
Capital Region Workforce Partnership Secret Shopper Report



VCU Center for Urban and Regional Analysis

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by

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I. Introduction

A healthy labor market is one of the most important features of a thriving community. Workforce training, job placement assistance and related services can help to keep unemployment low and improve the functioning of the labor market. In partnership with the federal government, which provides funding through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, localities organize workforce centers that provide a variety of services to help unemployed persons find jobs. In the Richmond region, Resource, the Capital Region Workforce Investment Board, operates three One-Stop Career Centers located in the City of Richmond (203 East Cary Street) Chesterfield (7333 Whitepine Road) and Henrico (121 Cedar Fork Road) Counties.

The workforce centers are intended to function as one-stop assistance providers. The centers provide “core services” which consist of self-service access to computers and online information systems; a variety of skill building opportunities including workshops; access to job banks and other labor market information; and referrals to employers and other service providers (see Box A for detailed list of core services). In addition to core services, each center also provides “intensive services” that consist of one-on-one attention and more intensive group assistance with career counseling, skill development, and various types of job related training (see Box A for detailed list of intensive services).

In order to evaluate the quality of its work in the eyes of service recipients, in March 2014 Resource asked the VCU Center for Urban & Regional Analysis (CURA) to conduct a “secret shopper” assessment at each of its three Richmond-area locations. Although a secret shopper assessment normally trains persons who then subsequently use a service and report on its quality or other features to a researcher, in this case, service recipients were not trained prior to receiving the service, but they were asked to participate in a post-service interview.

This report analyzes the results of those interviews, including the clients’ assessments of accessibility, service quality, and ease of use. It also provides the clients’ self-reported accounts of their service use and their demographic characteristics.

BOX A

Core Services

- Access to computers, telephones, fax and copy machines, resume building software.
- Online applications for unemployment insurance.
- Basic computer skills workshops.
- Financial aid information.
- Labor market information on in-demand careers, skills, and wages.
- Education, training, career information.
- Access to job banks, listings of available jobs, job searches, referrals to employers with current jobs.

Intensive Services

- One-on-one assistance with resumes, cover letters, thank-you letters.
- Assistance with completing employment applications.
- Career counselling, in-depth interviewing skills development.
- Development of an individual’s employment.
- Career and skills testing.
- Occupational skills training, on-the-job training, job-readiness training.
- Job search assistance workshops.
- Networking skills workshops.
- Interview techniques workshops.
- Referral to specialized services.

A. Methodology

Resource provided VCU with a list of topics to cover in the assessment from which VCU developed a set of interview questions for Resource’s approval (see Appendix A). Resource provided VCU with a list of 1,800 clients currently on their roster from which VCU (using SPSS software) extracted a stratified random sample of 150 potential participants with proportions of clients from each center representative of their proportions in the overall population of clients. In response to low initial client turnout VCU later randomly selected another 44 names from the Cary Street Center. Resource staff recruited clients by phone and email to provide feedback in confidential interviews held at off-site locations. Resource scheduled approximately 85 participants of which 41 showed up as scheduled and completed interviews. Table 1 shows the distribution of cases across the three centers. The majority of the cases came from Cedar Fork and Cary Street. VCU staff conducted 30-minute interviews capturing responses from each in a written report. At the end of each interview, VCU staff provided the interviewee a \$25 gift card in exchange for his or her participation. At the end of each interview day, staff submitted all confidential reports to the project principal investigator. This analysis is based on those reports.

	# Interviews Scheduled	# Interviews Completed	% of Scheduled Completed	Center % of Total Respondents
Cedar Fork	27	16	61.5%	39.0%
Whitepine	11	6	54.5%	14.6%
Cary Street	26	19	73%	46.3%
Total		41		100%

The remainder of the report will proceed as the follows: Chapter 2 covers the entire region by aggregating responses for the three workforce centers. In the three chapters that follow (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) each center’s responses are discussed separately along with more specific client comments. Appendix B provides a side-by-side comparison of responses for the three one-stop centers.

II. CAPITAL REGION WORKFORCE AREA

A. Demographics

Table 2 displays demographic data on select characteristics for all 41 study participants. The majority of participants were women (78%) and mostly African American (90%). A small percentage of participants were white (7.5%) and a few identified themselves as mixed race (2.5%). The greatest proportion (61%) were between the ages of 25 and 44 years old. Fifteen percent of the participants (6 people) had a permanent disability with the majority reporting no physical disabilities (86%). One person reported both a mental and a physical disability. Three of the 41 participants (7.3 %) were military veterans.

Age		
18 to 24 years old	1	2.4%
25 to 44 years old	15	36.6%
45 to 64 years old	25	61.0%
Over 65 years old	0	0.0%
Gender		
Female	32	78.0%
Male	9	22.0%
Race & Ethnicity		
White	3	7.5%
Black	36	90.0%
Asian	0	0.0%
Native American	0	0.0%
Hawaiian Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Mixed Race	1	2.5%
Military Veteran	3	7.3%
Disability¹		
Physical	6	14.6%
Mental	1	2%

¹Physical and Mental disabilities are not mutually exclusive

B. Accessibility and Physical Space

Study participants had been to their one-stop center anywhere from 5 and 120 times prior to the interview for this study averaging 2.6 times per week. Most clients did not have trouble finding their one-stop on their first visit (85.4%). Those who did have difficulty were from Cedar

Fork and mentioned several streets with similar names in the area of the one-stop center as the primary reason.

As Table 3 shows, interview participants primarily access their centers by car (77%). The next most common method is public transportation (15%). Another 10% normally walk to their center. It should be noted that all of the walkers were clients of the Cary Street Center. A few clients mentioned that while they could take public transportation, they prefer to drive, with one noting that it could take as long as two hours to get to the center by bus. Most of those who travelled to the center by car had little to no trouble finding parking. One of the two clients who mentioned having issues finding parking noted time restrictions on certain parking spaces around the center as a problem.

All of the interview participants (100%) reported that the one-stop center that they normally attend is comfortable and physically appealing. Most felt that there are adequate and safe curb cuts, ramps, automatic doors, elevators/lifts, and other access equipment (92.5%). When those who did not feel their center had adequate handicap provisions were asked to explain, multiple respondents reasoned that they had not noticed any automatic doors or other types of accommodations.

TABLE 3
Primary Mode of Transportation to One-stop Center

Mode of Transportation	Response Percent	Response Count
A. Public transportation	15.4%	6
B. Car	76.9%	30
C. Walk	10.3%	4
D. Cab	0.0%	0

C. Service Use and Quality

All clients described the atmosphere of their one-stop center in a generally positive way. Many of the interview participants described their center as pleasant, professional and with a staff that was eager to help. Several clients mentioned that the center is usually quiet and one described the mood as “studious.” A few minor issues or one-time incidents were noted with regards to general atmosphere and will be discussed below in each section for specific centers.

As Table 4 shows, almost all of the clients had attended orientation and used the resource room at the time of their interview. A slightly lower proportion had engaged in assisted services. Eighty percent had met with their counselor one-on-one and 81% had attended workshops. About one third of the interview participants (34%) had received training (the

highest level of service). There was a notable difference in training levels between age groups. While 44% of participants ages 45 to 64 received training, only 18.8 % of participants between the ages of 18 and 44 did.

