FINAL REPORT: PILOT PROJECT TO ASSESS CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

SUBMITTED TO: DIVISION OF OLDER WORKER PROGRAMS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
SUBMITTED BY: THE CHARTER OAK GROUP, LLC
DATE SUBMITTED: JUNE 30, 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2000 amendments to Title V of the Older Americans Act (OAA) require the Department of Labor (DOL) to develop performance measures for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), including customer satisfaction measures for each of the three customer groups: employers, host agencies, and enrollees. From February 6, 2003, to June 30, 2003, The Charter Oak Group, LLC conducted a pilot project in three states for the Division of Older Worker Programs of DOL to test the feasibility of using mail surveys to assess customer satisfaction. The goals of the pilot project were to determine:

- the most effective methods for administering the surveys to the three customer groups
- the most effective procedures to achieve acceptable response rates from each of the three customer groups
- whether there was any difficulty in obtaining adequate responses from certain enrollee sub-groups, e.g., those who are illiterate or who have limited English proficiency (LEP)
- what problems must be overcome in compiling customer data from sub-grantees and drawing samples from those compiled data bases
- whether grantees and sub-grantees have adequate contact and demographic information about the three customer groups
- how to minimize the administrative burden on grantees
- whether survey length would influence response rates
- which additional questions beyond the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ASCI) yield the most useful information to DOL and the grantees

The three pilot states were Florida, Iowa, and New York. The SCSEP program administrators in these states were responsible for all aspects of the administration of the surveys in their states. They worked with their sub-grantees to create a database of eligible customers in each of the three groups and then selected a sample of those customers who would receive the survey. Creating and utilizing the database caused many minor problems for the grantees and the researchers. Based on their experiences, developing a national database emerged as a high priority.

Since a major focus of the pilot project was achieving an acceptable response rate, the states tested several methods designed to increase response rates, including the use of a cover letter signed by the head of their department, pre-survey letters mailed to half of the selected customers prior to the first mailing of the survey, a follow-up mailing with a second copy of the survey to those customers who did not respond to the first mailing, and follow-up telephone calls to some of these non-respondents. They also tested the effect of survey length on response rates by mailing a long version of the survey to half of the sample and a short version to the other half.

The pilot project demonstrated that mail surveys are an extremely cost-effective means of assessing the satisfaction of SCSEP customers. The response rate for enrollees was 59 percent, for host agencies it was 73 percent, and for employers it was 44 percent. Although only the host agency response rate exceeded the target level of 70 percent set for the pilot project, the response rates achieved for the enrollees and employers far exceed the rates normally achieved with mail surveys. Interestingly, survey length had little or no impact on response rates. Only in the case of host agencies was a small effect evident, indicating some preference for the shorter version of the survey. However, given the high level of host agency response, survey length turned out not to be a significant issue even fro this group. The single most effective means of increasing response rates was the second mailing. Overall, the experience and information gained from the pilot project will enable DOL to increase the response rates for enrollees and host agencies 70 percent.

The pilot project also demonstrated the value of the information gained from the surveys in improving program performance. Major findings from the surveys include:

- satisfaction for all three groups as measured by the ACSI was extremely high: 88 for enrollees, 83 for host agencies, and 78 for employers
- while all customer groups are concerned about outcomes, how they are treated and the ease with which they navigate the process are also factors in their satisfaction levels
- enrollees' satisfaction is largely determined by the extent to which they receive training both before and during their host agency placement that will enable them to be successful on the job and to obtain unsubsidized employment
- enrollees report significant improvements in their outlook on life after becoming part of the program
- the program is extremely important to host agencies, many of which rely on enrollee placement to provide needed services to the community
- enrollees and host agencies praise the program for giving enrollees self-confidence and a purpose in life, as well as needed additional income
- host agencies and employers believe that enrollees need additional computer training prior to placement
- host agencies and employers share similar needs and concerns about important aspects of program quality
- most employers have a weak connection with the program
- the quality of the placement and the enrollees' success on the job are key determinants of overall satisfaction for host agencies and employers

I. BACKGROUND

The 2000 amendments to Title V of the Older Americans Act (OAA) require the Department of Labor (DOL) to develop performance measures for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), including customer satisfaction measures for each of the three customer groups: employers, host agencies, and enrollees. (P.L. 106-501) Planning for this effort has taken place over the last two years and has included the development of recommendations by the Customer Satisfaction Subcommittee of the Title V Performance Accountability Workgroup, which completed its work in 2001. The subcommittee recommended the use of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), which is widely used by many public- and private-sector organizations, including the Employment and Training Administration of DOL, which mandates the use of the ACSI for the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Employment Service (ES). The subcommittee recognized, however, that the ACSI would not provide sufficient data to grantees for program improvement. Consequently, the subcommittee recommended the inclusion of additional questions for each of the three customer groups that would be mandatory for all surveys and a menu of optional questions that each grantee could choose to add to its surveys.

The Division of Older Worker Programs of DOL decided to use mail surveys to reduce the cost of administering a nationwide survey. It also decided to pilot the surveys prior to nationwide implementation. The pilot project was conducted by The Charter Oak Group, LLC (COG), which had conducted a similar pilot project for the WIA program. The pilot project was designed to enable DOL to determine numerous factors that would be important for the success of the nationwide survey, including:

- the most effective methods of administration of the surveys to the three customer groups
- how to achieve acceptable response rates from each of the three customer groups
- whether there was any difficulty in obtaining adequate responses from certain enrollee sub-groups, e.g., those who are illiterate or who have limited English proficiency (LEP)
- what problems must be overcome in compiling customer data from sub-grantees and drawing samples
- whether grantees and sub-grantees have adequate contact and demographic information about the three customer groups
- how to minimize the administrative burden on grantees
- which additional questions yield the most useful information to DOL and the grantees

New York, Iowa, and Florida were asked to participate in the pilot project. These states were chosen because they provided a wide variety of conditions that are likely to be encountered in a nationwide survey and because they have a sufficiently large number of customers in each of the three groups to provide useful data within the brief period during which the pilot project was conducted. No national sponsors were included in the pilot project because DOL was about to select new national sponsors through a competitive process and did not want to bias the selection. For budgetary and programmatic reasons, the pilot project was required to be completed by June 30, 2003. Planning for the pilot project began on February 5, 2003, the first surveys were mailed on April 24, 2003, and data entry of the completed surveys concluded on June 6, 2003.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PILOT PROJECT

The pilot project commenced with a series of conference calls in early February, 2003, that were designed to provide background information on the project to the pilot states, educate COG about the administration of SCSEP in each of the pilot states, and obtain preliminary input on project design from the pilot states. The original project design is set forth in a document dated February 7, 2003, which is attached as Appendix I. COG then drafted surveys for each of the three customer groups based on the recommendations from the Customer Satisfaction Subcommittee of the Title V Performance Accountability Workgroup, reviewed the surveys with DOL staff, and sent the drafts to the pilot states for comment. The pilot states circulated the draft surveys to their sub-grantees and submitted comments to COG. Although states were invited to propose additional survey questions that might be unique to their states, no state chose to do so.

The original project design called for the surveys to be mailed with a cover letter, a postage-paid reply envelope, and a response postcard, which would be used to track responses to the first mailing and determine the need for a follow-up mailing. Early in the project, it was decided to use individually numbered surveys as a way to track responses, thus eliminating the need for the response postcards. Linking each survey to a particular customer would also enable COG to use customer characteristics to enrich the survey analysis.

One major objective of the pilot was to determine how best to assemble a database of customers from which the survey sample could be drawn. Since only Iowa had a statewide database, COG developed a database in Excel that the states provided to their sub-grantees. Included in the database was identifying information about each of the customer groups, as well as additional customer characteristics that might prove useful in the analysis of survey results. These data elements were largely derived from the participant eligibility and termination forms that are commonly used by sub-grantees. For host agencies and employers, the database also included the name of a contact person to whom the survey would be sent. The database was also designed to allow states to record various administrative actions, especially those that would be used to calculate response rates.

COG visited each of the three pilot states between March 21 and March 27, 2003. The visits occurred at the office of a state sub-grantee and included focus groups with each of the three customer groups in each state. The purpose of the site visits was to gain a better understanding of the difficulties likely to be encountered in assembling the databases, discuss various aspects of survey administration with grantees and sub-grantees, and obtain feedback from customers on the draft surveys. Customers in each focus group described their experiences with SCSEP, completed the draft survey, and provided feedback on the survey as a whole and each individual question in the survey.

As a result of the focus group comments, the surveys were substantially revised. Each survey was also created in a long and short version in order to determine whether the length of the survey had any impact on response rates. COG decided that it would data enter the host agency and employer surveys in order to obtain the best possible understanding of the effectiveness of the surveys by carefully observing patterns of survey response. COG chose to have a vendor create a scannable version of the enrollee survey in order to gain experience with scanning technology, which was likely to be required for the nationwide survey. The six surveys are attached as Appendix II.

A major finding drawn from the focus groups was that SCSEP was not known by a single name, that very few customers understood that the program was administered by state grantees, and that most customers related best to the sub-grantee and knew the program by the name of the sub-grantee. As a result, it was decided to test the use of a pre-survey letter that would be mailed by the sub-grantees to half of the sample in each customer group approximately one week before the surveys were mailed from the state SCSEP office.

In early April, 2003, the pilot states began receiving and aggregating the databases from their sub-grantees in order to create their statewide databases. This proved relatively painless in Iowa, a state with only four sub-grantees, which already had a statewide database and merely needed to enhance and correct its database. Florida did not have a statewide database but it has only five sub-grantees and it not encounter substantial difficulty in assembling a statewide database. New York, however, has 57 sub-grantees, many of which have no automation. The process of collecting and aggregating the databases in New York was extremely labor-intensive. Time constraints made it impossible to do much quality control or to ensure consistency in the way in which sub-grantees reported the data.

Once the databases were assembled, the states needed to select customers to receive the surveys. All customers that had been active in the program for any time between April 1, 2002, and March 1, 2003, were eligible for inclusion. The goal was a response rate of 70%. In order to have 200 completed surveys for each customer group for each state (a number that would permit analysis of sub-groups), the sample size was determined to be 300. No state had 300 employers so all employers in each state were surveyed. Iowa did not have 300 enrollees or host agencies either; therefore, all of its eligible customers in those groups were surveyed. Florida and New York had more than 300 enrollees and host agencies. Consequently, those states drew random samples to select 300 customers in each of these two groups.

Once the samples were drawn, the states assigned every other customer to the test group to receive the pre-survey letter. Half of those assigned to the test group received the long survey and half received the short survey. Similarly, half of those in the control group who were not receiving the pre-survey letter were assigned to get the long survey and half to get the short survey. The states provided to the sub-grantees the names of those in the test group who were to receive the pre-survey letter and, in some instances, also gave the sub-grantees mailing labels for those customers. The sub-grantees were instructed to use a mail merge function to generate customized letters to each customer in the test group, using standard letters that had been agreed to by the pilot states. (In Iowa, the state grantee generated the customized pre-survey letters for the sub-grantees.) The pre-survey letters were mailed on April 16, 2003.

