



# The Role of SCSEP in Workforce Training for Low-Income Older Workers

## The Senior Community Service Employment Program White Paper

*Kelly S. Mikelson*

*October 2017*

**The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)<sup>1</sup> is a \$400 million federal workforce investment program projected to serve over 67,000 low-income unemployed older adults in program year (PY) 2017 (DOL 2016). Operated by the US Department of Labor’s (DOL’s) Employment and Training Administration (ETA), SCSEP has a 50-year history of providing training in subsidized, part-time community service assignments before transitioning participants to unsubsidized employment. SCSEP is the only federally funded program to target older individuals who want to enter or reenter the workforce. The fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget eliminates all funding for SCSEP, calling it “a program that is ineffective at meeting its purpose of transitioning low-income unemployed into unsubsidized jobs” (DOL 2017). This white paper examines the evidence on the value of SCSEP and discusses the potential effects of cutting it.**

Because SCSEP’s goal is to serve America’s most vulnerable seniors, program participants must be at least 55 years old and have a family income of no more than 125 percent of the federal poverty level. The program is currently a significant source of job training, work experience, supportive services, and placement in employment for unemployed, older workers. The value of SCSEP is fourfold:

1. **The benefits of SCSEP outweigh the costs.** SCSEP’s per participant average annual cost was \$6,665. In FY 2015, 51.3 percent of SCSEP participants obtained unsubsidized employment, therefore, the average annual cost was \$12,993 per unsubsidized job placement (US DOL/ETA 2015). With average annual wages in the first year after program exit estimated to be \$15,866, SCSEP has a net gain of \$2,873 on average per participant (US DOL/ETA 2015).

2. **Demand for workforce programs serving older workers is increasing.** SCSEP was established by the Older Americans Act of 1965<sup>2</sup> at a time when older workers were statistically a smaller proportion of the labor force. With life expectancy in the US increasing, baby boomers aging, and 44 percent of low-income older workers saying they have no plans to retire within the next five years (Mikelson, Kuehn, and Martin-Caughey 2017), demand for SCSEP is increasing.
3. **SCSEP serves older unemployed workers when other programs do not, and coordination difficulties persist between SCSEP and WIA/WIOA.** With recent proposed budget cuts to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA),<sup>3</sup> the training and services that WIOA-funded programs provide will already be stretched thin. Moreover, SCSEP project operators increasingly enroll individuals under 65 years of age who are turning to SCSEP when other efforts to reenter the labor market prove unsuccessful (Kogan et al. 2013). A recent evaluation of SCSEP found that 15 percent of participants were individuals unable to find employment after using Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) services (Kogan et al. 2013). Although SCSEP and WIA have been required to coordinate services since 2000, perceived difficulties in coordination between SCSEP and WIA staff persisted as late as 2012 (Kogan et al. 2013). SCSEP projects found it difficult to rely on the resources of WIA American Job Centers to assist older workers in finding jobs (Kogan et al. 2013).
4. **SCSEP informs job training strategies for older workers.** SCSEP can help other training programs, both public and private, better serve older workers. Many low-income older workers face unique barriers to employment and require specialized services to prepare them for entry or reentry into the labor market; these barriers include age discrimination by employers, difficulties with hearing or vision, or age-related physical limitations. SCSEP's approaches for addressing such difficulties can serve as a model for other programs.

This paper draws upon a review of relevant literature related to older workers, SCSEP program materials, the laws and regulations governing SCSEP, a recent evaluation of SCSEP conducted by Social Policy Research Associates and Mathematica Policy Research (Kogan et al. 2013), and the author's recent qualitative study of SCSEP (Mikelson and Butrica, forthcoming).

This white paper describes the evolution of SCSEP for the past five decades and the proposed funding cuts. The paper goes on to describe the services provided by SCSEP, and information on program costs and benefits. SCSEP's value in today's economy and labor market is discussed. Next, the paper examines whether WIOA is well positioned to meet the needs of low-income, unemployed older workers should SCSEP's funding be eliminated. Finally, the paper describes SCSEP's value in informing workforce training strategies for older workers and concludes with a discussion of the implications of SCSEP funding cuts.

---

*“The Older Americans Act clearly affirms our Nation's sense of responsibility toward the well-being of all of our older citizens. But even more, the results of this act will help us to expand our opportunities for enriching the lives of all of our citizens in this country, now and in the years to come...Under this program every State and every community can now move toward a coordinated program of services and opportunities for our older citizens. We revere them; we extend them our affection; we respect them.”—President Lyndon B. Johnson, July 14, 1965<sup>4</sup>*

---

## The Evolution of SCSEP and Current Funding Cuts

SCSEP was established when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965.<sup>5</sup> The OAA as originally enacted supported a range of home and community-based services for older Americans, including funding for Meals on Wheels, legal assistance, elder abuse prevention, and other consumer protection services. Aiming to ensure the well-being and economic self-sufficiency of older Americans, Congress amended the OAA through the Older Americans Comprehensive Services Amendments of 1973.<sup>6</sup> Title IX of that law authorized SCSEP to provide community service employment for unemployed low-income people age 55 and older.