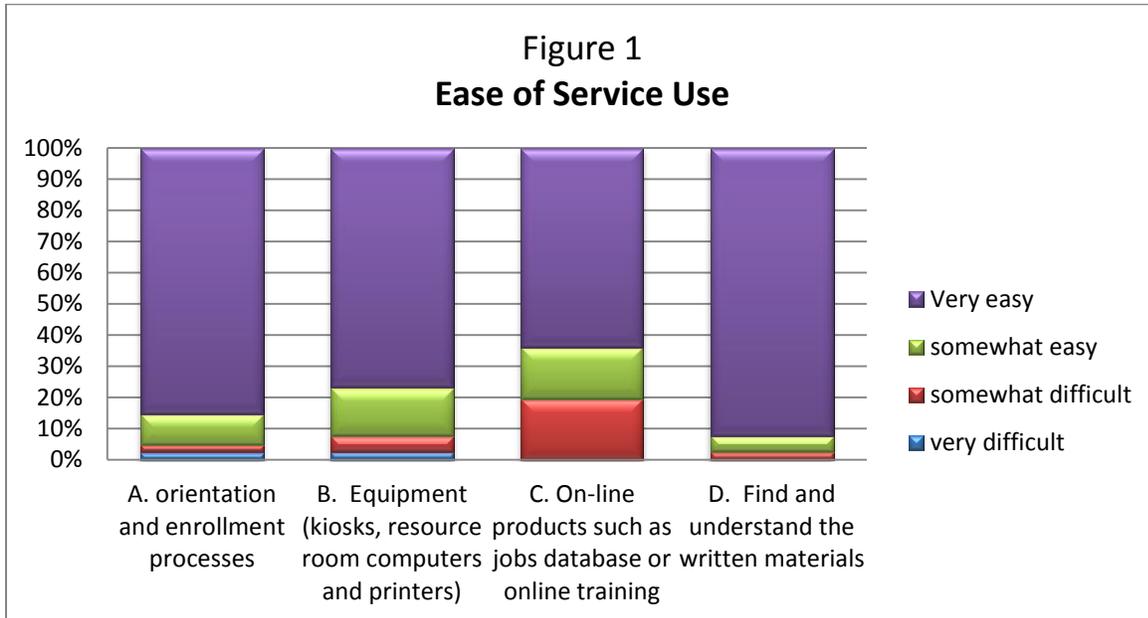
Level	Services	Percent	Count
1	Attended Orientation	100.0%	41
	Used Resource Room	92.7%	38
2	Met with a counselor one-on-one	90.2%	37
	Attended workshop(s)	80.5%	33
3	Received training	34.1%	14

Services	Response Percent
A. Assistance with a resume	68%
B. Assistance with job leads	65%
C. Provided information on training opportunities	90%
D. Assistance with a computerized job search	63%
E. Assistance finding employm't related websites	65%
F. Career counseling	68%
G. Follow-up services	55%
F. Referrals to other service provider(s)	42%
G. Received follow-up services	46%

Ease of Use

The majority of clients found it easy to proceed through the general process of obtaining services (83%). At least 90% of clients who used each service listed in Figure 1 found it either very easy or somewhat easy to use with one exception, online-products. Most clients found it very easy to find and understand written materials (92%) and to complete the orientation and enrollment process (85%). A lower proportion (77%) found using equipment including kiosks, computers and printers to be very easy— 15% found this somewhat easy but 8% found it either somewhat difficult or very difficult. A slightly greater proportion had trouble using on-line

products such as the jobs database and online training. While 64% found it very easy and 19% somewhat easy, 19% found it somewhat difficult. The majority of participants who found it somewhat difficult to use the online products (71%) were in the 45 to 64 age group compared to only 29% of the 18 to 44 age group.



Clarity of Process and Next Steps

Interview participants felt that the general process of how to obtain services was explained but that they were not given enough guidance on their specific situations, resulting in confusion over what they as individuals were supposed to do next. At the time of the interview, only 68% of interview participants felt that they knew what the next steps should be in obtaining workforce services. There was considerable confusion among those who had actually secured a job regarding what to do next and what support was now available to them.

Staff Interactions

Participants generally rated staff interactions positively. Ninety three percent reported that a staff member greeted and directed them immediately as they arrived at their one-stop center. A slightly lower percent (83%) felt that staff clearly explained the program structure, the process for receiving services and the range of services available. Yet only 68% of participants reported knowing the next steps in the process for receiving services. Only 62.5% of younger participants (age 18 to 44) knew the next steps compared to 72% of older participants (age 45 to 64).

As Table 6 shows, when asked to rate staff in each service area, in 7 out of 8 categories between 91% and 100% of clients rated the staff as helpful and courteous. The one area that stood out as a stark exception was one-on-one counselors. Only 68% of interview participants considered the one-on-one counseling staff to be courteous and helpful. Please see specific comments for each one-stop center later in this report.

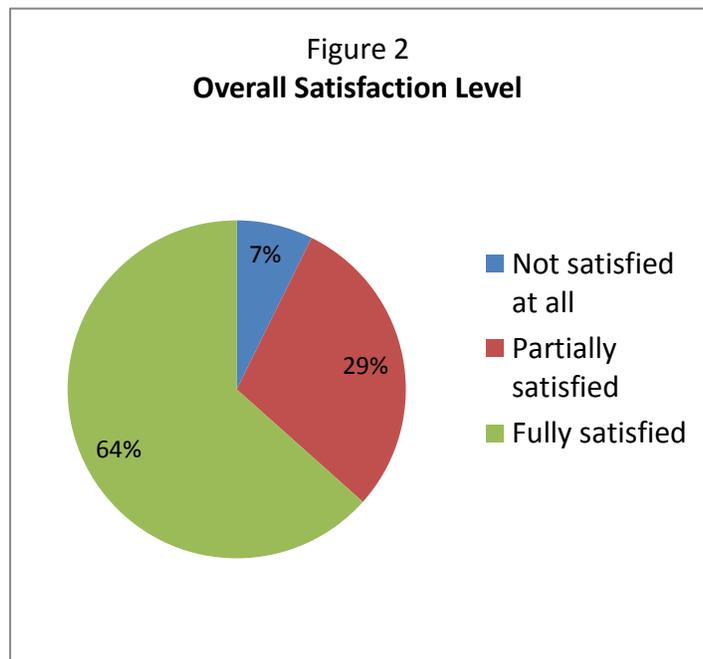
TABLE 6
Staff Courteous and Helpful

<i>Answer Options</i>	No	Yes	%Yes
A. Enrollment staff	1	40	98%
B. Orientation staff	2	39	95%
C. Resource room staff	4	35	90%
D. Counselor one-on-one	13	27	68%
E. Workshop staff	2	29	94%
F. Training staff	1	12	92%
G. Staff providing referrals to other service providers	0	13	100%
H. Staff providing follow-up services	2	20	91%

**base response number for each varies based on the number of interview participants who had actually used a particular service*

D. Overall Quality and Satisfaction

While nearly half of the clients interviewed (46.3%) reported that their expectations were met or exceeded, another third (29.3%) did not know what to expect from their one-stop center. Services received did not meet the expectations of 15% of interview participants at all. Some of their specific frustrations focused on the amount of time it took to either get enrolled in training or find a job.



Satisfaction levels among interview participants were moderate. As Figure 2 shows, sixty-four percent of interview participants were fully satisfied with their experience at their one-stop center while another 29% were only partially satisfied. Seven percent of clients interviewed were not satisfied at all. Younger participants (18 to 44 age group) were slightly more likely to be fully satisfied with their one-stop experience (69%) than older participants (45 to 64 age group) were. Another notable pattern was that participants who knew the next steps in the process were more than twice as likely to be fully satisfied with their one-stop experience (78%) than those who did not (31%).