The states mailed the surveys on April 21, 2003. Each customer in the sample received a numbered survey, a cover letter, and a postage-paid reply enveloped addressed to COG. The survey numbers were entered into the record for each customer in the database, as were codes for the pre-survey letter and the long and short surveys. Different reply envelopes were used for the host agency and employer surveys, which were to be data entered by COG, and the enrollee surveys, which were to be scanned by the vendor. The cover letters, which had been agreed to by the states, were signed by the head of the state agency and printed on that individual's letterhead stationery. The original design had called for states to test different signatories for the cover letter, such as the governor or the head of the state business association, but time constraints and the complexity of the pilot project design precluded testing another variable. Upon completion of the mailing and the updating of their databases, the pilot states sent COG a copy of their databases.

The design called for a second mailing if the initial responses were not sufficient. COG tracked survey returns against the states' databases and determined that the response to the initial mailing was likely to be 40 percent or less. As a result, it was decided to do follow-up mailings and phone calls to those who did not respond to the first mailing. On May 3-5, 2003, COG notified the states of those customers that had not completed the surveys. COG also provided to the states the text for the follow-up cover letter that would accompany the second mailing and a script for sub-grantees to use in making follow-up phone calls. The states participated in conference a call on May 5, 2003, to agree on the procedures for follow-up activity, and the second mailing of the surveys occurred from May 6 through 9, 2003.

Each customer that did not respond to the initial mailing received a follow-up cover letter, a long or short survey (the same type as the customer had received in the first mailing), and a postage-paid reply envelope. Those enrollees who were identified as limited English proficient (LEP) in the database received a Spanish version of the follow-up letter and survey. These enrollees had received an English version of the first mailing. Every other customer receiving the follow-up mailing was assigned to a test group to receive follow-up phone calls. The sub-grantees made these calls between May 8 and 12, 2003.

Data entry and scanning commenced on May 19, 2003, and the pilot states received preliminary analysis of the results for their states between May 28 and June 2, 2003. On May 28, 2003, the states participated in a conference call during which they discussed their experiences with the pilot project and made recommendations for improving the process for the nationwide survey. Data entry and scanning concluded on June 6, 2003.

III. RESPONSE RATES

DOL chose to use mail surveys because telephone surveys are extremely expensive and SCSEP has a relatively small budget. Mail surveys have a notoriously low response rate, however. One of the objectives of the pilot project was to determine if it is possible to obtain a 70 percent response rate, the level set by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget for using customer satisfaction surveys for sanctioning and incentive purposes.

The pilot project was structured to determine the lowest level of administrative burden that would achieve the desired response rate. Thus, the pre-survey letters that preceded the first mailing were structured as a test, with half of the total sample receiving the letters and half not receiving them. Similarly, when the second mailing was done to those who had not responded to the first mailing, half of the non-respondents received a follow-up telephone call from the sub-grantees in addition to the second mailing while the other half received only the second mailing. Similarly, those LEP enrollees identified as Spanish-speaking (no other significant language group was identified by the states as needing assistance) received the English version of the survey in the first mailing and only received the Spanish version in the second mailing.

The pilot project was also designed to test whether the length of the survey had a negative impact on response rates. For each customer group, there were two versions of the survey. Half of each group received the long version and half received the short version. All of the questions on the short version were included in the long version in order to yield more responses for analysis purposes.

<u>Overall response rates.</u> A major accomplishment of the pilot project was achieving an overall response rate of 73 percent for host agencies and 59 percent for enrollees. By comparison, WIA, which uses telephone surveys, had a nationwide response rate of 65.2% percent for job seekers in 2001. The response rate for employers was substantially lower for reasons discussed in Section V of this report. Nonetheless, the employer rate is significantly higher than the rate usually achieved with mail surveys. The tables below present the overall response rates for each state and for the three states combined. These rates include all eligible customers: those who received the pre-survey letter and those who did not, those who received the long survey and those who received the short survey, and those who received a follow-up phone call in addition to the second mailing and those who only received the second mailing.

Response Rates for Enrollees				
State	Sent	Ineligible	Returned/Useable	**Response Rate**
Florida	301	9	170	**58%**
Iowa	201	16	124	**67%**
New York	301	20	149	**53%**
All 3 States	**802**	**45**	**443**	**59%**

Response Rates for Host Agencies				
State	Sent	Ineligible	Returned/Useable	**Response Rate**
Florida	300	16	206	**73%**
Iowa	110	12	93	**95%**
New York	294	4	198	**68%**
All 3 States	**710**	**32**	**497**	**73%**

Response Rates for Employers				
State	Sent	Ineligible	Returned/Useable	**Response Rate**
Florida	122	20	41	**40%**
Iowa	39	4	14	**40%**
New York	87	9	40	**51%**
All 3 States	**248**	**33**	**95**	**44%**

Length of survey. The length of the survey produced very mixed results. It had no effect on employer responses, a positive effect on enrollee responses, and a negative effect on host agency responses. It should be noted, however, that despite the negative effect of survey length on host agency responses, the response rate even for the short survey was 62%, a remarkable result for mail surveys. There is no obvious reason why enrollees should have responded in significantly higher numbers to the long survey than to the short survey. The table below shows response rates based on survey length for each state and for the three states combined.

Responses Rates for Long and Short Versions of Survey						
State	Enrollees		Host Agencies		Employers	
	Long Version	Short Version	Long Version	Short Version	Long Version	Short Version
Florida	58.6%	41.4%	44.6%	55.4%	52.5%	47.5%
Iowa	55.4%	44.6%	46.2%	53.8%	50%	50%
New York	60.4%	39.6%	44.1%	55.9%	48.7%	51.3%
All States	58.3%	41.7%	44.7%	55.3%	50.5%	49.5%

Survey length had no effect at all on the percentage of respondents completing the survey. An analysis of the completed surveys showed no higher incidence of respondents failing to complete the long survey than of respondents failing to complete the short survey. Indeed, nearly everyone who responded to the survey completed it. For example, 458 host agencies responded to question 6 on the long survey, while 485 responded to question 24 and 481 responded to question 26. Similarly 238 enrollees answered question 4 while 223 answered question 19; and 47 employers answered question 11 while 44 answered question 17. Furthermore, a large number of respondents in all three customer groups wrote comments in response to the last two, open-ended questions on all versions of the survey. Typically, only 10 percent of respondents respond to open-ended questions in writing. For this survey, however, 88 percent of enrollees, 83 percent of host agencies, and 74 percent of employers responded to the question about what they found most valuable about the Older Worker Program. Clearly, these respondents had no issue with the length of the survey.

Pre-survey letters. The pre-survey letters had a variable effect on response rates. Unfortunately, the New York database did not permit tracking of customers who received the pre-survey letters. The data from the other two states, however, reveal that the letters had an effect on enrollee response rates for the first mailing, raising them by 10 percent on average. The effect of the letters on host agencies' response rates was negligible. The number of employer responses was too small to allow any conclusions to be drawn with confidence.

Follow-up mailing. The second mailing substantially improved response rates. The table below shows the number of returned surveys from the first mailing received by May 5, 2003, and the number of returned surveys received after that date. A small number of surveys received after May 5 were in response to the first mailing and some respondents who received the follow-up mailing returned the first survey rather than the second survey; nonetheless, it is evident that the second mailing caused a large number of additional respondents to complete the survey.

Surveys Returned in Response to First Mailing and to Follow-up Mailing						
State	Enrollees		Host Agencies		Employers	
	First Mailing	Follow-up Mailing	First Mailing	Follow-up Mailing	First Mailing	Follow-up Mailing
Florida	122	48	98	108	19	22
Iowa	96	28	68	25	11	3
New York	80	69	84	114	23	17
All States	298	145	250	247	53	42

Follow-up telephone calls. The effect of the follow-up telephone calls on response rates was similarly variable. Phone calls in addition to the follow-up mailing improved response rates for host agencies by about 10 percent, but did not have a significant impact on other response rates. Given the burden to sub-grantees of making these calls and the high response rate attainable for host agencies without the calls, it is not recommended that phone calls be used in subsequent survey efforts.

Response rates using both pre-survey letters and follow-up phone calls. One way to examine the different techniques used to enhance survey response is to consider the response rates for all combinations of techniques after all the surveys are returned. The combinations include receipt of the pre-survey letter before the first mailing and the follow-up phone call before the second mailing, the pre-survey letter but no follow-up phone call, and so on. In comparing all four possible combinations of techniques for enrollees, no significant differences in response rates were evident.

However, as previously noted, when we considered the difference in response rates only for the pre-survey letter, there was a small increase in responses to the first mailing for those enrollees who received the letter compared to those who did not. Since higher responses to the first mailing mean less work for the follow-up mailing, there is some value in the letter for enrollees even though there was no difference in overall response rates when looking at the combinations of techniques after all of the surveys were received.

IV. SURVEY RESULTS

Below are the results of the surveys for all three states. The individual reports for each of the pilot states are contained in Appendix III. Since a major objective of the pilot project was to determine whether adding questions to the ASCI questions would yield useful information for DOL and the grantees, we have focused the analyses that follow on addressing the utility of the information. A full range of analyses, including those addressing policy questions, has not been included, except for the host agency report, where we have included a causal model that relates groups of questions to customer satisfaction.

A. Enrollee Survey: Final Results for all 3 States

Response Rate[1]

For a discussion of response rates, see Section III above.

State	Sent	Ineligible	Returned/Useable	**Response Rate**
Florida	301	9	170	**58%**
Iowa	201	16	124	**67%**
New York	301	20	149	**53%**
Total	**802**	**45**	**443**	**59%**

Customer Demographics

The survey respondents are predominately female and white, with an average age of almost 69 years. Eighty percent have a high school diploma or less. No conclusions can be drawn without consulting nationwide demographic data, but we were struck by the age of enrollees and the small number of Blacks and Hispanics, even in New York and Florida, where one would have expected larger numbers of low income minority seniors. With the exception of education discussed below, customer characteristics did not have a significant effect on their responses to the survey.

Age	Number of Responses	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
	371	55.86	103.32	68.82	8.06

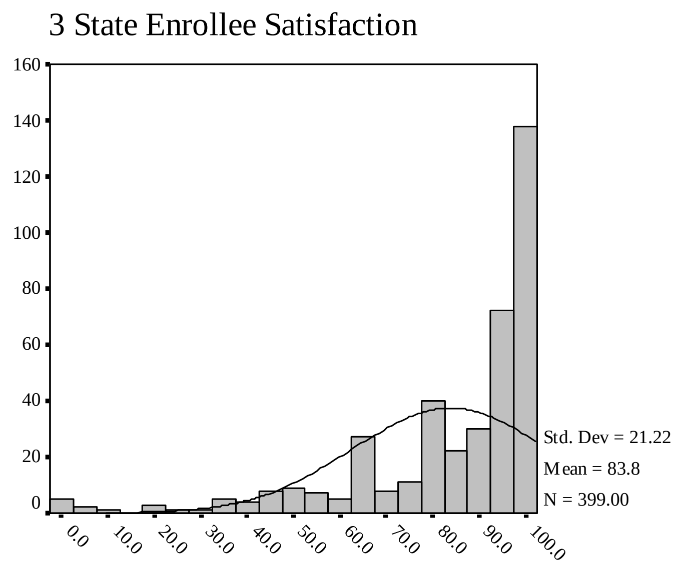
[1] The response rate includes some surveys that were received too late to be considered in the analysis.