As amended in 1973, SCSEP aimed to

- foster and promote part-time work opportunities in community service activities for unemployed low-income people age 55 and older and who have poor employment prospects,
- foster individual economic self-sufficiency, and
- increase the number of older people who may enjoy the benefits of unsubsidized employment in both the public and private sectors.

Amendments to Title V of the OAA in 2000<sup>7</sup> and 2006 provided administrative and programmatic guidance to increase accountability and performance requirements of SCSEP while also emphasizing the dual goals of (1) providing subsidized, part-time community service jobs to low-income older persons who have poor employment prospects and (2) increasing the number of older people who enter unsubsidized employment.<sup>8</sup> The training that participants receive during their community service prepares them for unsubsidized employment opportunities.

The 2006 OAA increased program accountability by requiring that SCSEP national grants be recompeted every four years. State grantees that fail to meet the core performance goals set by ETA for three consecutive years must also be recompeted. This programmatic oversight ensures that SCSEP continues to serve eligible participants by placing them in community service jobs at the highest of federal, state, or local minimum wage, transitioning them into unsubsidized jobs, ensuring job retention, and tracking their earnings for up to one year after placement.



*Employed Senior Community Service Employment Program participant.*

The ETA budget for FY 2018 proposes drastic cuts to both WIOA and SCSEP compared with FY 2017 funding levels. WIOA's proposed funding for FY 2018 is 2.05 billion, or a 62 percent cut from 2017. Following the Great Recession, SCSEP's funding peaked in FY 2010 at \$825 million and has been cut by 50 percent over the past seven years. In FY 2017, SCSEP received \$400 million, or a \$34 million (8.5 percent) cut from FY 2016 funding levels. According to a recent evaluation, the PY 2011 funding of approximately \$450 million is insufficient to cover even 1 percent of eligible participants (Kogan et al. 2013). For FY 2018, the ETA budget eliminates all funding for SCSEP, claiming that "the goal of supporting the self-sufficiency and employment of older workers can continue to be addressed through the core WIOA programs" (DOL 2017).

## SCSEP Serves Vulnerable Older Americans

SCSEP's goal is to increase employment, foster self-sufficiency, and improve quality of life. SCSEP aims to achieve self-sufficiency for all participants through unsubsidized employment. In cases where it becomes clear through reassessments that a participant will be unable to attain unsubsidized employment, self-sufficiency is achieved through transitioning clients to other services or programs.<sup>9</sup> In addition to improving employment outcomes and maximizing self-sufficiency, another goal of SCSEP is to increase the overall quality of life among low-income older individuals with difficulty meeting their financial needs.<sup>13</sup>

To achieve these goals, SCSEP has the following eligibility requirements. Participants must be interested in unsubsidized employment and in need of education or training to make them job ready, in addition to being age 55 and older, having a household income below 125 percent of the federal poverty level, and being unemployed. If there are more eligible applicants than available funds, programs give preference to individuals meeting the priority-of-service criteria, minorities, and the most economically disadvantaged (Kogan et al. 2013). To serve as many individuals as each SCSEP annual program budget allows, staff must recruit participants.

Although the eligibility criteria for SCSEP did not change, the amendments to Title V of the OAA in 2000 and 2006, gave enrollment priority to certain disadvantaged groups (including veterans and qualified spouses); priority then went to individuals who are over age 65; who have a disability, low literacy skills, or limited English proficiency; who reside in a rural area; who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; who have low employment prospects; or who have failed to find employment after using services through WIOA and the AJC system.<sup>11</sup>

Table 1 shows SCSEP participant characteristics for PY 2015. All of the characteristics in table 1 except "female" are defined as most in need (US DOL/ETA 2010). SCSEP most-in-need participants faced an average of 2.89 barriers (US DOL/ETA 2015). More than half (53 percent) of SCSEP participants were homeless or at risk of homelessness, and one-third (32 percent) were age 65 or older. Nine in 10 participants faced low employment prospects—they were unlikely to obtain employment without the help of SCSEP or another program because of the barriers they face. Over one-quarter (28 percent) were rural residents, and nearly one-fifth (19 percent) faced persistent unemployment rates, meaning they lived in a county or city with an unemployment rate more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two of the past three years.