There appears to be a link between the expectations being met and overall satisfaction levels as 87% of the interview participants whose expectations were met or exceeded were also fully satisfied with the service they received at the center (20 out of 23).

Despite only moderate levels of satisfaction, approximately 81% of clients interviewed for this study plan to return to their one-stop center. Of those who will not return, two mentioned that they had jobs which will make it either impossible to get there or no longer necessary. Others expressed doubt that the center will be useful to them in the future. Participants from the younger age group (18 to 44) were less likely to return compared to participants from the older (45 to 65) age group (75% and 84% respectively). Another factor correlated with the decision to return is whether the participant knew the next steps in the process. While 89% of those participants who report knowing the next steps in the process also report planning to return to their one-stop, only 62% of those who do not know the next steps plan to return. The majority of those who do not plan to return were from the Cary Street location.

TABLE 7

Were Expectations Met?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A. I did not know what to expect	29.3%	12
B. Expectations were not met	14.6%	6
C. Expectations were met	31.7%	13
D. Expectations were exceeded	24.4%	10

III. CEDAR FORK

A. Demographics

Table 8 displays the key demographic information for the 16 participants from the Cedar Fork One-Stop Center. The vast majority were split between the 25 to 44 age group (38%) and the 45 to 64 age group (56%), with one person in the 18 to 24 age group. Eighty one percent were women and 19% men. The majority of the Cedar Fork participants were African American (94%) with a small proportion being of mixed race (6%). The Cedar Fork sample included one military veteran and one person with a physical disability.

Age	Percent	Count
18 to 24 years old	6.3%	1
25 to 44 years old	37.5%	6
45 to 64 years old	56.3%	9
Over 65 years old	0.0%	0
Gender		
Female	81.3%	13
Male	18.8%	3
Race		
White	0.0%	0
Black	93.8%	15
Asian	0.0%	0
Native American	0.0%	0
Hawaiian Pacific Islander	0.0%	0
Mixed Race	6.3%	1
Military Veteran	6.3%	1
Disability		
Physical	6.3%	1
Mental	0%	0

B. Accessibility and Physical Space

On average, participants from Cedar Fork had visited the one-stop center 17 times prior to their interview (ranging from 4 to 50 prior visits). On average they visited 2.5 times per week. Most interviewees traveled to the center by car (87.5%) while a small proportion (12.5 %) used public transportation. One interviewee mentioned that it would take two hours to get to the center by

bus even though he/she “lives down the road.” Those who drove had no problems finding parking at the Cedar Fork Center.

About one third of the participants (31%) reported having trouble finding the Cedar Fork Center on their first visit. They mentioned that several streets in the area had similar names such as “Cedar Fork Road” and a few mentioned that that the sign is hard to see because it is on the side of the building.

All interview participants from this center (100%) felt that it was comfortable and physically appealing. Most also felt that there were adequate and safe curb cuts, ramps, automatic doors, elevators/lifts, and other access equipment and that diverse customers could move around easily (87.5%). One of the two persons who did not feel that diverse customers could move around easily was a physically disabled person who mentioned that there was not sufficient space. The other person mentioned that he/she was in construction and based on that experience did not think the center was “handicap accessible.”

TABLE 9

Mode of Transportation to the One-Stop Center

<i>Answer Options</i>	<i>Response Percent</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
A. Public transportation	12.5%	2
B. Car	87.5%	14
C. Walk	0.0%	0
D. Cab	0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>	16

C. Service Use and Quality

When asked about the general atmosphere of the center, interview participants had primarily positive things to say. Many described the center as quiet while others described it as friendly and helpful. One client described the center in the following way: “The center gives off an upbeat and helpful mood. I can see that the staff is genuinely interested in helping people.” A suggestion offered by a participant was that she thought people should have more privacy when receiving help.

Level of service and the specific types of assistance clients received are outlined in Tables 10 and 11 respectively. All of the Cedar Fork interview participants had attended orientation and all but one had used the resource room at the time of their interviews (Level 1 services). Most of them (14 or 88%) had also met with a one-on-one counselor and attended workshops (Level 2 services). Less than half (44%) of the participants from Cedar Fork had received training (Level 3 services).

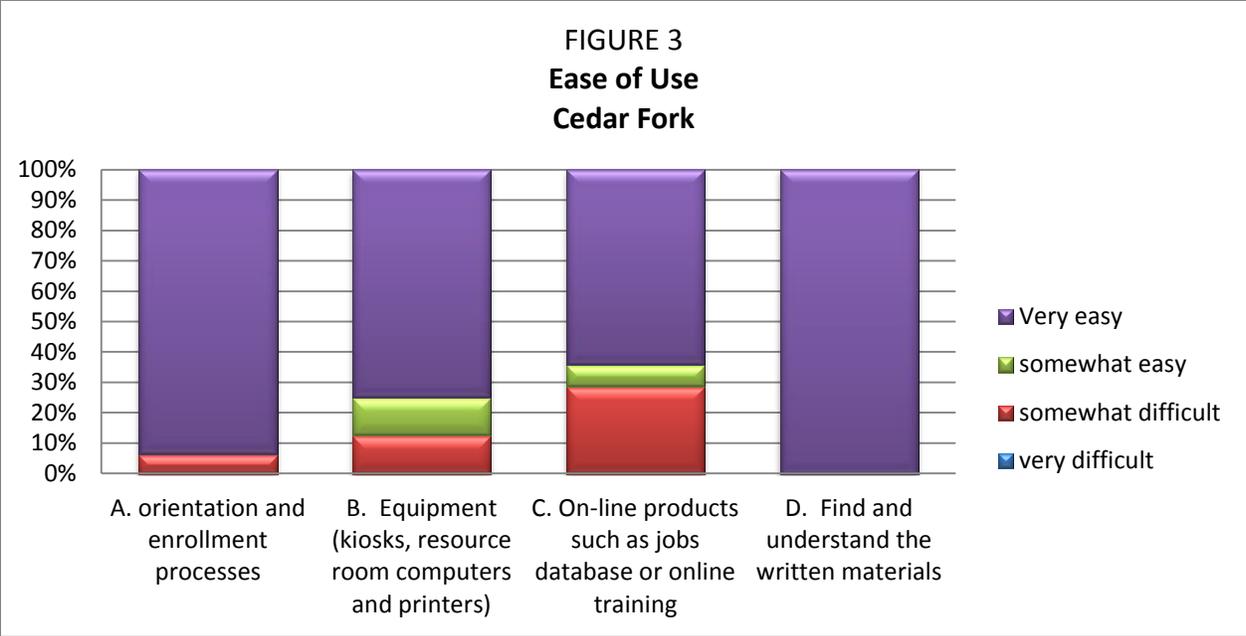
TABLE 10			
Level of Service Received: Cedar Fork			
Level	Services	Percent	Count
1	Attended Orientation	100.0%	16
	Used Resource Room	93.8%	15
2	Met with a counselor one-on-one	87.5%	14
	Attended workshop(s)	87.5%	14
3	Received training	43.8%	7

Table 11 outlines more specific assistance received by Cedar Fork study participants.

TABLE 11	
Specific Assistance Received: Cedar Fork	
Services	Response Percent
A. Assistance with a resume	66.7%
B. Assistance with job leads	33.3%
C. Provided information on training opportunities	93.3%
D. Assistance with a computerized job search	80.0%
E. Assistance finding employm't related websites	66.7%
F. Career counseling	53.3%
G. Follow-up services	60.0%
F. Referrals to other service provider(s)	66.7%

Ease of Use

The majority of clients found most services either very easy or somewhat easy to use. Figure 3 shows the distribution of client ratings for each service's level of difficulty. Most clients found it very easy to find and understand written materials (100%) and to complete the orientation and enrollment process (94%). A lower proportion (75%) found using equipment including kiosks, computers and printers to be very easy; 13% found this somewhat easy but another 13% found it somewhat difficult. A greater proportion had trouble using on-line products such as the jobs database and online training. While 64% found it very easy and 7% somewhat easy, 29% found these tools somewhat difficult to use.