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	112	26.2	26.5	26.5
	Female	311	72.8	73.5	100.0
	Total	423	99.1	100.0	
Missing		4	.9		
Total		427	100.0		

Education		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	8th and under	22	5.2	6.9	6.9
	9-11	45	10.5	14.0	20.9
	HS diploma or equal	160	37.5	49.8	70.7
	1-3 years college	63	14.8	19.6	90.3
	4 or more years college	31	7.3	9.7	100.0
	Total	321	75.2	100.0	
Missing		106	24.8		
Total		427	100.0		

Race/Ethnicity		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	American Indian/Alaskan	6	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Asian	14	3.3	3.3	4.8
	Black/African American	65	15.2	15.5	20.3
	Hispanic/Latino	30	7.0	7.2	27.4
	White	304	71.2	72.6	100.0
	Total	419	98.1	100.0	
Missing		8	1.9		
Total		427	100.0		

American Customer Satisfaction Index



The ASCI is widely used in both the public and private sectors and provides a very reliable benchmark. The ASCI scores for all customer groups, including enrollees, are truly impressive. The average ACSI score for public and private sector organizations at the end of 1992 was 73.1. One of the highest scores for a single private sector firm using the index, Amazon, is 88. The ASCI score for enrollees, while not as high as Amazon's, compares quite favorably with it. In most other private sector surveys, the highest scores were around 80. Comparing the enrollee's score to other employment and training participant scores, the three-state average for enrollees is nearly 6 points higher than the average score for WIA participants reported for program year 2002.

When looking at the individual scores, it is evident that the highest score is for overall satisfaction and the lowest is for compared to the ideal. This pattern is consistent with the pattern found in nearly all sets of ACSI questions, indicating that this population responds to the questions in a manner similar to the many customer groups across the country and across government and the private sector that have answered these questions.

All 3 States	Number of Responses	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall satisfaction	416	.00	100.00	87.37	21.77
Compared to expectations	409	.00	100.00	82.69	23.14
Compared to the ideal	407	.00	100.00	81.41	24.27
ACSI	399	.00	100.00	83.83	21.22

The questions below were asked after the 3 ACSI questions. They were all answered on scales ranging from 1-10. Those questions only asked on the long form of the survey are marked "L only" in parentheses.

The scores for these questions are all generally quite high. Several are outstanding. Q21 (Would you recommend the services of the program to other older workers?), which had the highest score, is nearly a proxy for the satisfaction index. Q13 (I like the way program staff treat me.) and Q 15 (I feel comfortable at my training site job.) both also had scores above 9. The remaining scores were above 8.6, with a few notable exceptions.

All 3 States	Number of Responses	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q4. The program staff told me everything I needed to know to understand how the program worked. (L only)	238	1	10	8.85	1.94
Q5. The program staff really listened to me. (L only)	232	1	10	8.71	2.11
Q6. The program staff understood my employment interests and needs.	407	1	10	8.85	2.06
Q7. The program provided me the supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, housing or medical care, I needed to meet my employment goals.	238	1	10	6.76	3.38
Q8. Before my training site placement with the host agency, the program gave me the training I needed to meet my employment goals.	271	1	10	7.29	3.16
Q9. The program helped me obtain a host agency training site job that was just right for me.	371	1	10	8.64	2.45
Q10. I understand that I have the right to request a different placement if I don't like the one the program gave me. (L only)	203	1	10	8.82	2.29
Q12. There is someone in the program I can talk to when I need to.	403	1	10	8.78	2.18
Q13. I like the way program staff treat me. (L only)	236	1	10	9.09	1.80
Q14. During my training site placement, my host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful on my job. (L only)	195	1	10	8.24	1.94
Q15. I feel comfortable at my training site job. (L only)	223	1	10	9.04	2.11
Q16. How helpful was your experience in your training site job with your host agency in preparing you to be successful on your current unsubsidized job?	134	1	10	8.16	2.06

All 3 States	Number of Responses	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q19. The pay I receive from the program has made a substantial difference in the quality of my life. (L only)	223	1	10	7.46	3.38
Q21.Would you recommend the services of the program to other older workers?	395	1	10	9.31	3.16

The lowest score, 6.76, was for Q7 (The program provided me the supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, housing or medical care, I needed to meet my employment goals.). Of the four questions with the next lowest scores, three relate to training, either before or during placement. Q8 (Before my training site placement with the host agency, the program gave me the training I needed to meet my employment goals.) had the next lowest score, 7.29, followed by Q19 (The pay I receive from the program has made a substantial difference in the quality of my life. (L only)) at 7.46; Q16 (How helpful was your experience in your training site job with your host agency in preparing you to be successful on your current unsubsidized job?) at 8.16; and Q14 (During my training site placement, my host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful on my job. (L only)) at 8.24. As the discussion of drivers points out, these training questions have a strong influence on enrollee's satisfaction with the program.

Other questions not using the 10 point scale

Q11. Placement convenient for transportation

Given your transportation situation, was your placement convenient to where you live? (Long form only)

Although this question does not suggest a problem with transportation and the location of placements, several comments submitted by enrollees express concern about the cost of transportation and recommend that a stipend be provided to those who have significant transportation costs. See Comments below.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	21	4.9	9.2	9.2
	Yes	207	48.5	90.8	100.0
	Total	228	53.4	100.0	
Not asked on short form[2]		199	46.6		
Total		427	100.0		

[2] In all tables, the frequency for "Not asked on short form" may include some responses that were missing on the long form. Similarly, the frequency for "Missing" may include non-responses due to fact that the question was not asked on the short form of the survey.

Q17. Physical health
Compared to the time before you started working with this program, would you say your physical health is better, worse, or about the same? (Long form only)

Nearly a quarter of respondents report that their physical health is better since they became involved with the program, and less than 5% report that their health is worse. Given the natural deterioration to be expected in enrollees of this age, this result is quite remarkable. The positive health benefits are also reflected in several of the comments.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Better	53	12.4	23.7	23.7
	Worse	18	4.2	8.0	31.7
	About the same	153	35.8	68.3	100.0
	Total	224	52.5	100.0	
	Missing	4	.9		
Not asked on short form		199	46.6		
Total		427	100.0		

Q18. Outlook on Life
Compared to the time before you began working with this program, how would you rate your outlook on life? (Long form only)

The question as originally written was intended to capture mental health as a companion to the physical health question. In discussion with enrollees, however, they recommended that asking about their "outlook on life" would be a more "positive" approach to the question of mental health. Over 70 percent of respondents report that their mental health is either a little more positive or much more positive since they became involved with the program. This result is strongly reflected in the comments and in the focus groups conducted before the survey.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Much more negative	9	2.1	4.0	4.0
	A little more negative	14	3.3	6.2	10.1
	About the same	44	10.3	19.4	29.5
	A little more positive	56	13.1	24.7	54.2
	Much more positive	104	24.4	45.8	100.0
	Total	227	53.2	100.0	
Missing/Don't know		8	1.9		
Not asked on short form		192	45.0		
Total		427	100.0		

Q20. Pressure to leave
During my placement, the Older Worker Program pressured me to leave my host agency training site job for another training site job or unsubsidized employment before I was ready to leave. (Long form only)

This question was added at the request of one of the pilot states in response to some of the discussion in the focus groups. It appears that prematurely removing enrollees from their training site placements is not a serious problem from the enrollees' perspective. However, results from the host agency survey suggest that this issue warrants some attention.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	130	30.4	88.4	88.4
	Yes	17	4.0	11.6	100.0
	Total	147	34.4	100.0	
Missing/Does not apply		85	19.0		
Not asked on short form		195	45.7		
Total		427	100.0		

Effect of customer characteristics on satisfaction

As stated above, none of the customer characteristics except education had a significant effect on enrollee satisfaction. Although we only had information about education for three-quarters of the enrollees, the data indicate that those with a high school degree or less (216) had an ACSI score of 85.7, while those with some college or more had an ACSI score of 78.5.

Factors (key drivers) most closely associated with the customer satisfaction index for all 3 states

The key drivers correlate responses to individual questions with respondents' ASCI scores. Reported below are only those correlations that are moderate to strong. There are three basic themes that emerge from this table: how the program staff treated the enrollees and understood their needs and interests; the quality and appropriateness of the placement; and the extent to which enrollees received training to enable them to be successful in their training site placements and unsubsidized employment. This last theme is both highly correlated with satisfaction and likely to be the most fruitful area to work on because it had some of the lowest scores. See discussion of questions with a 10-point scale above.

All 3 States	Number of Responses[3]	Strength of Association
Q4. The program staff told me everything I needed to know to understand how the program worked. (L only)	224	.649
Q5. Staff really listened to me. (L only)	218	.776
Q6. Staff understood my employment interests and needs.	392	.779
Q8. Before my training site placement with the host agency, staff gave me the training I needed to meet my employment goals.	261	.635
Q9. The program helped me obtain a host agency training site job that was just right for me.	351	.673
Q12. There is someone in the program I can talk to when I need to.	386	.672
Q13. I like the way staff treat me. (L only)	221	.689
Q14. During my training site placement, my host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful on my job. (L only)	181	.720
Q15. I feel comfortable at my training site job. (L only)	207	.723
Q16. How helpful was your experience in your training site job with your host agency in preparing you to be successful on your current unsubsidized job?	128	.744

Enrollee Comments

The last two questions in all versions of the survey asked respondents to write what they felt was most valuable about the program and what they thought was most in need of improvement. 83 percent of enrollees who responded to the first mailing commented on the first open-ended question and 59 percent of the enrollees responded to the second open-ended question. This level of response is unprecedented, evidencing a high level of attachment and involvement with the program. Appendix IV contains all of the individual comments which have been content coded into categories. Following each question below is a summary of enrollee comments.

[3] For each question in this table, only those respondents who answered both the particular question and the three ACSI index questions were included in the analysis of correlations.

Q22. What do you think is most valuable about the Older Worker Program?

For enrollees, there are five major areas noted as being most valuable. The percent making comments in each area is included after each area descriptor.

- Helped my self-esteem, independence—21%
- Helps seniors return to the workforce when otherwise they wouldn't be hired--18%
- Gave me needed income—16.5%
- Provided social contact, especially with other seniors—8%
- Felt I was needed—6.7%

A few of the verbatim comments describing what is most valuable follow:

"Their support and dedication in making me feel useful."
"It gave me back my confidence about the skills I have and let me learn new ones."
"Makes a person feel good about themselves."
"It helps us to be able to live independently and relieve the insecurities you have about having enough to live a little better."
"Employment opportunities for seniors are not in overabundance."

Q23. What part of the Older Worker Program do you think is most in need of improvement?

There were four major areas which enrollees noted as needing improvement:

- Wages—32.6%
- Hours—7%
- More and better training8.6%
- Rotating enrollees before they are ready—8.3% (only in two states)

A few of the verbatim comments describing what needed improvement follow:

"Extra pay—minimum wage is not enough to cover my bills and extra money for work expenses (gas)."
"Offer computer training and experience."
"Too short time at our new jobs and when we are already trained and doing good work, they withdraw us from this employment."
"More help with training for unsubsidized employment."

