

WHERE'S THE WORK?

HELPING CAREER PRACTITIONERS EXPLORE THEIR CAREER OPTIONS

PRELIMINARY REPORT

In February 2012, as part of the *Where's the Work? Helping Career Practitioners Explore their Career Options* project¹, Life Strategies surveyed Career Development Practitioners (CDPs) to help us explore CDP's general perceptions of their employment options, the roles (or positions) they may fill, and the work settings they are most interested in. The survey also included general demographic data (e.g., location, age, gender). Based on preliminary results, we conducted a quick follow-up survey specifically looking at salary range. This preliminary report shares some of our survey results.

Invitations were sent through Life Strategies' database, BCCDA listserv, CDAA listserv, key contacts, and various social media sites (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook). As we were seeking pan-Canadian representation, 24 hours prior to the survey closing we reached out to key contacts in provinces that weren't yet represented.

Survey Monkey was used for both surveys which helped to ensure all responses were confidential and anonymous. Respondents were able to identify how they'd prefer quotes from their qualitative responses to be used (i.e., not at all, yes without identifying information, and yes with identifying information) and provide their name/contact.

In total, 150 individuals responded to at least one question in the first section which comprised mostly quantitative questions while 116 individuals responded to at least one question in the second section which took a more qualitative, "informational interview" approach. We obtained over 100 responses within the first 2 days. The follow-up salary survey had 273 responses, in just four days, with 100 responses in the first 24 hours.

Quantitative data was downloaded to SPSS² for statistical analysis; NVIVO³ was used to analyze the qualitative data.

In the sections that follow, we present our preliminary findings.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Although we were unable to get pan-Canadian representation despite targeted follow-up with contacts in provinces/territories not represented, there was coast-to-coast representation with 58% of respondents from BC, 21% from Alberta, 12% from Ontario, 2% each from Nova Scotia and Nunavut, and 1% each from Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Northwest Territories. In addition, one respondent identified working throughout Canada and another identified working overseas. The majority of respondents were female (86%) and between the ages of 48 and 65 (58%).

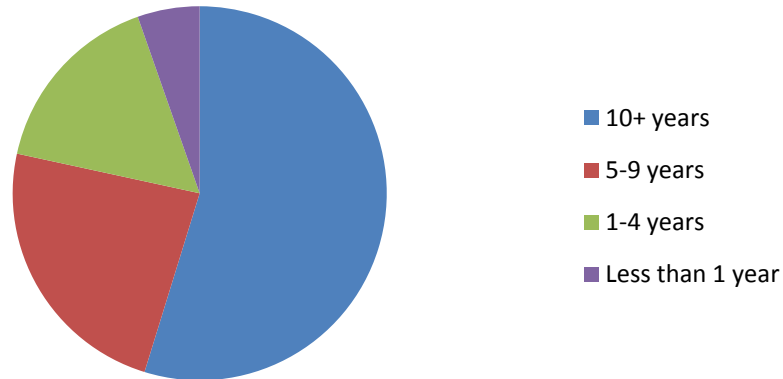
¹ This project was supported by a 2012 CCDF Building for the Future Endowment Fund

² <http://www-01.ibm.com/software/analytics/spss/>

³ http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx

As noted in Figure 1, our sample represented a fairly experienced group with the majority of respondents reporting 10 or more years of experience.