Staff Interactions

Interview participants generally had positive assessments of staff interactions. Ninety four percent said staff members greeted and directed them immediately as they arrived at the Center. Only 81% felt staff clearly explained the program structure, the process for receiving services and the range of services available.

Interview participants were asked to rate specific staff with whom they had interacted. Table 12 displays the results. Greater than 90% rated enrollment staff, resource staff, workshop staff and staff providing referrals favorably. Orientation staff, training staff, and staff providing follow-up services each received between 80% and 90% favorable ratings. However, only 63% of clients interviewed found one-on-one counselors at Cedar Fork to be courteous and helpful.

<i>Answer Options</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>%Yes</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
A. Enrollment staff	1	15	94%	16
B. Orientation staff	2	14	88%	16
C. Resource room staff	1	14	93%	15
D. Counselor one-on-one	6	10	63%	16
E. Workshop staff	1	12	92%	13
F. Training staff	1	4	80%	5
G. Staff providing referrals to other service providers	0	5	100%	5
H. Staff providing follow-up services	1	6	86%	7

The comments below explain the negative ratings of some one-on-one counselors:

“(Name omitted) was unwelcoming in a way that made me not want to continue, she told me she couldn’t help me and to look online.”

“I call my counselor “stuck up.” She doesn’t respond with kindness. It seems as though she presents a bad attitude that seems to be affected by home life and seems more focused on paper work than talking.”

D. Overall Quality and Satisfaction

Just over half of the clients of the Cedar Fork Center reported that their expectations were either met (25%) or exceeded (31%) during their experience with the one-stop center. Another 18.8% said that their expectations were not met. A fourth of the participants did not know what to expect before using the center.

Consistent with findings on expectations, Figure 4 shows that 50% of Cedar Fork interview participants were fully satisfied with their experience with the one-stop center. Another 44% were partially satisfied. Six percent (one person) was not satisfied at all.

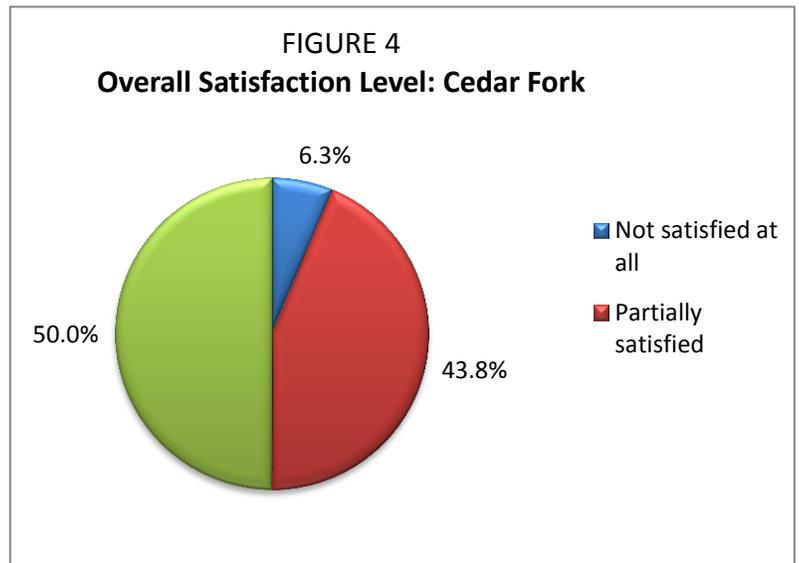
However, most clients (87.5%) plan to return to the one-Stop Center. One of the interview participants who said he/she did not plan on returning qualified it by stating that if staff called and said an actual job were available or if specific classes were being offered in his/her field, he/she would consider returning.

Following are some of the specific comments related to reasons for not returning.

“I did a lot of stuff on my own.”

“I expected more in helping the person become employed, versus preparing them about employment.”

“It is not catered to a person who is skilled and experienced, who does not need training but instead just needs contacts.”



IV. CARY STREET

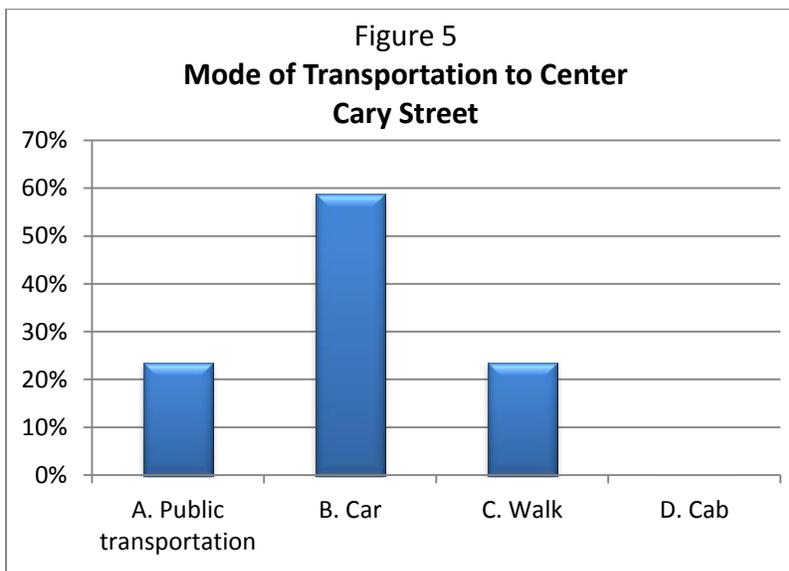
A. Demographics

Table 13 displays key demographic information for the 19 interview participants from the Cary Street One-Stop Center. The largest number of participants was between the ages of 45 and 64 years old (58%) with another 42% in the 25 to 44 age group. Three fourths were women (74%). Participants from the Cary Street location were primarily African American (95%) with one white interview participant (5%). The sample included two military veterans and six people with disabilities (five physical and one with both physical and mental disabilities).

TABLE 13 Demographics: Cary Street		
Age	Percent	Count
18 to 24 years old	0.0%	0
25 to 44 years old	42.1%	8
45 to 64 years old	57.9%	11
Over 65 years old	0.0%	0
Gender		
Female	73.7%	14
Male	26.3%	5
Race & Ethnicity		
White	5.3%	1
Black	94.7%	18
Asian	0.0%	0
Native American	0.0%	0
Hawaiian Pacific Islander	0.0%	0
Mixed Race	0.0%	0
Military Veteran	10.5%	2
Disability¹		
Physical	26.3%	5
Mental	5.3%	1
¹ Physical and Mental disabilities are not mutually exclusive		

B. Accessibility and Physical Space

On average, participants from the Cary Street Center had visited 28 times prior to their interview (ranging from 5 to 120 prior visits) — an average of 2.74 times per week. The most popular means of travel to the Cary Street Center was by car (56%). Equal proportions of clients took public transportation and walked (22 % each). In the “other” category, one person mentioned that she/he bikes to the center. Another mentioned that she/he participates in a carpool. Seventy five percent of those who drove reported having little or no problems finding parking although one client mentioned that once VCU opened nearby it became more difficult. The 25% who stated that parking was more difficult to find complained about the physical challenges associated with parking far away: “The little parking lot is terrible, so you have to go down the hill to the other lot. Then you have to walk up the hill and it was hard to go around the alley to the front of the building.” Other issues mentioned included time restricted spaces and difficulty at certain times of the day.