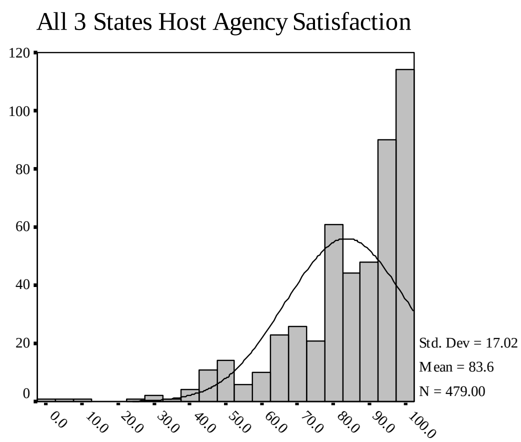
B. Host Agency Survey: Final Results for All Three States

Response Rate[4]

For a discussion of response rates, see Section III above.

State	Sent	Ineligible	Returned/Useable	**Response Rate**
Florida	300	16	206	**73%**
Iowa	110	12	93	**95%**
New York	294	4	198	**68%**
Total	710	32	497	73%

American Customer Satisfaction Index



-

The ASCI score for host agencies is identical to that for enrollees. For a fuller discussion of the ASCI, see the report on the enrollee survey above.

All 3 States	Number of Responses	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall Satisfaction	488	.00	100.00	86.66	18.25
Compared to Expectations	488	.00	100.00	83.29	17.00
Compared to the Ideal	479	.00	100.00	80.70	19.78
ACSI	479	.00	100.00	83.65	17.02

The questions below were asked after the 3 ACSI questions. They were all answered on scales ranging from 1-10. Those questions only asked on the long form of the survey are marked “L only” in parentheses.

[4] The response rate includes some surveys that were received too late to be considered in the analysis.

The scores on these questions are all fairly high, with a few exceptions. The highest score by far was for Q26. (Would you recommend the services of the program to other agencies?). At 9.44 this score is even higher than the comparable score given by enrollees. Five other questions scored above 8.5

All 3 States	Number of Responses	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q5. Program staff gave me the information I needed to understand the program. (L only)	214	1.00	10.00	8.83	1.77
Q6. Program staff made the placement process easy for me to use.	458	1.00	10.00	8.85	1.56
Q7. Program staff that made placements had a good understanding of my business needs.	467	1.00	10.00	8.56	1.71
Q8. I received sufficient information about the work history and education of the enrollees placed with my agency.	459	1.00	10.00	7.80	2.37
Q9. I had sufficient choice about the enrollees placed with my agency. (L only)	197	1.00	10.00	7.88	2.38
Q10. The enrollees placed in my agency had sufficient computer skills.	378	1.00	10.00	4.66	2.95
Q11. The enrollees placed were a good match with my agency.	480	1.00	10.00	8.11	2.04
Q12. The enrollees placed with my agency have been successful on the job.	480	1.00	10.00	8.43	1.86
Q13. Program staff responded promptly to any questions I had.	472	1.00	10.00	8.77	1.75
Q14. Program staff was helpful in resolving any problems I had.	439	1.00	10.00	8.72	1.83
Q22. Program staff stayed in touch with my agency to make sure the placement went well.	469	1.00	10.00	8.28	2.18
Q26. Would you recommend the services of the program to other agencies?	481	1.00	10.00	9.44	1.30

The one score that stands out in the entire survey is for Q10 (The enrollees placed in my agency had sufficient computer skills.), at 4.66. This score is consistent with what we learned from host agencies and employers in the focus groups: There is almost no job today that does not require familiarity with computers, and many enrollees lack the basic skills needed to be effective. The five questions with the next lowest scores all relate to the quality of the placement and the enrollees' success on the job: Q8 (I received sufficient information about the work history and education of the enrollees placed with my agency.), 7.80; Q9 (I had sufficient choice about the enrollees placed with my agency. (L only)), 7.88; Q11 (The enrollees placed were a good match with my agency.), 8.11; Q22 (Program staff stayed in touch with my agency to make sure the placement went well.), 8.28; and Q12 (The enrollees placed with my agency have been successful on the job.), 8.43. These five questions are strongly related to satisfaction as explained in the discussion of drivers below.

Other questions not using the 10-point scale

Q4. How long a host agency
For how long have you been a host agency?

On average, host agencies have been associated with the program for 6.9 years. This long tenure helps account for the high response rate achieved with this customer group.

All 3 states	Number of Respondents	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q4. For how long have you been a host agency?	423	.10	30.00	6.86	6.00

Q15. Enrollees require supportive services
Did any of the older workers placed with your agency require supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, medical care, or housing, to be successful in their placement?

This question and the two that follow it attempted to determine whether enrollees required supportive services after their placement and, if so, whether these services were being provided by the sub-grantee or the host agency. Although these three questions did not work as intended and require revision, they do suggest that this issue warrants attention. Note also that supportive services received the lowest score from enrollees.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	406	82.7	84.4	84.4
	Yes	75	15.3	15.6	100.0
	Total	481	98.0	100.0	
Missing		10	2.0		
Total		491	100.0		

Q16. Program provides supportive services
If the answer to question 15 is "Yes," to what extent did the Older Worker Program provide the enrollees the supportive services that they needed?

	All 3 States	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	12	2.4	17.6	17.6
	Few	7	1.4	10.3	27.9
	Some	22	4.5	32.4	60.3
	Nearly all	27	5.5	39.7	100.0
	Total	68	13.8	100.0	
Missing		423	86.2		
Total		491	100.0		

Q17. Agency provides supportive services
If the answer to question 15 is "Yes," to what extent did your agency provide the enrollees the supportive services they needed?

	All 3 States	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	7	1.4	10.1	10.1
	Few	4	.8	5.8	15.9
	Some	28	5.7	40.6	56.5
	Nearly all	30	6.1	43.5	100.0
	Total	69	14.1	100.0	
Missing		422	85.9		
Total		491	100.0		

Q18. Enrollees gain skills
To what extent did enrollees gain skills while working in your agency that made them more employable? (Long form only)

Since the training site placement is supposed to prepare enrollees for unsubsidized employment, this is a critical question. Host agencies reported that nearly a quarter of the enrollees placed with them received none or only a few of the skills they needed to be employable. This result is also reflected in enrollee survey. The strongest driver of enrollee satisfaction is the degree to which the host agency prepared the enrollee for unsubsidized employment.   The enrollees rated this aspect of host agency performance among the lowest of all of their survey responses.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None of the skills	4	.8	2.0	2.0
	A few of the skills	41	8.4	20.4	22.4
	Many of the skills	103	21.0	51.2	73.6
	Nearly all of the skills	53	10.8	26.4	100.0
	Total	201	40.9	100.0	
Missing		11	2.2		
Not asked on short form[5]		279	56.8		
Total		491	100.0		

Q19. Enrollees need training
Do enrollees placed in your agency ever need any kind of additional training other than the on-the-job training that came with their placement? (Long form only)

This question and the two that follow attempted to determine whether enrollees needed additional training, beyond normal on-the-job training, to be successful in their training site placement, and, if so, whether the host agency or the sub-grantee provided the training. As with the series on supportive services, this group of questions did not work as intended and needs revision. However, the responses indicate that more than a quarter of enrollees need additional training and that many of them are not receiving it. These questions too are supported by the enrollee survey, where enrollees gave a low score to the amount of raining provided by the sub-grantee and a relatively low score to the host agency training.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	154	31.4	72.3	72.3
	Yes	59	12.0	27.7	100.0
	Total	213	43.4	100.0	
Not asked on short form		278	56.6		
Total		491	100.0		

[5] In all tables, the frequency for “Not asked on short form” may include some responses that were missing on the long form. Similarly, the frequency for “Missing” may include non-responses due to fact that the question was not asked on the short form of the survey.

Q20. Program provides training
If the answer to question 19 is "Yes," does the Older Worker Program provide the needed training? (Long form only)

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never provides training	9	1.8	20.0	20.0
	Sometimes provides training	18	3.7	40.0	60.0
	Often provides training	15	3.1	33.3	93.3
	Always provides training	3	.6	6.7	100.0
	Total	45	9.2	100.0	
Missing		446	90.8		
Total		491	100.0		

Q21. Agency provides training
If the answer to question 19 is "Yes," does your agency provide the needed training? (Long form only)

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never provides training	5	1.0	8.1	8.1
	Sometimes provides training	20	4.1	32.3	40.3
	Often provides training	22	4.5	35.5	75.8
	Always provides training	15	3.1	24.2	100.0
	Total	62	12.6	100.0	
Missing		429	87.4		
Total		491	100.0		

Q23. Program tried to remove enrollees
Did the Older Worker Program ever attempt to remove any enrollee from your agency before you thought they were ready to leave? (Long form only)

This issue is discussed in relation to question 20 of the enrollee survey. Nearly twice as many host agencies as enrollees report that this occurs at least occasionally.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	152	31.0	78.8	78.8
	Occasionally	31	6.3	16.1	94.8
	Frequently	4	.8	2.1	96.9
	Nearly Always	6	1.2	3.1	100.0
	Total	193	39.3	100.0	
Missing		22	4.5		
Not asked on short form		276	56.2		
Total		491	100.0		

Q24. Benefit to agency
How would you rate the benefit to your agency of participating in the Older Worker Program?

The comments written by host agencies and voiced during the focus groups further indicate that the program is of enormous benefit and meets its goal of providing community service.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Little or no benefit	3	.6	0.6	0.6
	Some benefit	18	3.7	3.7	4.3
	Moderate benefit	43	8.8	8.9	13.2
	Great benefit	421	85.7	86.8	100.0
	Total	485	98.8	100.0	
Missing		6	1.2		
Total		491	100.0		

Q25. Able to provide same level of services
Would your agency be able to provide the same level of services that it does now if it did not participate in the Older Worker Program? (Long form only)

Again as reflected in the comments, host agencies indicate that they could not provide the same level of service if it were not for the older workers placed in their agencies.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	150	30.5	71.1	71.1
	Yes	61	12.4	28.9	100.0
	Total	211	43.0	100.0	
Not asked on short form		280	57.0		
Total		491	100.0		

Factors (key drivers) most closely associated with the satisfaction index for all 3 states.

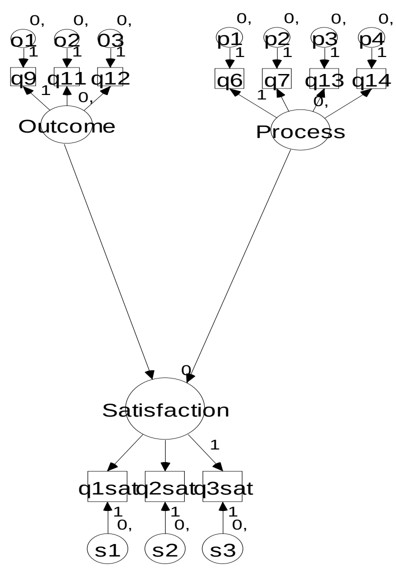
The four strongest drivers all relate to the quality of the placement and the ability of enrollees to be successful on the job. As with the enrollee survey, these drivers match nicely with those questions that host agencies scored the lowest and that therefore offer the greatest opportunity for improvement.