TABLE 1

**Senior Community Service Employment Program Participants Characteristics in Project Year 2015**

	Percentage served	Number served
Female	65%	42,259
Age 65 or older	32%	20,738
Has a disability	20%	13,108
Has limited English proficiency or low literacy skills	10%	6,222
Resides in a rural area	28%	17,959
Has low employment prospects <sup>a</sup>	91%	59,175
Failed to find employment after using WIA Title I	24%	15,377
Homeless or at risk for homelessness	53%	34,733
Veteran (or eligible spouse of veteran)	13%	8,430
Has severely limited employment prospects in areas of persistent unemployment <sup>b</sup>	19%	12,589

Source: US DOL/ETA. "SCSEP Final Nationwide Quarterly Progress Report for Program Year 2015," ETA 5140 (Washington, DC: US Department of Labor, 2015) [https://www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html\\_docs/Docs/Nationwide\\_QPR\\_Final\\_PY\\_2015.pdf](https://www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html_docs/Docs/Nationwide_QPR_Final_PY_2015.pdf).

Notes: N = 65,170. WIA = Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

<sup>a</sup>"Low employment prospects" means the individual will likely not obtain employment without the assistance of the Senior Community Service Employment Program or another workforce development program because they face significant barriers to employment, such as lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, or English-language proficiency; lacking a high school diploma or GED; having a disability; being homeless; or residing in socially and economically isolated rural or urban areas where employment opportunities are limited.

<sup>b</sup>Persistent unemployment means that the annual average unemployment rate for a county or city is more than 20 percent higher than the national average for two out of the past three years.

In PY 2015, 51 percent of all SCSEP participants were white, 38 percent were African American, and 12 percent were Hispanic (US DOL/ETA 2015). Twenty-nine percent of participants had some college education, and 13 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. On the other hand, 39 percent had a high school degree or equivalent while 18 percent had an 11th grade education or lower (US DOL/ETA 2015).

Under SCSEP, program participants are placed in community service assignments to help prepare them to transition to unsubsidized employment. Community service jobs are part time, temporary, paid positions that permit someone to obtain work experience or job skills and training. Beyond community service assignments, SCSEP participants may receive additional skills training and supportive services as necessary. Skills training may be provided before or during the community service job and, according to SCSEP staff interviewed, nearly every SCSEP participant could benefit from computer skills training and many could benefit from life coaching or financial management skills (Mikelson and Butrica, forthcoming).

SCSEP is tailored to assist older workers who may have more difficulty in finding new jobs when they become unemployed than younger workers. Even if older individuals are willing and able to work, obtaining and retaining a job also depends on employers' willingness to hire and retain them (Mikelson et al. 2017). A recent study found that some employers have stereotypes of older workers that create additional barriers to employment, such as that they perform poorly, resist change, learn more slowly, or are less able to learn than younger workers (Posthuma and Campion 2009). That same study found little support for the claim that job performance declines with age.

## SCSEP Benefits Outweigh Costs

Within the first year, the financial benefits to individual participants outweigh the costs of the program. In addition to these financial benefits, SCSEP participants also gain work experience and training. Finally, while in the SCSEP program, participants provide services to public and nonprofit agencies.

SCSEP participants earn more in their first year after exiting the program than the per person cost of the program. That is, the wages SCSEP participants receive in the first year after exiting the program exceed the amount of money spent helping them obtain and retain a job. In PY 2015, the overall funding for SCSEP was \$434,371,000, and 65,170 low-income older unemployed workers were served (US DOL/ETA 2015); that ratio produced a per person average cost of \$6,665. That said, 75 percent of SCSEP funding goes directly to the participants in the form of wages and benefits, producing net training costs of \$1,666 per person. However, in PY 2015, of those not employed at the time of participation, 51.3 percent<sup>12</sup> of participants were employed in the first quarter after exit (US DOL/ETA 2015). Therefore, the total cost for every job obtained is \$12,993, but the net training cost per job is \$3,248. SCSEP participant wages in the second and third quarters after exit were \$7,933<sup>13</sup> on average are estimated to be \$15,866 annually (US DOL/ETA 2015). This represents a net gain of \$2,873 per SCSEP participant per job obtained relative to total costs.<sup>14</sup> Those figures, do not account for all the other benefits accrued from participants in community service jobs or the benefits to the communities receiving those services.

The combination of work experience and training provided by SCSEP increases the human capital of older workers. Older workers may benefit more from job training than younger workers because older workers face more challenges in the labor market, including age discrimination and outdated job skills (Cummins, Harootyan, and Kunkel 2015). Further, older workers are less likely to regain their jobs once they are lost: in 2016, 39 percent of unemployed workers age 55 and older were long-term unemployed (meaning they were looking for work for 27 weeks or longer) compared with 27 percent of unemployed workers ages 54 and younger.<sup>15</sup> Evidence suggests that education and job training throughout a person's life course are becoming increasingly important if older workers are to succeed in the global economy (Belloni et al. 2015; Belloni and Villosio 2015; Cummins, Taylor, and Kunkel 2015).

