
3 or more	8.0
Program Status	
Active participant	8.3 ^{††}
Included exiter who found employment	7.8
Included exiter who did not find employment	6.8
Excluded exiter	7.2
Participated in OJE	
Yes	8.2
No	7.9
Type of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
State	7.9
National	7.9
Size of Sub-Recipient Serving Respondent	
Small (≤50 modified positions in PY09)	8.1 [†]
Medium (51-150 modified positions in PY09)	7.8
Large (>150 modified positions in PY09)	8.0
Type of Community Service Assignment (CSA)	
Government	8.0
Not for profit	7.9
Total number of respondents	14,412

Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010).

- ^a Priority of service areas are: age 65 or over, homeless or at risk of homelessness; rural; Limited English Proficiency (LEP); low literacy skills; veteran (or qualified spouse); disability; failed to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I; and low-employment prospects
- ^b Conditions qualifying for waiver of durational limit are: severe disability; frail; old enough for Social Security retirement but not eligible to receive it; severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment; and age 75 and over. In addition, LEP and low literacy skills, included in the priority of service areas, also qualify a participant for a waiver of the durational limit.

- ^c All definitions of Barriers to Employment footnoted below are from the SCSEP Data Collection Handbook, which is available at <http://charteroakgroup.org/resources/scsep.shtml>. Note that being age 75 or older at time of enrollment, included in this table as a participant characteristic, is also a barrier employment to that counts towards a program's "most-in-need" measure.
- ^d Frail means that an individual (1) is determined to be functionally impaired because of inability to perform at least two activities of daily living without substantial human assistance such as verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision or (2) requires substantial supervision because, due to a cognitive or other mental impairment, the individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to him- or herself or to another individual. Frailty must be documented by a qualified professional.
- ^e Disabled means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Older Americans Act (OAA) definition of disability that is used by SCSEP for determining eligibility, priority of service, or waiver of the durational limitation provides a specific, restrictive list of "major life activities" that includes self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; cognitive functioning; and emotional adjustment.
- ^f Severe disability means a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitation in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-sufficiency. Severe disability must be documented by a physician and is counted separately from the disabled classification for the most-in-need measure.
- ^g Low employment prospects means that an individual is unlikely to obtain employment without the assistance of SCSEP or another workforce development program. Persons with low employment prospects have a significant barrier to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.
- ^h Severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment is a classification with two separate requirements—severely limited employment prospects and residence in an area of persistent unemployment. Severely limited employment prospects means an individual has at least two significant barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited. An area of persistent unemployment means that the annual average unemployment rate for the county or city of residence is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the last three years.

**Table H-7. Correlations between Scores on
Customer Satisfaction Items**

	ACSI score	Program staff understood my employment needs and interests (Item 5)	The program helped me obtain the supportive services I needed (Item 6)	My community service assignment was just right for me (Item 8)	My host agency gave me the training I needed (Item 12)
ACSI score	1.000	0.785**	0.604**	0.712**	0.638**
Program staff understood my employment needs and interests (Item 5)	--	1.000	0.590**	0.688**	0.597**
The program helped me obtain the supportive services I needed (Item 6)	--	--	1.000	0.546**	0.541**
My community service assignment was just right for me (Item 8)	--	--	--	1.000	0.642**
My host agency gave me the training I needed (Item 12)	--	--	--	--	1.000

**Statistically significant at 99% confidence level

Table H-8. Regression Adjusted Mean ACSI Score, by Subgroups

	Regression-Adjusted ACSI score
Satisfaction with Case Management	
Low (score=1-5)	52.1 ^{††}
Medium (score=6-9)	75.2
High (score=10)	87.3
Satisfaction with Supportive Services	
Low (score=1-5)	75.8 ^{††}
Medium (score=6-9)	78.8
High (score=10)	83.7
Satisfaction with Community Service Assignment	
Low (score=1-5)	64.8 ^{††}
Medium (score=6-9)	77.3
High (score=10)	84.2
Satisfaction with Training Received	
Low (score=1-5)	72.2 ^{††}
Medium (score=6-9)	78.8
High (score=10)	82.6
Gender	
Female	80.3
Male	79.7
Race/Ethnicity	
White Non-Hispanic	79.1 [†]
Black or African-American Non-Hispanic	81.5
Hispanic	81.7
Other race or ethnicity	81.2
Age (Years)	
55 – 59	79.2 [†]
60 – 64	80.5
65 – 69	81.1
70 – 74	82.5
75+	82.4
Education	
Less than High School	81.1
GED	81.4
High School Graduate	80.8
More than High Graduate	79.4
Previously Enrolled in SCSEP	80.6
First Time Enrolled in SCSEP	80.0
Coenrolled in other Employment/Education Program at Intake	80.0
Not Coenrolled	80.2
Receiving Public Assistance	80.2
Not Receiving Other Public Assistance	80.0
Family Income at or Below Poverty	80.1
Family Income above Poverty	79.9
Disabled	80.9

	Regression-Adjusted ACSI score
Not Disabled	79.9
Low Literacy Skills	79.7
Not Low Literacy Skills	80.2
Rural	80.1
Not Rural	80.1
Limited English Proficiency	80.6
Not Limited English Proficiency	80.0
Failed to Find Employment after using WIA Title II	80.2
Not Failed under WIA Title II	80.1
Homeless	82.8*
Not homeless	80.0
At Risk of Homelessness	79.6
Not at Risk of Homelessness	80.3
Unemployment Rate in County During Quarter of Exit (Percent)	
< 7	80.1
7 – 9	79.7
9 – 11	80.3
11+	80.3
Government CSA	79.5
Non-profit CSA	80.4
National Grantee	80.4**
State Grantee	78.9
Sub-recipient Size	
Small (≤50 modified positions in PY09)	80.3
Medium (51-150 modified positions in PY09)	80.0
Large (>150 modified positions in PY09)	80.1
Sub-recipient Urbanicity	
Rural	81.3
Mixed	80.2
Urban	79.8
Program Status	
Active	81.1††
Included exiter who found employment	80.8
Included exiter who did not find employment	76.7
Excluded exiter	77.9
N	14,412

Source: Charter Oak Group (2010) and SPARQ (Program Years 2009 and 2010).

*** Difference is significant at 95/99% confidence level, two-tailed test. †/†† Differences across all subgroup levels are significant at 95/99% confidence level.