All 3 States	Number of Responses[6]	Strength of Association
Q7. The Older Worker Program staff that made placements had a good understanding of my business needs.	459	.695
Q9. I had sufficient choice about the enrollees placed with my agency. (L only)	195	.639
Q11. The enrollees placed were a good match with my agency.	472	.789
Q12. The enrollees placed with my agency have been successful on the job.	472	.784
Q14. Older Worker Program staff was helpful in resolving any problems I had.	430	.621

[6] For each question in this table, only those respondents who answered both the particular question and the three ACSI index questions were included in the analysis of correlations.

Host Agency Causal Model

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is another analysis method for looking at the factors related to satisfaction. SEM allows for the use of two powerful statistical tools, regression modeling and factor analysis, simultaneously. In the case of the host agency customer satisfaction data, overall customer satisfaction is a measure that is ready for inclusion in a structural equation model. Through several preliminary analyses, two other important measures were identified that, like the ACSI, are a combination of questions from the survey. (See table below.) One of the new measures was a combination of several questions that relate to the process of placing an older worker with a host agency. The other newly identified measure was a combination of questions related to the outcomes associated with such a placement. A structural equation model was developed associating these three measures, usually called "latent variables," to further evaluate the relationship between the outcome and process measures and the ACSI. The diagram below indicates the model to be tested. The question being asked in the model was to what degree outcomes and process are related to satisfaction.



Survey Questions	Latent Variable
Q6. Program staff made the placement process easy for me to use.	PROCESS
Q7. Program staff that made the placement had a good understanding of my business needs.	PROCESS
Q13. Program staff responded promptly to any questions I had.	PROCESS
Q14. Program staff was helpful in resolving any problems I had.	PROCESS
Q11. The enrollees placed were a good match with my agency.	OUTCOME
Q12. The enrollees placed with my agency have been successful on the job.	OUTCOME
Q9. I had sufficient choice about the enrollees placed with my agency.	OUTCOME
Q1. Overall satisfaction	SATISFACTION
Q2. Satisfaction compared to expectation	SATISFACTION
Q3. Satisfaction compared to ideal	SATISFACTION

The above model was tested using a structural equation software package, AMOS. The model fit the host agency data very well[7]. The model reveals that the ACSI is significantly associated with the host agency's view of whether the placement outcome was successful or not. The model also shows, however, the process the host agency goes through also has a substantial, although much smaller, impact on its satisfaction as measured by the ACSI.[8] Put another way, for every 1 point change in the outcome measure there would be a .98 point change in satisfaction. For every 1 point change in the process measure, there would be a .18 change in satisfaction. While both are significant, it is evident that improvements in the match for the agency, the enrollee's success on the job, and providing the agencies choice about placements will have the greatest impact on host agency satisfaction.

Host Agency Comments

The last two questions in all versions of the survey asked respondents to write what they felt was most valuable about the program and what they thought was most in need of improvement. 83 percent of host agencies that responded by May 23, 2003, commented on the first open-ended question and 58 percent of the host agencies responded to the second open-ended question. This level of response is unprecedented, evidencing a high level of attachment and involvement with the program. Appendix IV contains all of the individual comments which have been content coded into categories. Following each question below is a summary of host agency comments.

Q27. What do you think is most valuable about the Older Worker Program?

For host agencies, there are three major areas noted as being most valuable. The percent making comments in each area is included after each area descriptor.

- Save the agency money; lets it hire staff and do work that otherwise would not occur—28%
- The experience and qualities of the seniors, e.g., dependability, conscientiousness, life experience, serving as role models—23%
- A variety of benefits for the enrollees including increases to enrollees' self-esteem, enabling them to remain independent and healthy, re-enter the work force, and provide them with income—43%

A few of the verbatim comments describing what is most valuable follow:

"They do the jobs we don't have personnel to do."
"We like it because she is a positive role model for the younger kids."
"The workers are reliable and dependable."

---

[7] N=491, Tucker-Lewis Index of .94; Relative Fit Index of .93
[8] Standardized regression weight for path from outcome to satisfaction = .98; standardized regression weight for path from process to satisfaction = .18.

Q28. What part of the Older Worker Program do you think is most in need of improvement?

There were four major areas in which host agencies noted the need for improvements:

- More funding for more placements—15%
- Computer or other training for enrollees—28%
- Better communication with program staff—8%
- Better wages and benefits for enrollees—8%

A few of the verbatim comments describing what is most in need of improvement follow:

"Give them computer skills."
"Upgrading pre-employment training to meet basic skills needed to adequately handle the job assigned."
"More contact from the representatives of the program."
"Our worker was low income, drove a distance, and had problems with her car and high gas prices."

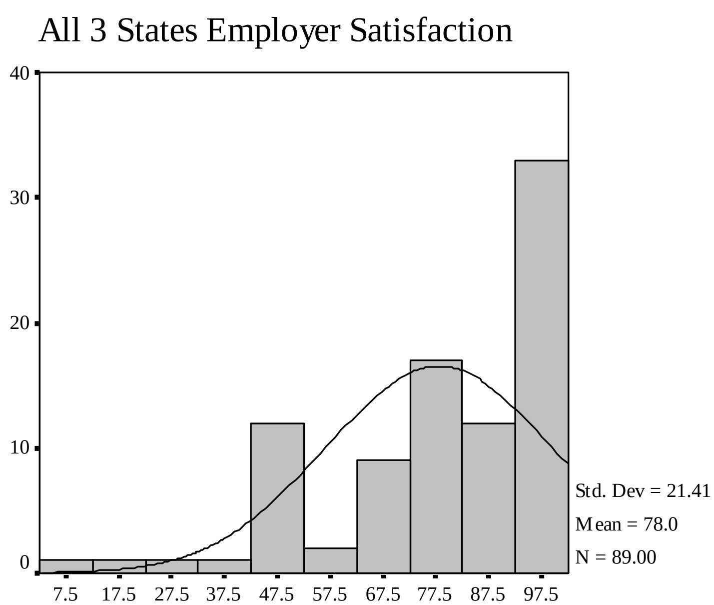
C. Employer Survey: Final Results for All Three States

Response Rate[9]

For a discussion of response rates, see Section III above.

State	Sent	Ineligible	Returned/Useable	**Response Rate**
Florida	122	20	41	**40%**
Iowa	39	4	14	**40%**
New York	87	9	40	**51%**
Total	248	33	95	**44%**

American Customer Satisfaction Index



The ASCI for employers, while the lowest of the three customer groups, is still quite high. For comparison, the average ACSI score for public and private sector organizations at the end of 1992 was 73.1. The highest score in most industries is around 80. For a fuller discussion of the ASCI, see the report on the enrollee survey above.

All 3 States	Number of Responses	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall Satisfaction	91	.00	100.00	79.98	22.72
Compared to Expectations	90	.00	100.00	77.78	21.78
Compared to the Ideal	89	.00	100.00	75.78	23.78
ACSI	89	3.70	100.00	78.03	21.41

[9] The response rate includes some surveys that were received too late to be considered in the analysis.

The questions below were asked after the 3 ACSI questions. They were all answered on scales ranging from 1-10. Those questions only asked on the long form of the survey are marked “L only” in parentheses.

Although employer scores are fairly high, they are substantially lower than the scores for host agencies and enrollees. As with the other surveys, the highest score was for Q18 (Would you recommend these services to other employers?). This question scored just below 9. Two process questions scored above 8.5.

All 3 States	Number of Responses	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q4. The staff gave me all the information I needed to understand the program.	87	1.00	10.00	8.36	2.05
Q6. Was the process for the work experience program easy to use? (L only)	21	6.00	10.00	8.71	1.10
Q10. The job applicants referred by the program were a good match for the job.	88	1.00	10.00	7.40	2.41
Q12. The older worker applicants I hired have been successful on the job.	91	1.00	10.00	7.76	2.49
Q15. Program staff responded promptly to any questions I had.	77	2.00	10.00	8.58	1.75
Q16. Program staff was helpful in resolving any problems I had.	64	1.00	10.00	8.33	2.06
Q17. Program staff stayed in touch with me after I hired the applicant to make sure that everything was going well. (L only)	44	1.00	10.00	7.66	2.69
Q18. Would you recommend these services to other employers?	88	2.00	10.00	8.97	1.67

The three lowest scores all relate to the quality of the match and the success of enrollees on the job: Q10 (The job applicants referred by the program were a good match for the job.), 7.40; Q17 (Program staff stayed in touch with me after I hired the applicant to make sure that everything was going well. (L only)), 7.66; and Q12 (The older worker applicants I hired have been successful on the job.), 7.76.

Other questions not using the 10-point scale

Q5. Participated in OJT w/ wages paid
Did you participate in the on-the-job or work experience training program under which the program pays all or part of the wages of the older worker for a number of weeks? (Long form only)

Employer participants in the Section 502e program were over-represented in this survey because they were more motivated to respond than other employers. This suggests that most employers have a very tenuous connection with the program. See discussion of employer participation in the Section 502e program in Section V below.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	23	24.2	52.3	52.3
	Yes	21	22.1	47.7	100.0
	Total	44	46.3	100.0	
Not asked on short form[10]		51	53.7		
Total		95	100.0		

Q7. More inclined to participate if wages paid
Would you be more inclined to use the program if the program paid the wages of the older workers for a number of weeks while they were gaining work experience?

Not surprisingly, employers found the prospect of a wage subsidy attractive.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	18	18.9	20.9	20.9
	Yes	68	71.6	79.1	100.0
	Total	86	90.5	100.0	
Missing		9	9.5		
Total		95	100.0		

[10] In all tables, the frequency for "Not asked on short form" may include some responses that were missing on the long form. Similarly, the frequency for "Missing" may include non-responses due to fact that the question was not asked on the short form of the survey.

Q8. Staff had good understanding of business
Would you say that the program staff who made job referrals had a good understanding of your business needs?

This is an important issue because it is closely related to the quality of the match. Employers in focus groups have told us that it is critical for program staff to take the time to understand employers' business needs before making referrals. The program gets high marks here but nearly 20 percent of employers think there is room for improvement.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Little or no understanding	2	2.1	2.4	2.4
	Some understanding	14	14.7	16.7	19.0
	Good understanding	41	43.2	48.8	67.9
	Great understanding	27	28.4	32.1	100.0
	Total	84	88.4	100.0	
Missing		11	11.6		
Total		95	100.0		

Q9. Applicants had necessary skills
Would you say that the job applicants referred by the program had the necessary skills for the job? (Long form only)

Success on the job is the most important driver for employers. Having the necessary skills is obviously important to success. A third of employers were not happy with the enrollees' skills.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Few or none of necessary skills	2	2.1	4.4	4.4
	Some of the necessary skills	13	13.7	28.9	33.3
	Many of the necessary skills	16	16.8	35.6	68.9
	Virtually all of the necessary skills	14	14.7	31.1	100.0
	Total	45	47.4	100.0	
Total		95	100.0		

Q11. Applicants came with computer skills
How many of the older worker applicants come with the basic computer skills they need? (Long form only)

Over 50 percent of employers report that enrollees have none or only a few of the computer skills they need. This may be the lowest score for employers and the lowest score overall for the survey. The strong sentiment of employers and host agencies on this question indicates that it is an important area to address.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	11	11.6	30.6	30.6
	Few	8	8.4	22.2	52.8
	Some	10	10.5	27.8	80.6
	Nearly all	7	7.4	19.4	100.0
	Total	36	37.9	100.0	
Missing		11	11.6		
Not asked on short form		48	50.5		
Total		95	100.0		

Q13. Applicants required supportive services
Did any of the older workers you hired require supportive services, such as assistance with housing, transportation, or medical needs? (Long form only)

About 20 percent of employers believe that enrollees need supportive services (in contrast to about 15 percent of host agencies), and that 22 percent of enrollees who need these services do not receive them. Because of the extremely low number of responses, these data are not reliable but, in conjunction with the enrollee and host agency data, they may indicate an issue to be addressed.