Almost none of the clients had trouble finding the Cary Street center on their first visit. All interview participants (100%) felt that it was comfortable and physically appealing. All but one participant felt that there was adequate accessibility and a handicap cut and that diverse customers could move around easily (94%). The one person who did not agree that accommodations were adequate mentioned that he/she did not remember seeing any accommodations and that “the front door slams back on you when you open it.”

C. Service Use and Quality

Clients generally described the overall mood and atmosphere at Cary Street as friendly and helpful. Others used words such as positive and welcoming. One person noted that while the staff are generally in a good mood (especially at the front desk) some seem anxious and frustrated.

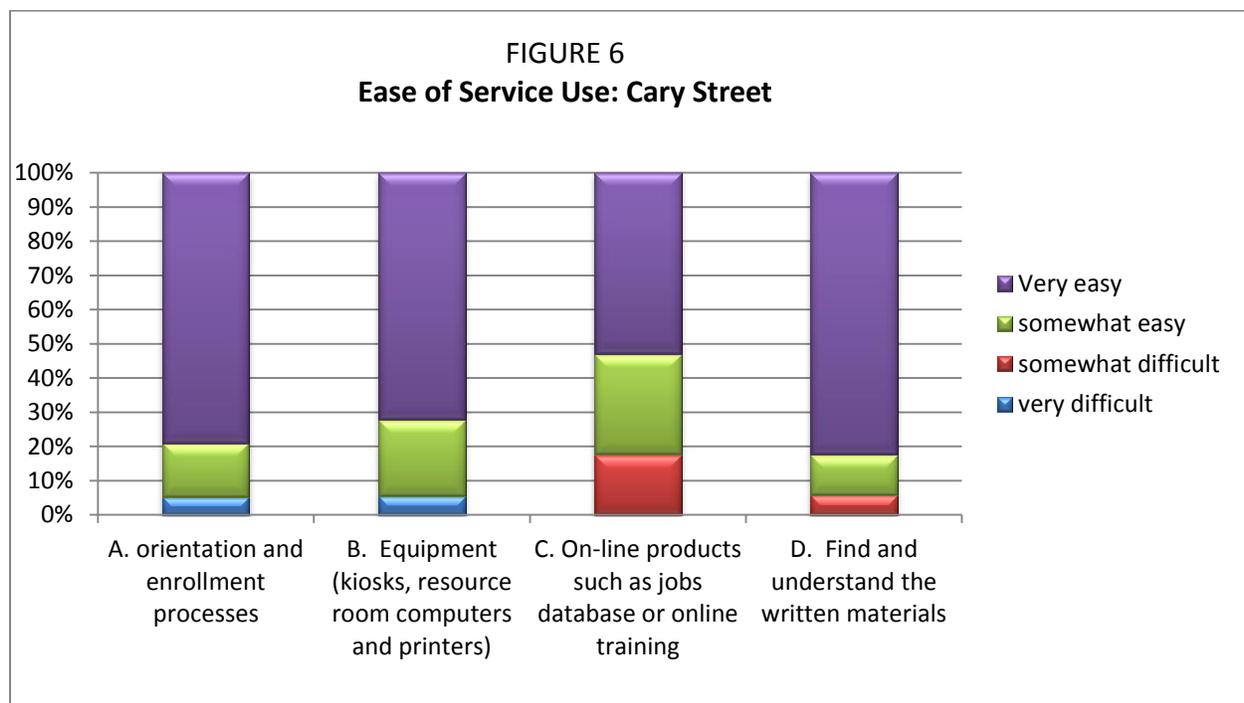
All of the Cary Street interview participants had attended orientation and all but one had used the resource room at the time of the interview (Level 1 services). Most of them (17 or 89.5%) had also met with a one-on-one counselor and 73.7 % had attended workshops (Level 2 services). A little over a third of the participants from Cary Street (37%) had received training (Level 3 service). More detail on the specific types of assistance that participants received is tallied in Table 15.

Level	Services	Percent	Count
1	Attended Orientation	100.0%	19
	Used Resource Room	94.7%	18
2	Met with a counselor one-on-one	89.5%	17
	Attended workshop(s)	73.7%	14
3	Received training	36.8%	7

Services	Response Percent
A. Assistance with a resume	68.4%
B. Assistance with job leads	84.2%
C. Provided information on training opportunities	84.2%
D. Assistance with a computerized job search	57.9%
E. Assistance finding employm't related websites	63.2%
F. Career counseling	73.7%
G. Follow-up services	47.4%
F. Referrals to other service provider(s)	36.8%

Ease of Use

At least 94% of clients who used each service found it either very easy or somewhat easy to use with one exception – online-products. Figure 6 shows the distribution of clients' ease of use ratings for each service. Most clients found it very easy to find and use written materials (94%), to complete the orientation and enrollment process (95%) and to use equipment including kiosks, computers and printers (94%). For each of these services only one of the persons who used each (5% or 6%) found it difficult or very difficult. However, a slightly larger proportion of clients who used the on-line products (such as jobs database or online training) found it either somewhat difficult or very difficult. While 82% found it either easy or very easy, 17% found it somewhat difficult.



Interview participants were also asked whether they understood the next steps in the process for obtaining workforce services. One fourth of the clients from Cary Street (26.3%) stated that they did not know what the next steps in the process were at the time of their interview, as indicated in the following comments:

“Once you’re employed, that’s it. You don’t know what other services are available or what other programs are for you. I didn’t know that once I found a job ... that I would have to wait a year before getting back in the program if I needed it.”

“After having all my forms and being ready the first day, it took five weeks before I was able to take any courses. I actually had to call the director and ask. “

Staff Interactions

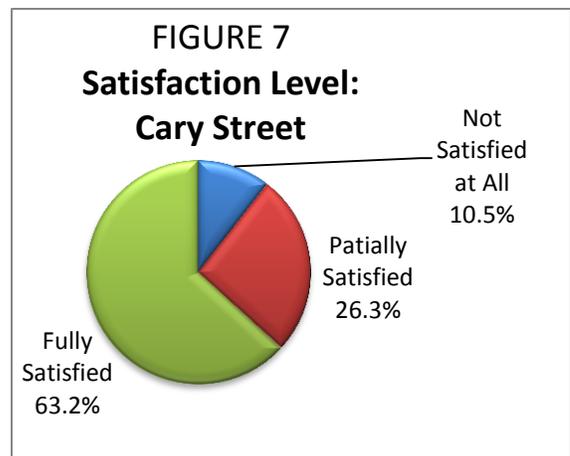
Interview participants from Cary Street generally had positive assessments of staff interactions. Of them, 89% confirmed that a staff member greeted and directed them immediately as they arrived at the Center. However, only 81% felt staff clearly explained the program structure, the process for receiving services and the range of services available.

Interview participants were asked to rate staff with whom they had interacted. Table 16 displays the results. Greater than 90% rated enrollment staff, resource staff, workshop staff and staff providing referrals as courteous and helpful. Orientation staff, training staff, and staff providing follow-up services each received between 80% and 90% favorable ratings. But only 61% of clients felt that one-on-one counselors at Cary Street were courteous and helpful.