The US economy also benefits when more workers enter or reenter the labor force. When people work longer, they produce additional goods and services and generate additional payroll and income tax revenue that could reduce the deficits for Social Security and the overall federal government. Butrica, Smith, and Steuerle (2007) estimate that delaying retirement one year would reduce the Social Security deficit in 2045 by 2 percent.

Community service agencies that host SCSEP participants also receive substantial benefits. SCSEP participants provided more than 34.8 million paid hours to more than 15,000 local public and nonprofit agencies, including American Job Centers, libraries, schools, and senior centers (US DOL/ETA 2015, 2016). The monetary value of community service provided through SCSEP is estimated to be greater than \$840 million,<sup>16</sup> or more than twice the \$400 million SCSEP appropriations in PY 2017.



*Senior Community Service Employment Program participant and project director.*

## Workforce Services for Older Workers Are Needed Now More Than Ever

Demographic shifts in the population mean that the demand for SCSEP services will likely increase. Retraining older workers and giving them the support services they need to enter or reenter the labor force will provide substantial benefits to them and to the US economy.

### **Living Longer, Working Longer**

People are living much longer than before and life expectancy is expected to continue increasing. Between 1975 and 2015, life expectancy at birth increased from 72.6 to 78.8 years for the US population.<sup>17</sup> Sixty-five-year-olds in 2015 have an additional life expectancy of 19.4 years (84.4), while 75-year-olds in 2015 can expect to live another 12.3 years (87.3). Despite working longer into old age, longer life spans mean future generations will still have more years of retirement on average than almost all generations living in the past.

Baby boomers, or people born between 1946 and 1964, are between ages 53 and 71 in 2017. But even as large numbers of this generation retire, older workers are propping up the labor force participation rate.<sup>18</sup> By 2024, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates that workers age 55 and older will make up 25 percent of the US civilian labor force compared with 64 percent for adults ages 25 to 54 and 11 percent for youth ages 16 to 24.<sup>19</sup> In 2024, the BLS projects there will be 40.6 million workers age

55 and older (a 76 percent increase since 2004), that the percentage of workers ages 25 to 55 will increase less than 3 percent, and that the percentage of youth workers will decline 17 percent.<sup>20</sup> Older workers are becoming an increasingly important part of the labor force, and workers age 65 and older are more than twice as likely to work part time, blurring the lines between work and retirement (Baer 2015).

## Some Struggling to Make Ends Meet

Older workers generally have lower unemployment rates and are better paid than younger workers (BLS 2017a, 2017b). Still, over 1 million workers age 55 and older are poor and struggle to make ends meet (BLS 2017c). Because of this financial insecurity, unemployed older workers or workers seeking to enter the labor force after some years of retirement would benefit from the training and upskilling provided through SCSEP. Additional years of working allow people to increase their annual consumption at older ages by more than half simply by delaying retirement for five years (Butrica, Smith, and Steuerle 2007). Delaying retirement by even one more year increases annual consumption 9 percent overall and 16 percent for the lowest-wage workers (Butrica, Smith, and Steuerle 2007).

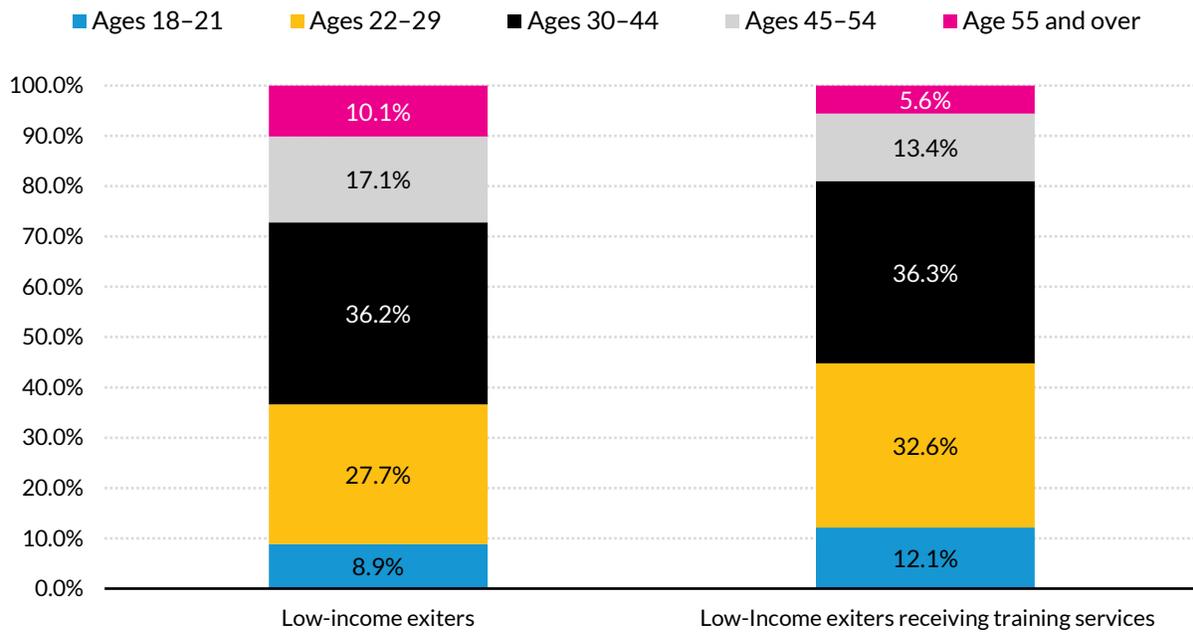
## WIA/WIOA Less Likely to Serve Older Workers