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	37	38.9	78.7	78.7
	Yes	10	10.5	21.3	100.0
	Total	47	49.5	100.0	
Not asked on short form		48	50.5		
Total		95	100.0		

Q14. Supportive services provided
Would you say that the program provided the supportive services that the older worker needed? (Long form only)

All 3 States		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	2	2.1	22.2	22.2
	Some	5	5.3	55.6	77.8
	Nearly all	2	2.1	22.2	100.0
	Total	9	9.5	100.0	
Missing		1	1.1		
Not asked on short form		85	89.5		
Total		95	100.0		

Factors (key drivers) most closely associated with the satisfaction index for all three states

The two strongest drivers relate to the quality of the match and success on the job. These are also the areas with the lowest scores. Consequently, any improvement efforts directed at these issues is likely to yield the greatest returns.

All 3 States	Number of Responses[11]	Strength of Association
Q4. The staff gave me all the information I needed to understand the program.	86	.640
Q6. Would you say that the process of this work experience program was easy to use? (L only)	20	.683
Q10. The job applicants referred by the program were a good match for the job.	87	.807
Q12. The older worker applicants I hired have been successful on the job.	87	.846
Q16. Program staff were helpful in responding to any problems I had.	63	.697

[11] For each question in this table, only those respondents who answered both the particular question and the three ACSI index questions were included in the analysis of correlations.

Employer Comments

The last two questions in all versions of the survey asked respondents to write what they felt was most valuable about the program and what they thought was most in need of improvement. 74 percent of employers that responded by May 23, 2003, commented on the first open-ended question and 46 percent of the employers responded to the second open-ended question. This level of response, while lower than the response from enrollees and host agencies, is remarkable. Appendix IV contains all of the individual comments which have been content coded into categories. Following each question below is a summary of host agency comments.

Q19. What do you think is most valuable about the Older Worker Program?

There are four major areas that employers noted as being most valuable. The percent making comments in each area is included after each area descriptor.

- The quality of the candidates—59%
- Helping seniors update their skills and get back into the labor force—11%
- Improves seniors' self-esteem, keeps them happy and productive—11%
- Screening of candidates and training they received—10%

A few of the verbatim comments describing what was most valuable follow:

"Providing training to older workers for new jobs is a win-win."
"Matching employees with employer needs."
"I had the ability to interview people who had exactly the skills I needed."

Q20. What part of the Older Worker Program do you think is most in need of improvement?

Employers noted four areas needing improvement:

- Administrative issues, including the need to more clearly communicate rules, roles, and expectations—26%
- Screening and referral—17%
- Enrollees needing more training—17%
- More follow-up and more supportive services for enrollees--11%

A few of the verbatim comments describing what needed improvement follow:

"Possibly preparing them for the job they are going into. Some workers just need to give themselves time to adjust to the job."
"More up-front explanation/training of the employer."
"Need better communication between staff and employers."
"Matching job with candidate."

V. SPECIAL ISSUES AFFECTING EMPLOYERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONWIDE SURVEY

The pilot project revealed several problems in conducting customer satisfaction surveys with unsubsidized employers. First, a significant number of unsubsidized employers appear to be host agencies that have hired enrollees who had been placed with them. It became clear during the focus groups that these host agency/employers could not answer the survey as employers because their primary experience with the program was as host agencies. Consequently, the database instructions called for them to be listed as host agencies only, and not as employers. There is a field on the database that identifies a host agency that is also an unsubsidized employer. Unfortunately, sub-grantees did not generally utilize this field, and we were not able to determine if this sub-set of host agencies differed significantly in its responses to the survey. Our sense is that it did not.

A second problem is that many employers listed in the sub-grantees' records hired the enrollees on their own and had little or no contract with SCSEP. Again, the database instructions called for these employers to be omitted. However, from comments written on the surveys and from communications with the state grantees, we know that some employers that had no contact with the program were nonetheless surveyed. These employers had no experience with the program and thus no basis for responding to the survey.

The combination of these factors resulted in many fewer employers in the sample than host agencies or enrollees, even in large states like New York and Florida. The final number of eligible employers for the three states was only 95, in contrast to 497 host agencies and 443 enrollees, and even this number undoubtedly includes employers that should have been omitted from the database under the instructions.

It should be noted that the employer response rate, although disappointing in the context of the pilot project, is substantially higher than response rates generally achieved with mail surveys. The poor response rate for employers compared to the other customer groups in the pilot project is almost certainly related to the lack of employer contact with the program. Employers that hired enrollees directly and even those that hired them as a result of SCSEP referrals probably have little consciousness that the workers they hired are considered enrollees of the program, especially if, as appears to be the case, there was little follow-up by the sub-grantee after the placement. Even those employers that were aware that they had been involved with the program at some level may have felt that the degree of contact with the program was too little to warrant filling out the survey.

Support for this explanation can be found in the responses to the question about whether employers had participated in the Section 502e program, under which the program paid the wages of the enrollee for a limited period of on-the-job training. Of those employers responding to the long form of the survey, nearly half (47.7%) reported that they participated in the 502e program. This is a far higher percentage than the actual rate of participation reported by the pilot states. This confirms that those employers with the most substantial involvement with SCSEP were more likely to be motivated to respond to the survey.

One additional factor may have reduced employer response rates. Sub-grantees did not list contact names for some employers and host agencies. This was undoubtedly less of a problem with host agencies because they were all clearly aware of the program and the surveys were likely to get to the right person even without a contact name. For employers, however, the lack of a contact name may have been fatal since employers had far less contact and familiarity with the program.

Given the tenuous connection of most SCSEP employers with the program, none of the methods employed in the pilot project will generate a sufficient response rate or sample size to allow reliable analysis of the data at a state level. It will, therefore, be necessary to employ other means to satisfy the congressional mandate to assess the satisfaction of employers and to learn how the program can serve them more effectively. There are two approaches that we believe will generate an adequate response rate.

The first is to use a telephone survey. It would be feasible to use a short survey, no more than five minutes in duration, which includes the three ASCI questions and a six to eight additional questions. With proper attention to the grantee databases and with pre-survey contact by the vendor or the sub-grantees, a telephone survey of SCSEP employers is likely to yield a response rate of 70 percent or more. Such a survey would be extremely expensive, however. If we assume that there is an average of 60 valid employers for each grantee and that there are 68 grantees, the annual cost of a telephone survey would be approximately $84,000. For this reason, we do not recommend using telephone surveys.

The second approach, which we recommend, is to survey employers whenever a sub-grantee does its first 90-day follow-up for an unsubsidized placement. Since the employer customer group is so small, no sampling need be employed and all eligible employers would be sampled. The sub-grantee would be required to notify the employer at the time of placement that it will be receiving a survey. Then, if it conducts the follow-up by telephone, the sub-grantee would inform the employer that the survey will be mailed the next day. The sub-grantee would be responsible for mailing the survey and notifying the grantee that it had done so. If the sub-grantee does the 90-day follow-up in person, it would deliver the survey to the employer. If the survey is not returned, the sub-grantee would also be responsible for contacting the employer again and sending out another survey.

We recommend that an employer only be surveyed once each year at the time of the 90-day follow-up. Thus, if an employer hires additional enrollees after having been surveyed once in a given year, the employer would not be surveyed again. Similarly, if the employer did not hire additional enrollees in a subsequent year, it would not be re-surveyed. Although the number of employers surveyed will be relatively small, only those employers that have a connection with the program will be surveyed and the survey will take place at a time when the employers will have the freshest recollections of their interactions with the program.

To ensure that grantees are able to oversee the administration of the employer surveys, there would need to be a separate employer database that the sub-grantees would complete and provide to the grantees. See Section VII below. There would also have to be a reporting mechanism whereby sub-grantees would notify the grantees of initial contacts with an employer regarding the survey, the delivery of the first survey to the employer, and any needed additional activity if the employer does not complete the survey. Unlike the completed enrollee and host agency surveys, which will be mailed to the vendor for scanning, the completed employer surveys would be mailed to the grantee, which would check the returns against the employer database and notify the sub-grantee of the need to send out a second survey. The grantee would hold all completed surveys and send them to the vendor once each quarter, along with the employer database. Since sub-grantees are required to conduct follow-up activity, we believe that this approach will impose less administrative burden on sub-grantees than the method that was employed for the pilot project. It will also be extremely inexpensive to administer.

We are fairly confident that this approach will satisfy the congressional mandate, yield an adequate response rate, and provide meaningful information about employer perceptions of SCSEP. However, we believe that customer satisfaction surveys alone will not be sufficient to provide the most important or useful information about what employers value about the program, which employers are most likely to use the program, and how to make the program more attractive to employers. Consequently, we recommend that the customer satisfaction survey for employers be supplemented with a study that includes interviews with employers, the creation of enrollee and employer profiles to determine the customer characteristics that ensure the best match between older job seekers and employers, and the collection of best practices from grantees throughout the country. The study would lead to the creation of a nationwide marketing strategy that would enable grantees to target those employers most likely to hire SCSEP enrollees. While this strategy would have to be modified by each grantee to account for local conditions, it would also be possible for DOL to promote the strategy nationally and, in the process, help build name recognition and a national identity for SCSEP.

VI. EFFECTIVENESS OF SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISED SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

As set forth in Section II above, the surveys were extensively revised as a result of input from the pilot states and the focus groups. It is apparent that the questions added to the surveys following the ACSI questions were an effective means of capturing respondents' evaluations of the program and of providing useful insights into the effectiveness of the processes employed by the sub-grantees. However, analysis of the completed surveys reveals several ways in which the surveys should be revised and improved.

First, the host agency survey should be shortened to increase the response rate. The long version (four pages) had a response rate of 62%, and the short version (three pages) had a response rate of 76%. The three-page survey does not deter respondents and provides sufficient space to ask questions that provide valuable feedback to grantees. We recommend that the enrollee survey remain at four pages and the employer survey at two or three pages. As set forth in Section III above, survey length had no impact on employer response rates and a positive impact on enrollee response rates. The enrollee and employer surveys may in fact be shortened for one or more of the reasons that follow, but they need not be shortened in order to increase response rates.

Second, there are several questions that did not yield the intended information and must be revised. Among these are the three questions regarding supportive services and the three questions regarding training asked on the host agency survey. While these topics are important and should remain in the survey, the questions will be simplified and the total number of questions reduced.

Third, there are some questions that work technically but do not produce information of sufficient value to warrant keeping them in the survey. Examples include the following questions in the enrollee survey that seem duplicative: Q5. The Older Worker Program staff really listened to me; Q12. There is someone in the Older Worker Program I can talk to when I need to; and Q 13. I like the way the Older Worker Staff treated me. Further analysis will be needed to determine whether to delete one or more of these questions, but it is highly unlikely that all three questions need to be retained.

