



# EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING REPORTER

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Washington, November 19, 2012

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and identify available resources. The staffer was also a member of the state's emergency preparedness and response team, representing the workforce agency in meetings with other state departments.

The Tri-County WIB assigned one staffer responsibility for safety, which included leading safety training and monitoring work sites.

Recovery projects are temporary. The duration of the jobs they provide is determined by federal rules. In most cases, individuals may be employed in these jobs for no more than six months.

These exemplary projects also focused on providing employment services that helped participants eventually find other jobs, if their old workplaces did not reopen.

In Louisiana and Mississippi, disaster job programs included structured, unpaid program time set aside for workers to participate in job search workshops, sometimes delivered through mobile one-stops. Some workers were also enrolled as Workforce Investment Act dislocated workers and provided with training.

In Pennsylvania, the Tri-County WIB had managed a disaster NEG prior to the Hurricane Ivan project that focused solely on cleanup jobs. With the 2004 project, agency staff took a different approach, making a point of helping participants find their next job.

The staff invited area employers to come visit work sites and see the workers in action or to meet with them at one-stops.

The WIB's director acted as a reference and wrote letters of recommendation for crew members, detailing their responsibilities and positive qualities. Some participants received subsidized on-the-job training once cleanup was complete.

"In addition to expediting clean-up and humanitarian aid, a well-conceived temporary jobs program provides an opportunity to transition workers to permanent employment opportunities," according to the evaluators.

✓ The National Emergency Grants Promising Practices series of program guides can be found at [www.doleta.gov/neg/pp\\_series.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/neg/pp_series.cfm).

—Ryan Hess

## Job Search

### STUDIES FIND MARYLAND, DETROIT REEMPLOYMENT, HUNT LESSONS

BALTIMORE — A national research conference produced portraits of the job search and reemployment process experienced during the recession by dislocated workers in Detroit and Maryland, showing differences in the search patterns and success of different types of workers.

In Detroit, a study found a positive relationship between the number of applications jobseekers sent out and their chance of finding a new job, but more

for employed workers seeking new positions than for the jobless.

From Maryland, another research project found that workers losing jobs due to firm closure during the recession were finding new jobs more slowly than workers dislocated prior to the recession, but the lucky ones were commanding much higher wages, because they had come from and returned to higher-wage industries.

These tales of two labor markets came together at the Association for Public Policy and Management conference on Nov. 10, where scholars shared forthcoming research on job search.

The projects, each studying the job search and reemployment experiences of dislocated workers, come from two dramatically different labor markets.

## Motown Job Hunt

The Detroit metropolitan region saw peak recession unemployment of 16 percent right before the launch of a project surveying working-age adults about their job search. In Maryland, although the unemployment rate eventually reached 8.6 percent after the recession, in February 2010, it had only risen to 7.7 percent during the period researchers tracked dislocated workers' wage records.

A University of Michigan research team featuring Italo Gutierrez, Patrick Wightman and Sheldon Danziger dug into the Michigan Recession and Recovery Study to search for links between job search behavior and effectiveness.

The study, funded by the federal Department of Health and Human Services, the Ford Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, surveyed 914 working-age adults in the Detroit metropolitan region in two rounds of interviews conducted in late 2009 and early 2010 and again in the second quarter of 2011.

The researchers performed a series of regression analyses to determine behavior patterns related to job search.

Of 358 respondents who were not working during the first round of interviews, 47.5 percent found jobs by the second interview.

The likelihood of reemployment increased by 1.2 percentage points with each additional application an individual submitted. The effect was even stronger, 2.5 points, for workers who held a job at their first interview and were looking for a new one.

Clearly, sending out lots of applications was more effective for the employed than it was for the unemployed.

Survey participants were asked at each interview how many applications they had filed during their most recent job search.

On average, jobless individuals reported 7.5 recent applications at the time of their first interview and 5 applications when interviewed a second time, in 2011, when the region's unemployment rate hovered around 11.8 percent.

But a sizable number of respondents who said they were looking for work also reported that they had applied for specific jobs. Among jobless individuals who applied for at least one job, the average number of applications filed was 13.78.

The researchers found something troubling when they factored in unemployment insurance receipt. Although individuals reporting UI receipt were 21.8 percentage points more likely than others to say they were looking for work, they had submitted to employers 8.4 fewer applications than other jobless individuals.

UI receipt “has a large negative relationship with the number of applications they are sending out,” Wightman said

The research team’s findings also show younger jobless individuals more likely than older unemployed workers to report job search. Individuals with a shorter duration of unemployment were more likely to report looking for work.

Those whose previous earnings were higher sent out more applications than others. Those willing to accept a lower wage than at their previous job applied for fewer jobs than those seeking the same wage.

### Free State Recovery

Ting Zhang and David Stevens, of the Jacob France Institute at the University of Baltimore’s Merrick School of Business, studied the reemployment experience of Marylanders dislocated from jobs due to business closure — or “business death,” to use their term — from January 2004 through June 2009.

With the cooperation of the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, they were able to access the state’s Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages data and use it to track reemployment through UI wage records.

All told 126,023 individuals who lost jobs due to closures became reemployed in the study period.

The researchers found that the nature of these workplace closures and the reemployment outcomes of dislocated workers changed during the recession.

Among those laid off prior to the recession, 58 percent became reemployed within a year, compared with only 53 percent of workers dislocated after the downturn started.

While 23 percent of the recession-cohort workers changed industries after their dislocation, 33 percent of prerecession job losers found new jobs in different industries.

Recession-cohort workers who became reemployed took slightly longer than prerecession workers to find new jobs and return to their previous wage.

However, wages for workers who lost jobs during the recession were much higher.

Workers dislocated before the recession, who became reemployed, returned to their previous wage

level within two quarters after their job loss. And their median quarterly earnings were just under \$8,500.

It took three quarters for workers dislocated during the recession to regain their earnings, which were almost \$9,500.

“The first thing we would think of when we saw this is industry change, and that actually was true,” Zhang said.

Comparing job loss due to firm closure before and during the recession, more professional services and administration jobs were affected after the recession; construction and retail jobs were less affected by firm closures.

In other words, workers from more highly paid jobs made up an increasing share of those experiencing job loss during Maryland’s recession, but they eventually returned to similar high-paying jobs.

Seventy-four percent of recession-cohort dislocated workers remained in the industry of their past employment, compared with only 67 percent of Marylanders whose companies closed down before the economic downturn.

—Ryan Hess

### Low-Wage Workers

#### RAISE PAY, DON’T OVERWORK THEM, LET LOCALS FIND SOLUTIONS

Challenged to put forth one wish to improve the lot of low-wage workers, one expert asked for empowered communities, another for floor wages above poverty and a third drew on what their children want.

“I gave children a wish for their parents,” said Ellen Galinsky, president and cofounder of the Families and Work Institute, drawing from recent field research. “What do you think they asked for?”

Her audience of adults put forth variations on the idea that children would ask from employers more time with their parents.

“The largest proportion of children wished that their parents weren’t so tired and stressed,” Galinsky stated, noting that the health of workers “is going down.”

Fred Keller, chairman and chief executive officer of Cascade Engineering, asked to focus on community, where he said change is found.

“In west Michigan we have 100 units of government. No one is in charge,” he explained. “I would like to see enabling legislation to allow communities to spend dollars in a way that would bring about needed change. What if you could decide whether to spend ‘WIB dollars’ on training or to save jobs?”

“My challenge to everyone is to think of the floor wage so that anybody should be able to work 40 hours a week and not live in poverty,” offered Javier Morillo-Alicea, president of the Minneapolis-based Service Employees International Union Local 26.