Answer Options	no	yes		Response Count
A. Enrollment staff	0	19	100%	19
B. Orientation staff	0	19	100%	19
C. Resource room staff	3	15	83%	18
D. Counselor one-on-one	7	11	61%	18
E. Workshop staff	1	12	92%	13
F. Training staff	0	7	100%	7
G. Staff providing referrals to other service providers	0	5	100%	5
H. Staff providing follow-up services	1	10	91%	11

D. Overall Quality and Satisfaction

Fifty eight percent of the interview participants from the Cary Street Center reported that their expectations were either met (32%) or exceeded (26%) during their experience with the one-stop center. Another 16% said that their expectations were not met. Just over a fourth of the participants (26%) did not know what to expect before using the center.



Related to the findings on expectations, 63.2% of interview participants were fully satisfied with their experience with the Cary Street One-Stop Center. Another 26% were partially satisfied and 15.8 % were not satisfied at all (see Figure 6), as indicated in comments such as the following:

“I am a cook by trade it shouldn't be that hard to find me a restaurant job. I do not mind going in and starting from the bottom, but I am looking to be a part of some establishment. Just because I am an ex-felon, does not mean you should not work as hard to get me a job.”

“They wouldn't let me move on because of the time frame, I expected them to be understanding, especially after I already went through the testing hurdles. I understand that you shouldn't be able to take forever, but when you get pushed in there you also get pushed out.”

While 68% of the interview participants plan to return to the one-stop center, almost a third (32%) does not. One person explained that she would not be returning because she got a job. Others voiced the following frustrations with the process:

“I don't think that they are actually about putting people into work. I think they are more about getting a large head count in these classes.”

“I would have to go through the orientation and testing again, and it was too confusing and unrealistic.”

“I like my career coach and I know she wants to see me successful... but I need them to assist me more with things that I cannot do on my own.... I do not like waiting around, I will go out there and get a job on my own.”

“I do not know if they have an option of getting a different career coach, but if I could I would really like that.”

A few others cited personal difficulties:

“If I could I would. I have to walk, so it's hard to get there.”

“I am a single woman so I have to work two jobs, so it is hard to find time to go to the center.”

V. WHITEPINE

A. Demographics

Only six participants from the Whitepine One-Stop Center showed up for interviews for this study, so the following statistics should be considered with that limited sample size in mind. Most of the Whitepine interview participants were between the ages of 45 and 64 years old (85%) with another 16.7% in the 25 to 44 age group. Eighty three percent were female. Over half of the participants from the Whitepine location were African American (60%) and the rest were white (40%). The sample included no military veterans and no participants with disabilities.

Age			
18 to 24 years old	0.0%	0	
25 to 44 years old	16.7%	1	
45 to 64 years old	83.3%	5	
Over 65 years old	0.0%	0	
Gender			
Female	83.3%	5	
Male	16.7%	1	
Race & Ethnicity			
White	40.0%	2	
Black	60.0%	3	
Asian	0.0%	0	
Native American	0.0%	0	
Hawaiian Pacific Islander	0.0%	0	
Mixed Race	0.0%	0	
Military Veteran	0.0%	0	
Disability ¹			
Physical	0%	0	
Mental	0%	0	

¹Physical and Mental disabilities are not mutually exclusive

B. Accessibility and Physical Space

On average, participants from the Whitepine center had visited the one-stop 18 times prior to their interview (ranging from 5 to 50 prior visits) visiting on average 2.33 times per week. All six of the Whitepine participants normally traveled to the center by car. One person reported

sometimes using the bus as an alternative. Participants from this site had no trouble finding it on their first visit and none of them reported trouble finding parking when they drive to the center.

All interview participants (100%) felt that it was comfortable and physically appealing and that there were adequate accessibility and handicap provisions. They all also felt that diverse customers could move around easily.

C. Service Use and Quality

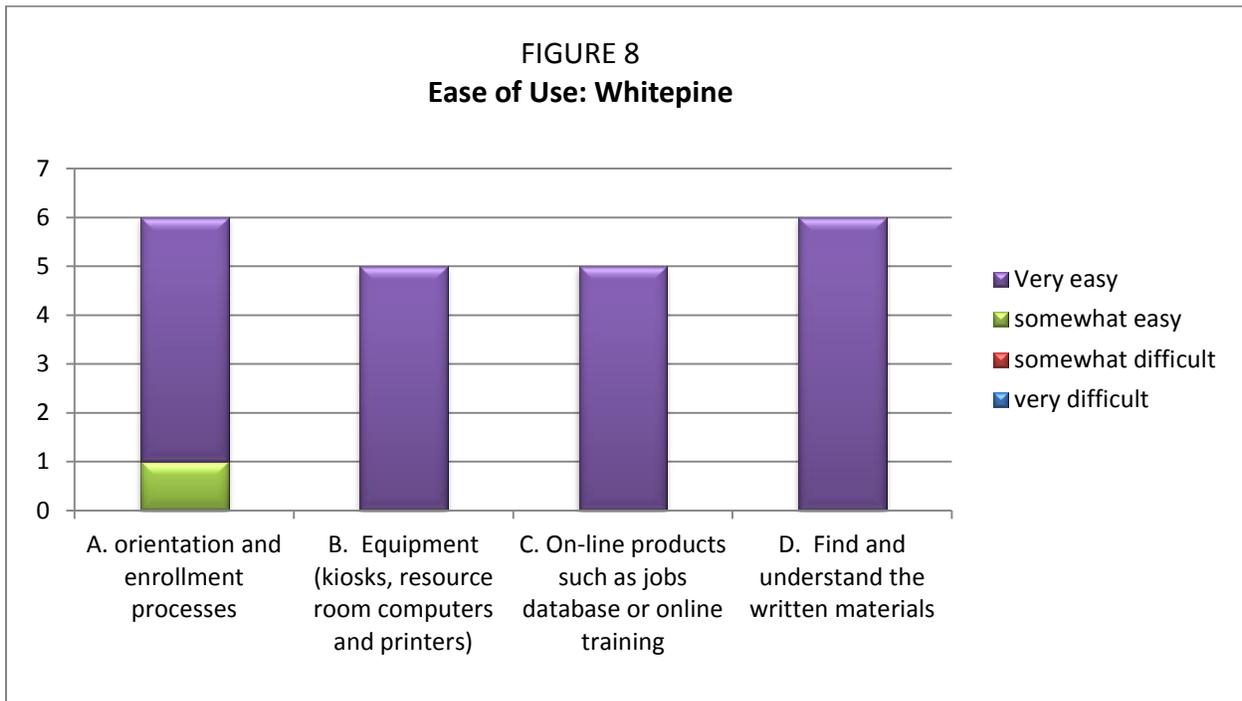
Table 18 outlines the levels of service received by Whitepine interview participants. All of them had attended orientation and all but one had used the resource room at the time of the interview (Level 1 services). All of them had also met with a one-on-one counselor and 83.3 % had attended workshops (Level 2 services). Only one of the participants from Whitepine had received training at the time of the interview (Level 3 service).

TABLE 18 Level of Service Received: Whitepine			
Level	Services	Percent	Count
1	Attended Orientation	100.0%	6
	Used Resource Room	83.3%	5
2	Met with a counselor one-on-one	100.0%	6
	Attended workshop(s)	83.3%	5
3	Received training	16.7%	1

TABLE 19 Services Received: Whitepine		
Services	Response Percent	
A. Assistance with a resume	66.7%	4
B. Assistance with job leads	83.3%	5
C. Provided information on training opportunities	100.0%	6
D. Assistance with a computerized job search	33.3%	2
E. Assistance finding employment related websites	66.7%	4
F. Career counseling	83.3%	5
G. Follow-up services	66.7%	4
F. Referrals to other service provider(s)	50.0%	3

Ease of Use

Five out of six of the clients from the Whitepine Center found all of the services very easy to use. Only one client rated the orientation and enrollment process as somewhat easy.