Finally, to the extent feasible, any revision of the surveys should ensure that the enrollee, host agency and employer surveys are aligned to ensure comparability of results. As the analysis of drivers of satisfaction reveals, both host agencies and employers have similar concerns about the quality of referrals, the training and skill level of enrollees, and enrollees' ability to be successful on the job. Similarly, enrollees are concerned about getting the training and experience they need to be successful in both their host agency placement and their unsubsidized employment. To the extent that the survey results speak to these issues coherently across customer groups, sub-grantees will have better guidance for improving the quality and effectiveness of their services.

VII. RECOMMMENDATIONS FOR DATABASE AND DATA ELEMENTS

As explained in Section II, one of the most challenging aspects of this pilot project was assembling statewide data from which the samples could be drawn and which could be used for survey analysis. This task proved difficult for a variety of reasons, including a lack of sufficient experience with databases among some sub-grantees, inconsistency in following directions, incomplete or inaccurate records from which the databases were compiled, and lack of sufficient time for the grantees to review the databases submitted by sub-grantees and return them for correction. These problems were compounded by the use of an Excel database that did not contain built-in edits, was not laid out in a manner that accommodated the data entry needs of the grantees, and proved difficult for some sub-grantees to use. Creating the statewide database was the most burdensome aspect of the project and engendered the most complaints from sub-grantees and grantees.

Because of the need to control the administration of the survey at the state or national grantee level, there is no alternative to creating statewide and national grantee databases. Since most national grantees but few states have comprehensive databases, the following discussion centers on the need to create a common database for state grantees. The considerations would be similar for any national sponsor that lacks a comprehensive database or whose database is incompatible with the one being recommended.

The problems encountered during the pilot project can be largely eliminated if the database for the nationwide survey can be derived from the automated reporting that DOL is currently working on. Coordination with the contractor that is designing the reporting mechanism is essential to ensure that all data elements necessary for the customer satisfaction surveys are captured, that the individual records contain sub-grantee codes and roll up to the grantee level, that duplicate records are flagged, and that the sampling process is simplified. It appears that such coordination is feasible and that the resulting product will ultimately produce the data required for administering and analyzing the surveys. Unfortunately, such a product will not be available by the time data collection for the nationwide survey commences in late 2003. Without it, many of the difficulties encountered during the pilot project are likely to recur.

As an interim solution, we propose that a standalone database be constructed that contains a data entry utility and that has edits which minimize the entry of inaccurate information. Such a database should be produced on CD-ROM format and provided to all sub-grantees at least one month before it is due to the state grantees. There should also be an application that assists the state grantees in aggregating the sub-grantee databases and drawing the sample. Based on the experience gained during the pilot project, it should be possible to design the database so as to accommodate the needs of all users. This database would be used for enrollees and host agencies only. For the reasons set forth in Section V above, we recommend the creation of a separate database for employers that will be used primarily to allow grantees to track the survey activities of sub-grantees.

The database used for the pilot project contained most of the data elements found on the eligibility and termination forms that are commonly used by sub-grantees, as well as several additional elements. Unfortunately, much of this information, as noted above, was incomplete or inconsistently entered, and matching respondent records with survey responses proved extremely difficult. As a consequence, we were not able to use some of these elements in analyzing the surveys. However, these elements are potentially important and may enhance the analysis of the nationwide survey. For this reason, we recommend that they be retained in the interim database and that every effort be made to ensure the accuracy of the database before the survey is conducted.

VIII. RECOMMENDED METHODS OF ADMINISTERING THE NATIONWIDE SURVEY

Based on the experience gained during the pilot project, we have identified the following elements to be addressed in the design of the nationwide survey of enrollees and host agencies:

- informing customers that a survey will be conducted
- pre-survey letters
- cover letters from sponsors
- follow-up letters and telephone calls
- printing and scanning of surveys and printing of reply envelopes
- tracking response rates
- sample size
- LEP and illiterate enrollees
- survey analysis and reporting

Our recommendations for each of these elements follow. For the reasons set forth in Section V above, most of these recommendations apply to the enrollee and host agency surveys only. Separate procedures would need to be applied to the employer survey.

Informing customers that a survey will be conducted. An important way to increase response rates is to inform customers at appropriate times that a survey will be conducted and that their responses will be important to the agency. We believe that this measure is the most effective and most cost-effective improvement that can be made in the administration of the survey. It was obviously not possible to do this for the pilot project, but it should be easy to accomplish for the nationwide survey once a schedule has been published. Sub-grantees have significant contact with host agencies and enrollees to enable them to inform and remind these customers of the approaching survey date. Sub-grantees have less ongoing contact with employers and those enrollees in unsubsidized employment; therefore, these customers should be advised of the survey at the time of orientation and placement. Once accurate databases are available for sub-grantees, it might also be advisable to do a general mailing to all customers in advance of the pre-survey letters.

Pre-survey letters. Because of the lack of a national or statewide identity for SCSEP, we believe that it is worth the money and effort to send letters to enrollees in the week prior to the mailing of the surveys. In the pilot project, the pre-survey letters increased enrollee responses to the first mailing by 9.2%. The pre-survey letters alert the enrollee to expect the survey in the mail and contain a request from someone known to the enrollee that he or she complete the survey. Since the surveys are being sent by the state SCSEP office, the pre-survey letters reduce the likelihood that enrollees will not associate the surveys with a program with which they are involved and will throw the surveys away. The pre-survey letters also can serve as an early warning if addresses are wrong. Since the letters will be mailed 5-10 days before the surveys, it will be possible to correct information on returned letters and re-mail both letters and surveys.

We do not recommend pre-survey letters for host agencies. These letters had only a negligible effect on response rates and, even without them, response rates will be more than sufficient. Furthermore, sub-grantees have sufficient contact with host agencies to ensure that host agencies are aware that they will be receiving a survey from the state office. See Informing customers that a survey will be conducted, above in this section.

Pre-survey letters are most effective if they are customized with the name of the enrollee. They should also be signed in blue ink by the director of the sub-grantee so they do not look as though they have been photocopied. The easiest way to customize the letters is with a mail merge function using the information in the database. It is important, therefore, that state grantees have adequate time to return the database to the sub-grantees after the sample is drawn so that the sub-grantees can prepare the letters.

Cover letters from state sponsors. The pilot project design called for the pilot states to test different signatories for the letter that accompanied the surveys. Research has shown that having a well known and trusted figure sponsor a survey can significantly increase response rates. Unfortunately, for the reasons set forth in Section II, it was not possible to implement this part of the pilot project. The pilot states used a standard letter that was drafted by COG, and all chose to have the letter signed by the director of the state SCSEP agency. In the case of Florida, this person was also a cabinet secretary. The states chose the director because they had easy access to this individual and because the director was seen as a neutral figure. In final discussions with the pilot states, there was no consensus about the appropriate person to sign the cover letter. Some felt that the governor would not be appropriate, but at least one thought that it would have been helpful to have used the governor had time permitted.

Our recommendation is that states be given a standard letter and a list of possible signatories, including the governor, cabinet secretary, and director of the state SCSEP program, for use with the enrollee and sub-grantee surveys. National grantees should use the name and letterhead stationery of the head of the grantee's program for the state in which the customer resides. Given sufficient lead time, states should be able to secure the governor's signature if the grantee determines that the governor is the most effective signatory. The instructions should call for copying the standard letter onto the signatory's letterhead stationery for all copies of the cover letter. Obtaining the stationery will also require sufficient lead time. It would be preferable for grantees to customize the cover letter by using a mail merge function, and to have them signed in blue ink. Since sub-grantees will be providing the surveys to employers directly, the sub-grantee's director should sign the cover letter for employers.

Follow-up letters and telephone calls. When a second mailing of the survey is required for host agencies and enrollees, the survey should be accompanied by a follow-up letter signed by the signatory of the original cover letter. The pilot project established that a second mailing is highly effective and essential for achieving adequate response rates. Again, the letter should be customized and should be printed directly on the signatory's letterhead. Where necessary, we believe that it will be cost-effective to do a third mailing rather than a follow-up telephone call. Telephone calls are extremely burdensome to the sub-grantees and are almost impossible to monitor and verify. Furthermore, telephone calls only proved effective with host agencies. Although they did improve host agency response rates by 10.8%, we believe that the response rate for this group will be more than adequate without such a costly measure.

We thus recommend that for the first year of the nationwide survey, grantees do one follow-up mailing and be prepared to do a second follow-up mailing for any customer group that does not attain the required response rate. We are fairly confident that if all of the measures recommended in this section are implemented, follow-up telephone calls will not be required. If the required response rate cannot be attained with these measures, telephone calls can be added in the second year of the survey.

<u>Printing and scanning of surveys; printing of reply envelopes.</u> In contrast to the pre-survey letters, original cover letters, and follow-up cover letters, all of which must be produced locally by the grantees or sub-grantees, the surveys and reply envelopes should be produced centrally and mailed to each grantee. The pilot project proved the feasibility of using scannable, consecutively numbered surveys. (See Section XI for a discussion of the cost of printing and scanning the surveys.) Given sufficient lead time, there should be no difficulty in having the vendor mail the surveys and reply envelopes to the grantees well before the first mailing. The grantees will have to provide a supply of employer surveys and reply envelopes to the sub-grantees for delivery at the time of the 90-day follow-up. The reply envelopes for the enrollee and host agency surveys would carry the address of the vendor that will do the scanning. The reply envelopes for the employer surveys will be mailed to the grantees. We recommend that the grantees receive a supply of unprinted reply envelopes and that they affix their address to the envelopes before providing them to the sub-grantees.

<u>Tracking response rates.</u> The major deviation from the original design of the pilot was the decision to abandon response postcards in favor of numbered surveys as a way to track response rates. The change in methodology was made to reduce cost, eliminate a burden on the grantees, and provide a mechanism for enriching survey analysis by linking completed surveys with individual records in the statewide database. As completed surveys were received by COG and the vendor, survey numbers were checked against the statewide databases and the individual records coded to indicate that a survey was received. At the designated time, the updated databases were returned to the states so they could send follow-up mailings to customers that had not yet completed surveys.

We recommend that this tracking method be employed for the nationwide survey. Since all completed enrollee and host agency surveys will be returned to the vendor for scanning, the vendor will have to scan the survey numbers from the first mailing into the statewide databases and send the states information necessary for the follow-up mailing. Completed employer surveys will be mailed to the grantees, which will be responsible for tracking returns and notifying sub-grantees of the need for follow-up activity. Grantees would send the completed surveys to the vendor for scanning once each quarter. Based on our discussion with the vendor for the pilot project, we do not foresee any problems with this approach.

Sample size. OMB, based on a recommendation by the University of Michigan Business School (the owner of the ACSI), recommends a minimum of 250 usable surveys if the surveys are to be used for sanctions or incentives. Because this sample size provides sufficient data for sub-group analysis at the grantee level, we recommend that DOL adopt it as the target for the enrollee and host agency surveys. Assuming a 70 percent response rate, which OMB also recommends, grantees would need to draw a sample of 357 customers for each of these two customer groups. For any group with fewer than 250 customers, all customers would be surveyed. There will be no sampling of employers.