SCSEP funding cuts since PY 2010 may have produced a small increase in the percentage of older workers using WIA. In PY 2011, 12.7 percent of all WIA exiters were age 55 and older; by PY 2015, however, this percentage had increased slightly to 15.8 (Social Policy Research Associates 2016a). Over the same period, however, the share of WIA exiters age 55 and older that received training has remained flat, ranging from 7.0 percent in PY 2014 to 7.6 percent in PY 2013 (Social Policy Research Associates 2017, 2016b, 2015). This may be because SCSEP participants often have additional barriers to employment that require significantly more personalized assistance than is available under WIA/WIOA. For example, 15 percent of SCSEP participants had a disability, 20 percent of had low literacy skills, and 10 percent had limited English proficiency (Kogan et al. 2013).

Given stereotypes and age discrimination in the labor market, low-income older workers benefit from receiving supportive services and training or retraining before they are placed in unsubsidized employment. Under both WIOA and SCSEP, occupational training is an option for all participants. WIA reporting data demonstrate that older workers receive less robust services and job training than any other age cohort. As figure 1 shows, low-income<sup>21</sup> older participants in WIA receive training at a much lower rate than participants under age 55. Approximately 10 percent of WIA adult exiters in PY 2015 were age 55 and older, a significantly lower share than any other age group except adults ages 18 to 21; many in the latter age group, however, receive WIOA youth services. The share of older WIA exiters who received training services (5.6 percent) was substantially lower than for all other age groups. Moreover, the share of WIA participants age 55 and older receiving training is proportionately lower, evidenced by the fact that 5.6 percent is much lower than 10.1 percent. If training services provided through WIA were equally provided for all age groups, then the percentages in each stacked bar should be equal, as they are for WIA exiters ages 30 to 44. WIA exiters ages 45 to 54 are also proportionately

less likely to receive training services. On the other hand, younger WIA exiters ages 18 to 21 and ages 22 to 29 are substantially more likely to receive WIA training services.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Adult Low-Income WIA Exiters and WIA Exiters Receiving Training, by Age, Program Year 2015**



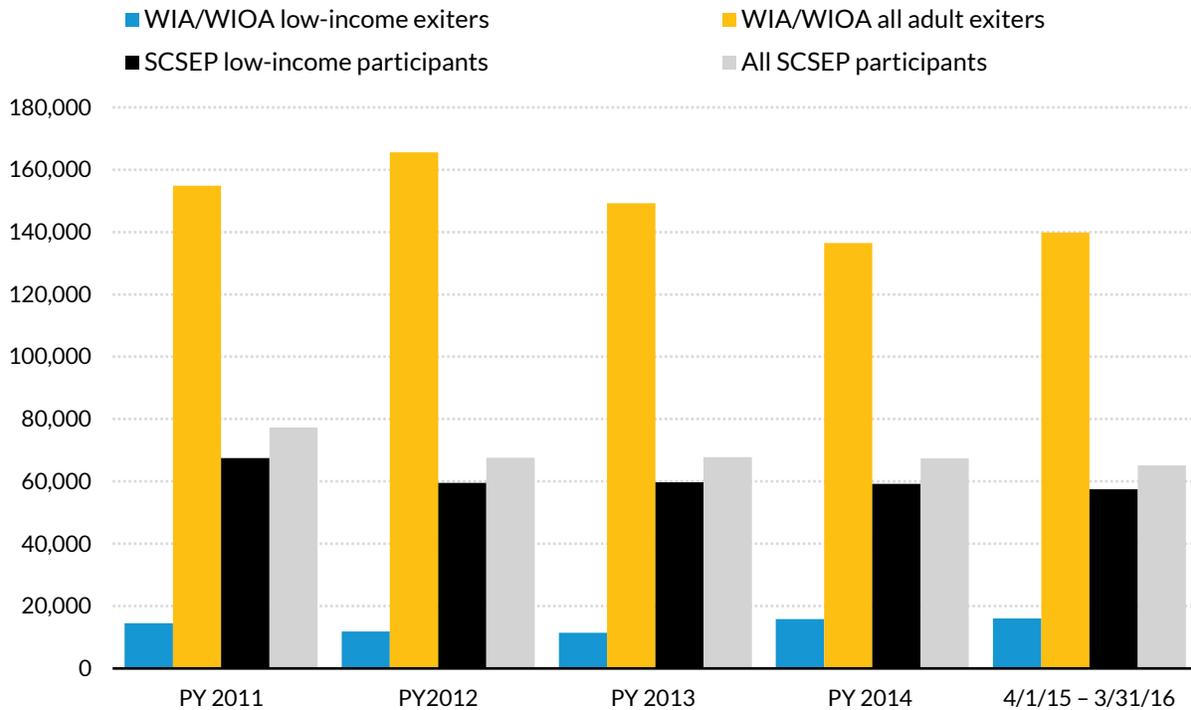
**Source:** Social Policy Research Associates, *PY 2015 Low-Income Adult Data Book* (Washington, DC: US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Performance and Technology, 2017).