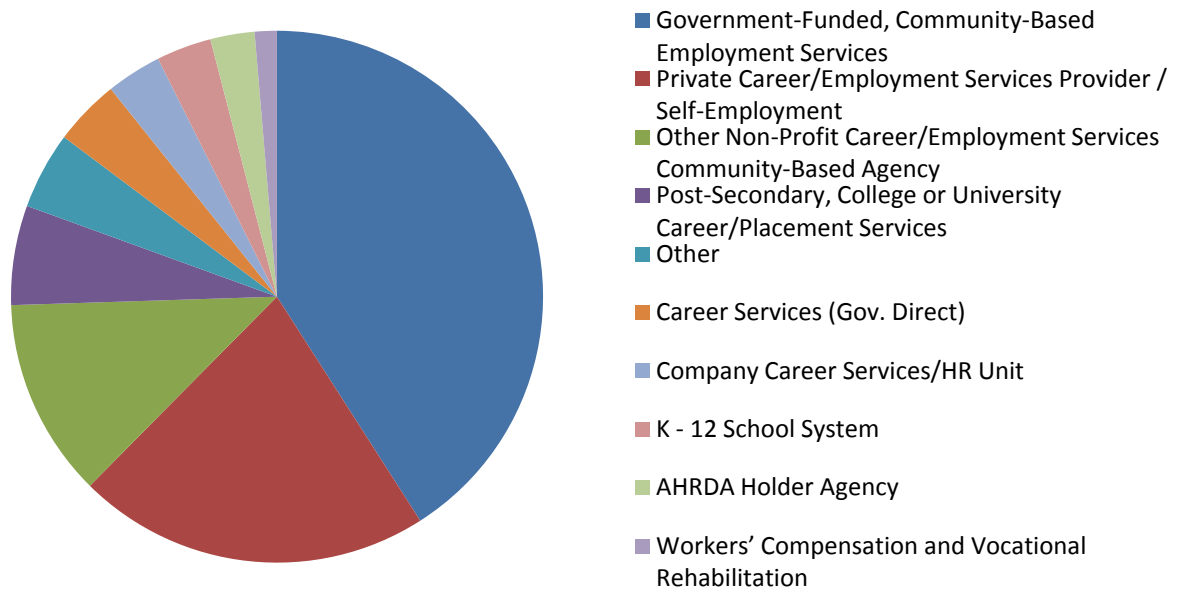
Figure 1: Years of Experience



WORK SETTINGS

Similar to the findings of CCDF’s 2009 Pan-Canadian Mapping study⁴ which indicated that 37% of CDPS work in third-party career/employment services funded by government, the majority of our respondents (41%) were employed in government-funded community-based employment services (private or non-profit), followed by private (for profit) career/employment services provider / self-employment (21%), and other non-profit career/employment services community-based agencies (12%). Figure 2 summarizes these findings while also identifying where the remaining respondents work.

Figure 2: Agency, Institution, or Organization Type



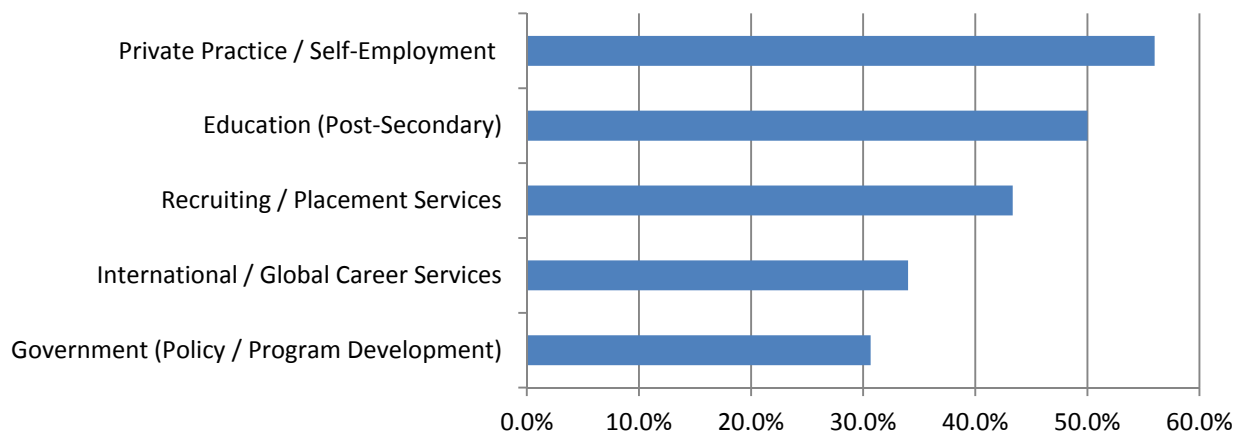
⁴ <http://www.ccdf.ca/ccdf/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/PAN-CANADIAN-MAPPING-STUDY-OF-THE-CAREER-DEVELOPMENT-SECTOR.pdf>

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they identified, at least somewhat, as a Career Development Practitioner (88% total – 61% yes, definitely; 27% yes, somewhat) indicating that, at least in our sample, the broad title of CDP was fairly well accepted.