LEP and illiterate enrollees. Sub-grantees did not have sufficient data on the literacy of enrollees so we were unable to determine how common illiteracy is or whether it seriously affected enrollees' ability to respond to the survey. Our sense from the focus groups and discussions with sub-grantees is that those enrollees with literacy problems were likely to seek assistance from a friend or relative or from someone at the host agency. As we were repeatedly told (and as the response rate bears out), enrollees are extremely conscientious. We suspect, therefore, that many with literacy problems sought assistance in completing the survey.

We were only partially successful in testing the needs of LEP enrollees. Sub-grantee data on language need was not complete, and Spanish was identified as the only language for which there was a significant enrollee sub-group. New York identified 19 eligible Spanish-speaking enrollees and Florida identified 46. Iowa identified none. For the first mailing, this sub-group was treated the same as enrollees in general and received all materials in English only. The response rate for the Spanish enrollees was 29.2%, compared to an enrollee response rate to the first mailing in the two states of 35.3%. For the second mailing, this sub-group received a Spanish version of the appropriate survey and follow-up letter. The Spanish mailing was sent to 14 enrollees in New York and 29 in Florida. Only 4 New York enrollees completed the Spanish version of the survey. None of the Florida enrollees returned the Spanish version of the survey. New York also identified 25 enrollees as LEP without specifying their primary language. The response rate to the first mailing for this sub-group was 28% percent.

Because the database elements for LEP enrollees were so incomplete and unreliable and because the sub-group is so small, we hesitate to draw any conclusions from the data. Although LEP response rates were lower than overall response rates for the first mailing, a substantial number of LEP enrollees were able to obtain assistance in completing the surveys. Furthermore, when Spanish-speaking enrollees were sent the survey in Spanish with the second mailing, hardly any completed it. If the pilot states are at all typical of the nation, it is likely that the number of LEP enrollees nationwide is fairly low and that they will not be a substantial factor in enrollee response rates. However, to ensure the full participation of these sub-groups in the nationwide survey as required by Title VI, we recommend that the contractor work with national organizations that serve Spanish and Asian enrollees to design a pilot project within the national survey to determine how best to increase response rates for LEP enrollees. We also recommend that DOL mandate that sub-grantees ascertain and record the literacy level and primary reading language of all enrollees. If these data elements were incorporated into the national reporting requirements, it would be possible to isolate these sub-groups from the sample and use telephone or facilitated in-person surveys to obtain their input.

Survey analysis and reporting. We recommend that each grantee receive a standard report that gives the grantee's results and the nationwide results. The report at the grantee level would be similar to that of the pilot state reports, containing demographics, the ACSI score, statistical analysis of each question, and identification of drivers of satisfaction. See Appendix III. We believe that the contractor could add a narrative analysis of key issues and opportunities for improvement for a reasonable additional cost beyond the cost of the basic survey report. However, we believe that this money would be better spent on regional trainings at which the contractor could discuss the reports with each grantee and assist the grantees in devising improvement projects based on the results of the surveys. There would also be a national report, which would contain all of the elements in the state reports as well as a narrative discussion of the key findings and recommendations. It would also contain a causal model that correlates the process-related measures and the outcome related measures to the ASCI, as was done for the three-state host agency report in Section IV above.

Grantees should be able to add questions to the nationwide survey or obtain more detailed analysis at their own cost. We suggest that the consultant establish a menu of options, including the additional costs, and include this information in the manual.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVAL AND SCHEDULING OF NATIONWIDE SURVEY; STATUS OF PILOT STATES

Interval. Conducting the enrollee and host agency surveys on a rolling basis as is done for WIA and ES would ensure that customers provide feedback at a time when their experiences with SCSEP are fresh in their minds and when they still have a connection with the program. However, in contrast to WIA and ES, enrollees and host agencies remain active in SCSEP for a significant period. Enrollees in the pilot project have an average tenure of three years and host agencies have been in the program an average of 6.9 years. In addition, the administrative burden of conducting and overseeing a decentralized mail survey is substantial, and rolling or even quarterly surveys would magnify that burden. Consequently, we recommend that surveys of enrollees and host agencies be conducted once each year at a pre-determined time. Those eligible for inclusion in the sample should be all customers who participated in the program at any time in the previous year, excluding those whose participation began less than 90 days before the mailing date of the surveys. As set forth in Section V, we recommend that employers be surveyed at the time of the first 90-day follow-up that the sub-grantee conducts for any enrollee placed with an employer.

Scheduling. The strong consensus of the pilot states was that the nationwide survey be conducted at a time when there are no other major events or activities involving seniors, that the schedule of major activities for the survey be provided to the grantees and sub-grantees well in advance, and that sufficient time be allowed for each task required of grantees and sub-grantees. The pilot project was conducted under serious time constraints that created difficult circumstances for the grantees and sub-grantees and necessarily compromised the quality of many aspects of the administration of the survey. A minimum of three months from the completion of the training and the provision of the database to the sub-grantees was seen as necessary to avoid these problems.

We recommend that the schedule for the training and the various steps in the process be announced to grantees and sub-grantees at the earliest opportunity. The more lead time they are provided, the more they will be able to plan and obtain the needed resources for each task. We concur with the pilot states that three months should be allowed following the training. Since the training will take several months to design and deliver, surveys could by mailed sometime in January or February, 2004, yielding the first nationwide data by the end of the first quarter. The results of the first year of the survey will provide baseline data that DOL can use to establish performance and response rate targets for the program year beginning July 1, 2004. This schedule also makes sense for subsequent years of the survey since grantees would have sufficient time to use the survey results for continuous improvement activities and their planning for the coming program year.

Status of pilot states. As is evident from Appendix III, there is an abundance of survey data from the pilot states. Since the first year of surveying is designed to yield baseline data and since there are unlikely to be any questions on the nationwide survey that were not asked in the pilot project, there is no need to include the pilot states in the first year of the nationwide survey. Because of the experimental nature of the pilot project, the pilot states have had to do far more work than will be required of grantees for the nationwide survey. Exempting them from the first year of the survey will be a small way of acknowledging the contribution they have made to SCSEP.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Training prior to survey. We recommend that all grantees receive a half day of training three to four months prior to the mailing of the surveys. The training could be conducted regionally in conjunction with other SCSEP training. The training should include the following elements:

- an overview of the entire process
- an explanation of the pilot project
- a review of the surveys, pre-survey letters, and follow-up letters
- a full examination of the database and a demonstration of how grantees and sub-grantees should complete it
- an opportunity for questions and answers.

As part of the training, the grantees should receive for each of their sub-grantees a CD-ROM of the database and a manual. The manual should contain the survey schedule; copies of all documents; detailed explanations of each step in the process; detailed instructions for completing the database, including allowable values for each field; and a list of all the technical skills required, e.g., mail merge, generating labels, aggregating databases. This list will enable grantees and sub-grantees that do not have the technical expertise within their agency to arrange to borrow it at the appropriate times.

We believe that it will take approximately two months to design the training and produce the manual. If the nationwide surveys are to be mailed in early 2004, the training should be given in September or October and design work should commence in July. We recommend that the pilot states be asked to participate in an advisory committee for the training. The advisory committee should also include a national sponsor and a state grantee that did not participate in the pilot project. The pilot states might also be invited to help deliver the training.

Training in how to use the survey results for program improvement. As is evident from the analysis of the pilot project data, customer satisfaction surveys yield extremely valuable information that can be used for program improvement. Because of the cost constraints of a nationwide survey and the large volume of grantee reports, it is not feasible to provide each grantee with customized guidance in the use of the reports for continuous improvement. We recommend, therefore, that DOL sponsor one-day regional trainings after the reports have been issued to teach the grantees how to interpret the results and how to derive the maximum benefit from the surveys. This training could easily be expanded to incorporate the other SCSEP performance measures and to provide guidance to the grantees in the use of performance data for program management.

Support. Support to the grantees will be crucial at each step in the process. We recommend that the support take two forms. First, there should be a web site where grantees can access the materials in the manual, the consultant assisting DOL can post updates, and grantees can post questions, suggestions, and descriptions of best practices. In addition, during designated periods for each task, the consultant should be available by telephone and e-mail to respond to individual requests for assistance. This level of support will be necessary during the first year of the survey but can probably be significantly reduced in subsequent years.

XI. COSTS AND RESOUCE REQUIREMENTS

Costs, DOL, the grantees and the sub-grantees will each incur costs in administering the surveys. The categories of expenses and the estimated cost where available are listed in the following table. The costs are given for a single customer group of host agencies or enrollees. They assume a sample size of 357, a response rate to the first mailing of 40%, and an overall response rate of 70%. Since many grantees will not have 357 customers in these customer groups, actual costs will be significantly lower. Similarly, costs for the employer surveys will be significantly lower because the number of employers is small, there will not be any pre-survey letters, and the surveys can be delivered during the 90-day follow-up of enrollees that sub-grantees are required to perform. Although we have no data on the total number of customers in each group by grantee, our sense is that the printing and scanning would cost approximately $40,000 and postage would cost approximately $51,000 (or $750 per grantee).

Costs per Customer Group by Category of Expense					
DOL		Grantees		Sub-grantees	
Type of Expense	Estimated Cost	Type of Expense	Estimated Cost	Type of Expense	Estimated Cost
Consultant		Letterhead for cover letters and follow-up letters	572@?	Letterhead for pre-survey letters	357@?
Printing of scannable surveys and reply envelopes; mailing envelopes	600 surveys, reply envelopes, and mailing envelopes @ $.40=$240	Postage for surveys and reply envelopes	1114@ $.36=$412	Envelopes for pre-survey letters	357@?
Scanning of completed surveys	250@ $.261=$65	Labels for surveys (and possibly pre-survey letters)	572@? (929@?)	Postage for pre-survey letters	357@ $.36=$129
Hosting web site		Labor to aggregate databases and draw sample		Labor to complete database	

Costs per Customer Group by Category of Expense					
DOL		Grantees		Sub-grantees	
Training and manuals, including CD-ROMs		Labor to print letters and labels		Labor to print and mail pre-survey letters	
				Labor to make follow-up phone calls	
		Labor to oversee adminis-tration			
		Labor to assemble survey mailings			

Resources. Assuming that DOL retains a consultant to oversee the nationwide survey, the only resource DOL will need to commit to the project is a program manager to whom the consultant reports. The grantees should be able to oversee the bulk of the administration of the enrollee and host agency surveys with existing SCSEP staff, primarily the program director and an administrative assistant. Several tasks, however, will require additional or specialized resources. For example, tasks associated with aggregating the databases, drawing the sample, running a mail merge application, and generating mailing labels may require technical skills not possessed by anyone within the grantee's office. These tasks and the schedule for their completion will be set forth in the manual, thus enabling grantees to make arrangements to borrow or otherwise acquire the expertise when it will be needed. In addition, the experience from the pilot project has persuaded all participants that grantees will need three people dedicated to the assembling and mailing of the surveys, primarily due to the need to match a numbered survey with the mailing label for a particular customer. Depending on the size of the grantee's customer groups, this process should take one to two days for the initial mailing and somewhat less time for the follow-up mailing. Grantees will have very little burden with regard to overseeing employer surveys.

For enrollee and host agency surveys, sub-grantees will need staff with the ability to do the data entry for the database and to run a mail merge. In addition, sub-grantees will need staff to mail the pre-survey letters. Given sufficient notice, sub-grantees should be able to arrange for the necessary resources. For employer surveys, sub-grantees will utilize the 90-day follow-up and thus should have little extra administrative burden.