**Note:** WIA = Workforce Investment Act of 1998. These data are for adult WIA exiters only.

At its current funding level, SCSEP is estimated to serve less than 1 percent of eligible individuals (Kogan et al. 2013). By targeting older low-income unemployed adults, however, SCSEP serves more low-income older unemployed individuals than WIA and WIOA. As figure 2 shows, in PY 2011 through PY 2015, SCSEP served between about 65,200 and 77,300 low-income adults age 55 and older. SCSEP defines “low income” as a family income at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$20,300 for a family of two (US DOL/ETA 2017). Of those adults served, approximately 88 percent in each program year had a family income at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$16,240 for a family of two. Over the same period, WIA served between about 11,400 and 16,100 low-income adults age 55 and older.<sup>22</sup> WIOA defines “low income” with an upper bound ranging from \$16,240 (100 percent of the federal poverty level) to \$19,012 for a family of two, depending on location. That is, WIA served about 19 to 28 percent as many workers age 55 and older with incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level as SCSEP served.<sup>23</sup> Figure 2 also shows that between PY 2011 and PY 2015, the overall number of WIA participants age 55 and older ranged from about 136,500 participants in PY 2014 to about 165,600 in PY 2012. SCSEP is serving nearly half (46 percent) as many older WIA participants overall and four times as many low-income WIA participants.

FIGURE 2

**Total Number of Adult WIA/WIOA Exitters, Low-Income Adult WIA/WIOA Exitters, SCSEP Participants, and SCSEP Low-Income Participants Age 55 and Older, PY 2011–15**



**Sources:** Table II-2 of Social Policy Research Associates, *PY 2015 Low-Income Adult Data Book* (Washington, DC: US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Performance and Technology, 2017); table II-2 of Social Policy Research Associates, *PY 2015 WIASRD Adult Data Book* (Washington, DC: US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Performance and Technology, 2017); and SCSEP Final Nationwide Quarterly Progress Reports for program years 2011 through 2015.

**Notes:** PY = program year; WIA = Workforce Investment Act of 1998; WIOA = Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. For adult WIOA exitters in PY 2015, data are for April 1, 2015, through March 31, 2016, and are the latest data available.

## SCSEP Informs Workforce Training Strategies for Older Workers

In addition to providing work experience, training, and supportive services to low-income older unemployed individuals, SCSEP is uniquely positioned to inform workforce training strategies for older workers in today’s economy (Mikelson and Butrica forthcoming). The strategies that SCSEP staff use to address barriers to employment, develop a job training plan for older workers, engage with employers willing to hire low-income older workers, and provide additional job training may prove useful to staff in American Job Centers or in other workforce development programs serving low-income older workers.

Low-income older unemployed individuals often face unique circumstances related to their stage in life. Low-income older individuals entering or reentering employment may also face unique

circumstances—older women entering the labor force for the first time, reentry after retirement, the loss of a spouse, or a lack of basic computer and internet skills. SCSEP staff are particularly knowledgeable about strategies to assist low-income older workers with these circumstances (Mikelson and Butrica, forthcoming).

SCSEP staff have well-developed networks of low-cost, subsidized, and sometimes free training providers that can successfully serve older workers. With a scarcity of occupational training dollars, SCSEP staff have often developed relationships with free training providers (such as food banks or tax preparation companies) or low-cost, subsidized options. In all cases, SCSEP staff have identified training opportunities that are proven to be successful for older workers.