Five of the six interview participants felt that they knew what the next steps were in the process of obtaining workforce services. The one person who was not sure explained his/her confusion in the following way:

“Once I attended the workshops I felt that I was out there on my own. I did not know whether I was supposed to contact my adviser at specific times, or if she was going to call me, it was not clear to me.”

“At Whitepine, said another, “even without a career counselor, the folks have been a lot more willing to work with you. They realize that everyone is their own individual and the workshop people work with you. The most valuable part of the program has been the employer job fairs.”

Staff Interactions

Interview participants from Whitepine felt very positively about their interactions with staff. They all reported that a one-stop staff member greeted and directed them immediately as they arrived at the center. All of the participants (100%) in each type of activity listed in Table 20 rated staff as courteous and helpful.

TABLE 20 Was Staff Courteous and Helpful?: Whitepine				
Answer Options	No	Yes	% Yes	Response Count
A. Enrollment staff	0	6	100%	6
B. Orientation staff	0	6	100%	6
C. Resource room staff	0	6	100%	6
D. Counselor one-on-one	0	6	100%	6
E. Workshop staff	0	5	100%	5
F. Training staff	0	1	100%	1
G. Staff providing referrals to other service providers	0	3	100%	3
H. Staff providing follow-up services	0	4	100%	4

D. Overall Quality and Satisfaction

Half of the interview participants from the Whitepine Center reported that their expectations for service at the one-stop center were met and the other half of the participants reported that they did not know what to expect before using the center.

Whether they knew what to expect or not, all six of the clients (100%) were fully satisfied with their experience with at the Whitepine One-Stop Center. All six of the interview participants plan to return to the center.

Conclusion and Acknowledgments

The Capital Region Workforce Partnership and Resource are to be commended for undertaking this evaluation of their work. The results show that, overall, clients are pleased and derive considerable value from the services that Resource provides. As to be expected, there are also areas where changes could be made that would likely increase client satisfaction.

To get the most benefit from this evaluation we recommend that the Capital Region Workforce Partnership use the present study as a benchmark and then repeat it at regular intervals – perhaps every two years – so that progress can be tracked and documented.

We are grateful to several persons whose good work ensured a successful project. We thank the Capital Region Workforce Partnership, particularly the Quality Assurance Committee, and the leadership and staff of Resource – Brian Davis, Krishawn Monroe and Cathleen Freiburger – for working with us to set up and guide the research process. We thank VCU Urban & Regional Planning students Susanna Finn and Jamie Pham for their diligence and attention to detail in conducting the interviews with clients. And most of all, we thank the clients of the one-stop centers who took the time to do the interviews and who approached the task seriously and thoughtfully.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Service Request

A. Analyze the results of the interviews and draft an analytical report of the findings and recommendations. The report must include a demographic breakdown of the secret shoppers – gender, race, age, veteran status, disability status, jurisdiction of residency.

- Number and frequency of individual secret shopper visits to the workforce centers and the components participated in at each visit.
- Type and frequency of mode of transportation to the workforce centers for each visit.
- List the services used and the frequency of use.
- Customer service related questions such as – how easy was the facility to find and use, how easy were the orientation and enrollment processes, how easy was the equipment to use (kiosks, resource room computers and printers), how easy was it to find and understand the written materials, if a referral was needed how was it handled and was it a positive experience.
- An evaluation of the interaction with staff at each step of the process from being greeted upon entry to the building, to use of the resource room, orientation, enrollment and intensive services, support services if necessary and training and follow-up if necessary.
- Did the program structure make sense and did you feel it was easy to understand how to proceed through the process?
- Did you receive what you expected as a customer? Describe how or how not for this question.
- Identify if any staff stood out in a positive way and explain why that was the case.
- If ineligible for services were you referred to another agency for services?
- With what other resources were you provided during your visit with at the AJC?
- If any secret shoppers worked with management to resolve an issue, describe the issue and how effective the resolution was for that issue.

APPENDIX B

COMPARISON OF ANSWERS ACROSS CENTERS

Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Total Response Count	
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
Cedar Fork	16	100%	0	0%	0	0%	16	39.0%
Whitepine	0	0%	6	100%	0	0%	6	14.6%
Cary Street	0	0%	0	0%	19	100%	19	46.3%
Total	16		6		19		41	

1. Which group encompasses your current age?								
Answer Options	Resource Workforce Center						Total Count	Total Percent
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
18 to 24 years old	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	2.4%
25 to 44 years old	6	37.50%	1	16.67%	8	42.11%	15	36.6%
45 to 64 years old	9	56.25%	5	83.33%	11	57.89%	25	61.0%
Over 65 years old	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.0%
Total	16		6		19		41	

2. Which gender category best identifies you?								
Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count	Response Percent
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
Female	13	81.25%	5	83.33%	14	73.68%	32	78.0%
Male	3	18.75%	1	16.67%	5	26.32%	9	22.0%
Total	16		6		19		41	

3. Which racial category best describes you?								
Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count	Response Percent
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
White	0	0.00%	2	40.00%	1	5.26%	3	7.5%
Black	15	93.75%	3	60.00%	18	94.74%	36	90.0%
Asian	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.0%
Native American	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.0%

Hawaiian Pacific Islander	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.0%
Mixed Race	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	2.5%
Total	16		5		19		40	

4. What is your ethnicity?								
	Name of Resource Workforce Center							
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent
Not Hispanic	16	100.00%	5	100.00%	19	100.00%	40	100.0%
Hispanic	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.0%
Total	16		5		19		40	

5. Are you a military veteran?								
	Name of Resource Workforce Center							
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent
No	15	93.75%	6	100.00%	17	89.47%	38	92.7%
Yes	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	2	10.53%	3	7.3%
Total	16		6		19		0	

7. Do you have a permanent physical or mental disability? Yes or No								
	Name of Resource Workforce Center							
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent
No	15	93.75%	6	100.00%	14	73.68%	35	85.4%
Yes	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	5	26.32%	6	14.6%
Total	16		6		19		0	

Is it physical or mental								
	Name of Resource Workforce Center							
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent
Physical	1	100.00%	0	0.00%	5	83.33%	6	100.0%
Mental	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	16.67%	1	16.7%
Total	1		0		6		6	

8. Which of the following services have you participated in at her one-stop Center?								
Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count	Response Percent
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
A. Assistance with a resume	10	62.50%	4	66.67%	13	68.42%	27	67.5%
B. Assistance with job leads	5	31.25%	5	83.33%	16	84.21%	26	65.0%
C. Obtaining information on training opportunities	14	87.50%	6	100.00%	16	84.21%	36	90.0%
D. Assistance with a computerized job search	12	75.00%	2	33.33%	11	57.89%	25	62.5%
E. Finding employment related websites	10	62.50%	4	66.67%	12	63.16%	26	65.0%
F. Career counseling	8	50.00%	5	83.33%	14	73.68%	27	67.5%
G. Follow-up services (once you had completed your program)	9	56.25%	4	66.67%	9	47.37%	22	55.0%
Total	16		6		19		40	

11. Which of the following describes how you typically get to the one-stop center?								
Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count	Response Percent
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
A. Public transportation	2	12.50%	0	0.00%	4	22.22%	6	15.4%
B. Car	14	87.50%	6	100.00%	10	55.56%	30	76.9%
C. Walk	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	4	22.22%	4	10.3%
D. Cab	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.0%
Total	16		6		18		39	