Although our project’s primary focus was to look at work opportunities beyond government contracts it seemed important to also explore what CDPs would consider to be a “traditional” work environment. In our sample, 91% (40% yes, definitely; 51% yes, somewhat) felt that services funded by government, either through a 3rd party contract or direct services, was the “traditional” work environment for Canadian CDPs.

When respondents were asked to select outside of the “traditional” environment, up to 5 work settings that they were most interested in learning more about, results were fairly wide spread. As noted in Figure 3, six settings of interest were endorsed by 30 or more respondents; these included Business / Corporations (n=92), Private Practice / Self-Employment (n=84), Education (Post-Secondary; n=75), Recruiting / Placement (n=65), International / Global Career Services (n=51), and Government (Policy / Program Development; n=46).

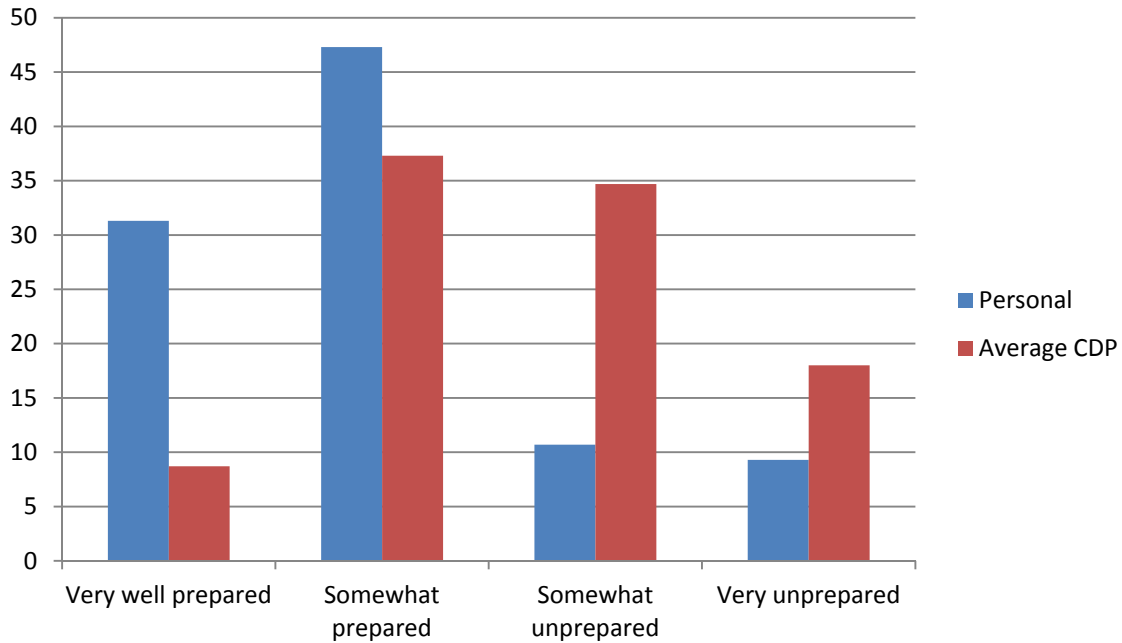
Figure 3: Non-Traditional Work Settings



READINESS FOR WORK BEYOND GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

When considering how prepared the average CDP is to move into non-traditional settings, respondents rated their own preparedness as well as how prepared they felt their colleagues were. Interestingly, as shown in Figure 4, although most respondents reported that they were well-prepared, they were far less confident that their colleagues were similarly ready to transition into a different type of career service. These two ratings had only a slight correlation ($r=.32, n=147, p<0.01$); perhaps indicative of over-rating personal preparedness and/or under-rating the average preparedness of other CDPs.

Figure 4: Ratings of Preparedness to Work Outside of Traditional Setting



THE NATURE OF THE WORK

The qualitative questions sought to explore CDP’s overall feelings about their work, what they wish they’d known before entering the field, and their thoughts about the future.

Overall, respondents entered the field one of two ways – either by *choice* (e.g., intentionally looked for work in this area, took training, learned on-the-job, were mentored, “called” to the field) or by *chance* (e.g., happenstance, pushed by circumstances). When asked what they wish they’d known prior to entering the field, respondents highlighted sector realities (e.g., compensation, bureaucracy), the training and interpersonal skills required to be successful, as well as the richness of the sector.