In interviews, SCSEP staff described their engagement with local employers willing to hire older workers. Given age discrimination and stereotypes, knowing the employers that hire SCSEP participants is particularly valuable. SCSEP staff work diligently to maintain good relationships with employers, and these relationships change and evolve with local labor market conditions.

SCSEP staff are knowledgeable about the unique barriers to employment facing older unemployed workers (e.g., vision, hearing, health, physical limitations, age discrimination). Although many barriers to employment are not age-specific (e.g., difficulty with transportation), the barriers facing low-income older workers and their solutions may be unique. For example, SCSEP programs have developed relationships with vision and hearing aid providers.

The strategies that SCSEP staff have developed to address each of these and many other issues that are unique to low-income older individuals could provide valuable information to other job training programs serving a significant number of these individuals.

## Implications of SCSEP Funding Cuts

SCSEP has helped many low-income older unemployed workers find jobs. If Congress moves forward with eliminating or drastically cutting the SCSEP program, then those low-income unemployed older individuals may not be served. With a 62 percent funding cut in WIOA and SCSEP zeroed out for FY 2018, it is unlikely that low-income unemployed older workers will continue to receive services, training, and employment assistance at a similar level. In addition, the community-based nonprofit agencies that are strengthened by partnership with the SCSEP will lose that support. Further, the knowledge gained from SCSEP programs, participants, and staff that can be used to inform other workforce training programs about how to best meet the needs of low-income older unemployed workers will also be lost.

# Notes

1. SCSEP is also known as the Community Service Employment for Older Americans program.
2. Older Americans Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-73, 79 Stat. 218 (1965).
3. WIOA replaced WIA, and, although WIA's overall structure remains in place, WIOA allows states and localities more flexibility, increases cross-agency collaboration, and emphasizes upskilling (Eyster & Nightingale 2017).
4. Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks at the Signing of the Older Americans Act," July 14, 1965, accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27079>.
5. Older Americans Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-73, 79 Stat. 218 (1965).
6. Older Americans Comprehensive Services Amendments of 1973, Pub. L. No. 93-29, 87 Stat. 30 (1973).
7. Older American Community Service Employment Act, Pub. L. No. 106-501, 114 Stat. 2267 (2000).
8. Senior Community Service Employment Program; Final Rule, 75 Fed. Reg. 53786 (September 1, 2010).
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. "Senior Community Service Employment Program," US Department of Labor, accessed October 2, 2017, <https://www.doleta.gov/seniors>.
12. The 51.3 percent employment rate exceeds the employment goal set by US DOL/ETA of 45 percent.
13. The average earnings of \$7,933 exceeds the average earnings goal set by US DOL/ETA of \$7,500.
14. This analysis assumes that these previously unemployed individuals in need of education or training would not have obtained employment without the SCSEP program.
15. Authors tabulations of data in "Table 31 Unemployed persons by age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, marital status, and duration of unemployment," US Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed October 20, 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat31.pdf>.
16. Independent Sector estimates the value of a volunteer hour to be \$24.14 in 2016. With 34.8 million hours of community service in PY 2015, the monetary value of community service is estimated to be 34.8 × \$24.14, or slightly greater than \$840 million. See "The Value of Volunteer Time," Independent Sector, May 31, 2016, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://www.independentsector.org/resource/the-value-of-volunteer-time>.
17. See Table 15, "Life expectancy at birth, at age 65, and at age 75, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin: United States, selected years 1900–2015," from National Center for Health Statistics (2016).
18. Joseph Coombs, "Older Workers Prop Up Labor Market, Even as Waves of Baby Boomers Retire," *Society for Human Resource Management*, March 15, 2017. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/older-workers-labor-market-baby-boomers-retire.aspx>.
19. "Table 3.1 Civilian labor force, by age, gender, race, and ethnicity, 1994, 2004, 2014, and projected 2024," US Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed October 19, 2017, [https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_table\\_301.htm](https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_301.htm).
20. Ibid.
21. WIA/WIOA defines the term "low-income individual" using several criteria, including an individual in a family with total family income for a six-month period that does not exceed the higher of either the federal poverty level or 70 percent of the Lower Living Standard Income Level. In 2017, the income limit for a family of two would range from \$16,240 (100 percent of the federal poverty line) to \$19,012 the 70 percent Lower Living Standard Income Level for Boston-Brockton-Nashua, the highest limit in the US.
22. The analyses in this paper rely on performance data for WIA available through PY 2015. WIOA data for program years beyond 2015 are not yet available.
23. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 2017; Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL), 82 Fed. Reg. 23595 (May 23, 2017).