13. Did you have any trouble finding the one-stop center building location the first time you went there?								
Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count	Response Percent
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
No	11	68.75%	6	100.00%	18	94.74%	35	85.4%
Yes	5	31.25%	0	0.00%	1	5.26%	6	14.6%
Total	16		6		19		41	41

15. Do you feel that there were adequate and safe curb cuts, ramps, automatic doors, elevators/lifts, and other access equipment?									
	Name of Resource Workforce Center								
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent	
no	2	12.50%	0	0.00%	1	5.56%	3	7.5%	
yes	14	87.50%	6	100.00%	17	94.44%	37	92.5%	
Total	16		6		18		40		

16. Did one-stop center staff members greet and direct you immediately as you arrived at the Center?									
	Name of Resource Workforce Center								
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent	
No	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	2	11.11%	3	7.5%	
Yes	15	93.75%	6	100.00%	16	88.89%	37	92.5%	
Total	16		6		18		40		

18. Was the staff courteous and respectful?									
	Name of Resource Workforce Center								
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent	
no	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	1	5.26%	2	4.9%	
yes	15	93.75%	6	100.00%	18	94.74%	39	95.1%	
Total	16		6		19		41		

19. Was the center physically comfortable and appealing?									
	Name of Resource Workforce Center								
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent	
no	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.0%	
yes	16	100.00%	6	100.00%	19	100.00%	41	100.0%	
Total	16		6		19		41		

20. Can diverse customers move around easily?									
	Name of Resource Workforce Center								
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent	
No	2	12.50%	0	0.00%	1	5.26%	3	7.3%	
Yes	14	87.50%	6	100.00%	18	94.74%	38	92.7%	

<i>Total</i>	<i>16</i>		<i>6</i>		<i>19</i>		<i>41</i>	
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21. Did the staff clearly explain the program structure, the process for receiving and the range of services available?								
	Name of Resource Workforce Center							
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent
No	3	18.75%	0	0.00%	4	21.05%	7	17.1%
Yes	13	81.25%	6	100.00%	15	78.95%	34	82.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>16</i>		<i>6</i>		<i>19</i>		<i>41</i>	

22. Did staff use simple language in instructions and explanations? Yes or No								
	Name of Resource Workforce Center							
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent
No	2	12.50%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	4.9%
Yes	14	87.50%	6	100.00%	19	100.00%	39	95.1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>16</i>		<i>6</i>		<i>19</i>		<i>41</i>	

23. Did you feel it was easy to understand how to proceed through the process?								
	Name of Resource Workforce Center							
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent
No	2	12.50%	0	0.00%	5	26.32%	7	17.1%
Yes	14	87.50%	6	100.00%	14	73.68%	34	82.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>16</i>		<i>6</i>		<i>19</i>		<i>41</i>	

24. Please tell me whether you used or received each of the following services:								
	Name of Resource Workforce Center							
Answer Options	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		Response Count	Response Percent
A. Attended orientation	16	100.00%	6	100.00%	19	100.00%	41	100.0%
B. Used resource room	15	93.75%	5	83.33%	18	94.74%	38	92.7%
C. Met with a counselor one-on-one	14	87.50%	6	100.00%	17	89.47%	37	90.2%
D. Attended workshop(s)	14	87.50%	5	83.33%	14	73.68%	33	80.5%
E. Received training	6	37.50%	1	16.67%	7	36.84%	14	34.1%
F. Received referrals to other service provider(s)	7	43.75%	3	50.00%	7	36.84%	17	41.5%

G. Received follow-up services	7	43.75%	4	66.67%	8	42.11%	19	46.3%
Total	16		6		19		41	

25. For each of the following that you used or received please tell me whether staff associated with the service was courteous and helpful.							
Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street		
A. Enrollment staff							
no	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
yes	15	93.75%	6	100.00%	19	100.00%	
	16		6		19		41
B. Orientation staff							
no	2	12.50%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
yes	14	87.50%	6	100.00%	19	100.00%	
	16		6		19		41
C. Resource room staff							
no	1	6.67%	0	0.00%	3	16.67%	
yes	14	93.33%	6	100.00%	15	83.33%	
	15		6		18		39
D. Counselor one-on-one							
no	6	37.50%	0	0.00%	7	38.89%	
yes	10	62.50%	6	100.00%	11	61.11%	
	16		6		18		40
E. Workshop staff							
no	1	7.69%	0	0.00%	1	7.69%	
yes	12	92.31%	5	100.00%	12	92.31%	
	13		5		13		31
F. Training staff							
no	1	20.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
yes	4	80.00%	1	100.00%	7	100.00%	
	5		1		7		13
G. Staff providing referrals to other service providers							
no	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
yes	5	100.00%	3	100.00%	5	100.00%	
	5		3		5		13
H. Staff providing follow-up services							
no	1	14.29%	0	0.00%	1	9.09%	
yes	6	85.71%	4	100.00%	10	90.91%	
	7		4		11		22
answered question							41

26. I will ask you a series of questions about various services. For each if you used it please rate it for ease of use as one of the following:

Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count
	Cedar Fork	Whitepine		Cary Street			
A. orientation and enrollment processes							
Very easy	15	93.75%	5	83.33%	15	78.95%	
somewhat easy	0	0.00%	1	16.67%	3	15.79%	
somewhat difficult	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
very difficult	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	5.26%	
	16		6		19		41
B. Equipment (kiosks, resource room computers and printers)							
Very easy	12	75.00%	5	83.33%	13	68.42%	
somewhat easy	2	12.50%	0	0.00%	4	21.05%	
somewhat difficult	2	12.50%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
very difficult	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	5.26%	
	16		5		18		39
C. On-line products such as jobs database or online training							
Very easy	9	56.25%	5	83.33%	9	47.37%	
somewhat easy	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	5	26.32%	
somewhat difficult	4	25.00%	0	0.00%	3	15.79%	
very difficult	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
	14		5		17		36
D. Find and understand the written materials							
Very easy	16	100.00%	6	100.00%	14	73.68%	
somewhat easy	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	10.53%	
somewhat difficult	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	5.26%	
very difficult	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
	16		6		17		39
<i>answered question</i>							41

29. Which of the following statements best describes the extent to which your expectations were met during your visit to the one-stop center?								
Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count	Response Percent
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
A. I did not know what to expect	4	25.00%	3	50.00%	5	26.32%	12	29.3%
B. Expectations were not met	3	18.75%	0	0.00%	3	15.79%	6	14.6%
C. Expectations were met	4	25.00%	3	50.00%	6	31.58%	13	31.7%
D. Expectations were exceeded	5	31.25%	0	0.00%	5	26.32%	10	24.4%
Total	16		6		19		41	

30. Which of the following statements best describes your level of satisfaction with your visit?								
Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count	Response Percent
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
A. I was not satisfied at all with my visit to the One-stop Center	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	2	10.53%	3	7.3%
B. I was partially satisfied with one-stop Center	7	43.75%	0	0.00%	5	26.32%	12	29.3%
C. I was fully satisfied with my visit to the one-stop center	8	50.00%	6	100.00%	12	63.16%	26	63.4%
Total	16		6		19		41	

32. Do you plan to return to the one-stop center?								
Answer Options	Name of Resource Workforce Center						Response Count	Response Percent
	Cedar Fork		Whitepine		Cary Street			
No	2	12.50%	0	0.00%	6	31.58%	8	19.5%
Yes	14	87.50%	6	100.00%	13	68.42%	33	80.5%
Total	16		6		19		41	