We also asked respondents to share what they love and dislike about the work they do. In general, they love the opportunity to (a) make difference and positively impact the lives of clients, (b) develop interpersonal relationships with clients, co-workers, and employers, and (c) develop and grow with the job. Many respondents also indicated loving their specific roles and tasks as well as the variety of work. Factors that were disliked clustered into extrinsic elements (e.g., funding/policy constraints, challenging clients) as well as intrinsic ones (e.g., value conflicts, not meeting clients’ needs).

When asked what they’d do differently, if there was an opportunity to begin again, a large portion of respondents indicated “nothing.” However, some did report that they’d be more intentional about their career path, recognize the diversity of work across different settings, bridge silos between sectors, commit to ongoing development, and influence policy.

In reflecting on their future, some respondents noted they’d continue doing the work they’ve been doing; others were uncertain about what the future holds. Still others indicated they’d either be growing

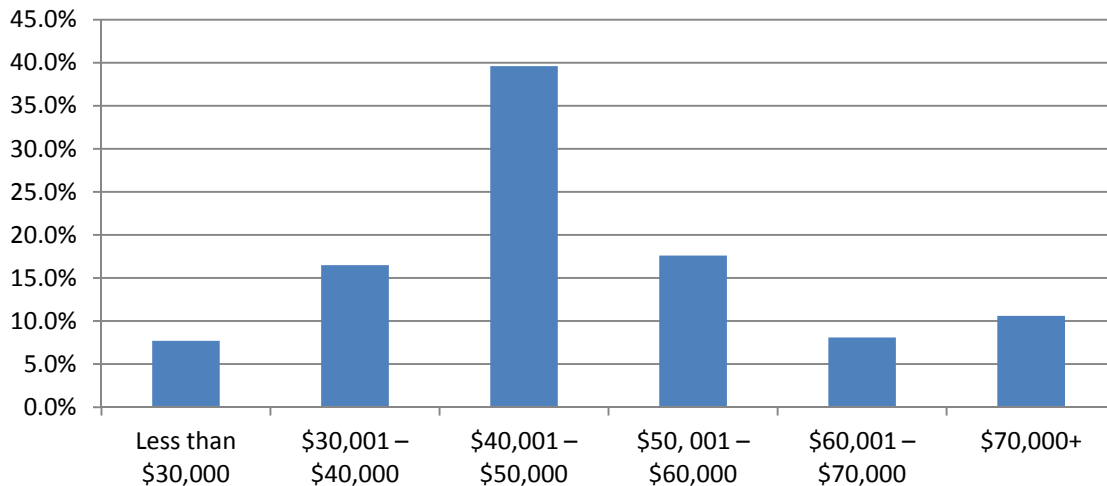
in the field (e.g., taking training, obtaining certification, transitioning to a different role/setting) or leaving it to pursue a different career.

In offering advice to those considering work as a CDP some respondents were encouraging while others cautioned about pursuing work in this field; regardless, many noted the importance of doing research, getting training in advance, and finding a mentor for support.

SALARY RANGE

The overall salary distributions are presented in Figure 5 and illustrate that the most common salary for CDPs is between \$40,000 and \$50,000 (40%, n=108) per annum. In addition to overall salary, 82% of respondents reported receiving extended health/dental benefits, while only 31% received employer contributions to their RRSPs and only 24% received a pension.

Figure 5: Salary Range



Two roles (i.e., curriculum/resource development and employee recruitment/selection) reported the highest average earnings (i.e., \$70,000+); however, this was based on a very small sample size (n = 3 and n = 1 respectively). Many respondents who selected “other” as their role also reported earning more, selecting the \$70,000+ range 46% of the time (n = 11). Although there was no single role that had lower overall earnings, 38% of the job / work development respondents reported earnings in the \$30,001-\$40,000 range. What the data doesn’t indicate is whether or not respondents were working part- or full-time which could have significant impact on results.

NEXT STEPS

We’d like to thank all those who took the time to respond to our two surveys. We collected a wealth of data that will continue to inform this project, and other related work, for years to come. We look forward to the release of the *Where’s the Work?* guide and launch of the 3-part webinar series; please join us March 14, 2012 part 1. For more information on this project contact us at info@lifestrategies.ca / 604-856-2386.