## References

- Baer, David. 2015. "Older Workers: More Likely to Work Part Time 2015." Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute.
- Belloni, Michele, Agar Brugiavini, Elena Meschi, and Giacomo Pasini. 2015. "Does Training Help Retaining Older Workers into Employment? Evidence from the SHARE Survey." In *Aging in Europe—Supporting Policies for an Inclusive Society*, edited by Axel Börsch-Supan, Thorsten Kneip, Howard Litwin, Michal Myck, and Guglielmo Weber (257–65). Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Belloni, Michele, and Claudia Villosio. 2015. "Training and Wages of Older Workers in Europe." *European Journal of Ageing* 12:7–16.
- BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics). 2017a. "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey." Washington, DC: US Department of Labor.
- . 2017b. "Weekly and Hourly Earnings Data from the Current Population Survey." Washington, DC: US Department of Labor.
- . 2017c. "A Profile of the Working Poor, 2015." Report 1068. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Butrica, Barbara A., Karen E. Smith, and C. Eugene Steuerle. 2007. "Working for a Good Retirement." In *Government Spending on the Elderly*, edited by Dimitri B. Papadimitriou, 141–74. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cummins, Phyllis, Bob Harootyan, and Suzanne Kunkel. 2015. "Workforce Development in the United States: Facilitating Opportunities to Work at Older Ages." *Public Policy & Aging Report* 25 (4): 150–54.
- Cummins, Phyllis, Philip Taylor, and Suzanne Kunkel. 2015. "Working Longer, Learning Longer." *Public Policy & Aging Report* 25 (4): 120–24.
- DOL (US Department of Labor). 2016. "FY2017 – Department of Labor: Budget in Brief." Washington, DC: US Department of Labor.
- . 2017. "FY2018–Department of Labor: Budget in Brief." Washington, DC: US Department of Labor.
- Eyster, Lauren, and Demetra Smith Nightingale. 2017. "Workforce Development and Low-Income Adults and Youth: The Future under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014." Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Kogan, Deborah, Hannah Betesh, Marian Negoita, Jeffrey Salzman, Laura Paulen, Haydee Cuza, Liz Potamites, Jillian Berk, Carrie Wolfson, and Patty Cloud. 2013. *Evaluation of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)*. Occasional Paper 2013-03. Washington, DC: US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration.
- Kosanovich, Karen, and Eleni Theodossiou Sherman. 2015. "Trends in Long-term Unemployment." Spotlight on Statistics. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Mikelson, Kelly S., and Barbara A. Butrica. Forthcoming. *Understanding Investments in Low-Income Incumbent Older Workers*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Mikelson, Kelly S., Daniel Kuehn, and Ananda Martin-Caughey. 2017. *Occupational Projections for Low-Income Older Workers: Assessing the Skill Gap for Workers Age 50 and Older*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- National Center for Health Statistics. 2016. *Health, United States, 2015: With Special Feature on Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Posthuma, Richard A. and Michael A. Campion. 2009. "Age Stereotypes in the Workplace: Common Stereotypes, Moderators, and Future Research Directions." *Journal of Management* 35 (1): 158–88.
- Social Policy Research Associates. 2015. "PY 2013 WIASRD Data Book." Washington, DC: US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Performance and Technology.
- . 2016a. "PY 2015 WIOA Trends Over Time." Washington, DC: US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Performance and Technology.

- . 2016b. “PY 2014 WIASRD Data Book.” Washington, DC: US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Performance and Technology.
- . 2017. “PY 2015 WIASRD Data Book.” Washington, DC: US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Performance and Technology.
- US DOL/ETA. 2015. “[SCSEP Final Nationwide Quarterly Progress Report for Program Year 2015](#).” ETA 5140. Washington, DC: US Department of Labor.
- . 2016. “[Nationwide Host Agency Survey Report – PY 2015](#).” Washington, DC: US Department of Labor.

## About the Author



**Kelly S. Mikelson** is a senior research associate in the Income and Benefits Policy Center at the Urban Institute. With over two decades of experience conducting quantitative and qualitative research, her work focuses on low-income workers, workforce development issues, and evaluating education and occupational training programs. Mikelson earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in public policy from Harvard University and her doctorate from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

## Acknowledgments

This brief was funded by AARP Foundation. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission.

The views expressed are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute’s funding principles is available at [www.urban.org/support](http://www.urban.org/support).

The author would like to thank Pamela Loprest for her comments.



2100 M Street NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
[www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)

### ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The nonprofit Urban Institute is dedicated to elevating the debate on social and economic policy. For nearly five decades, Urban scholars have conducted research and offered evidence-based solutions that improve lives and strengthen communities across a rapidly urbanizing world. Their objective research helps expand opportunities for all, reduce hardship among the most vulnerable, and strengthen the effectiveness of the public sector.

Copyright © October 2017. Urban Institute. Permission is granted for reproduction of this file, with attribution to the Urban Institute.