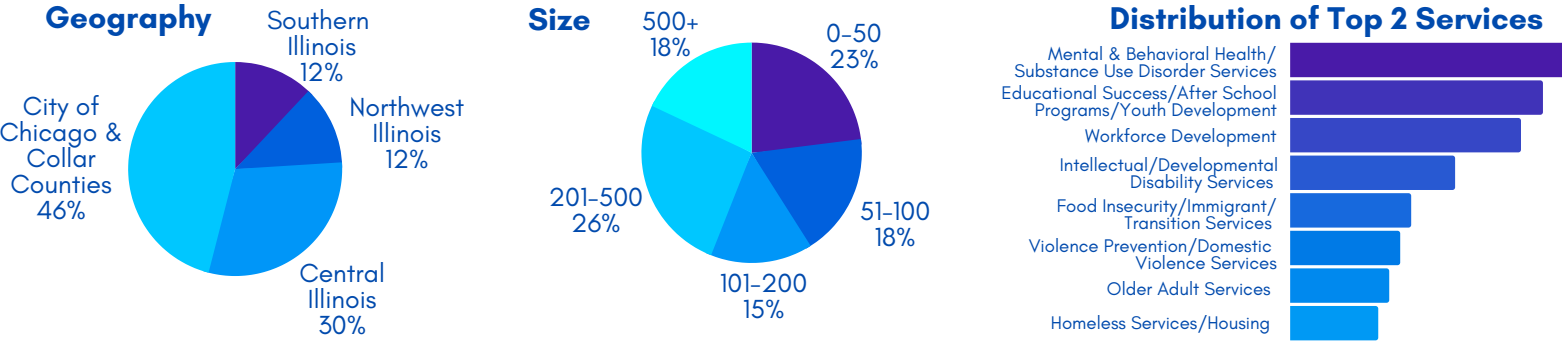


More Essential than Ever: 2022 Workforce Research Supplement

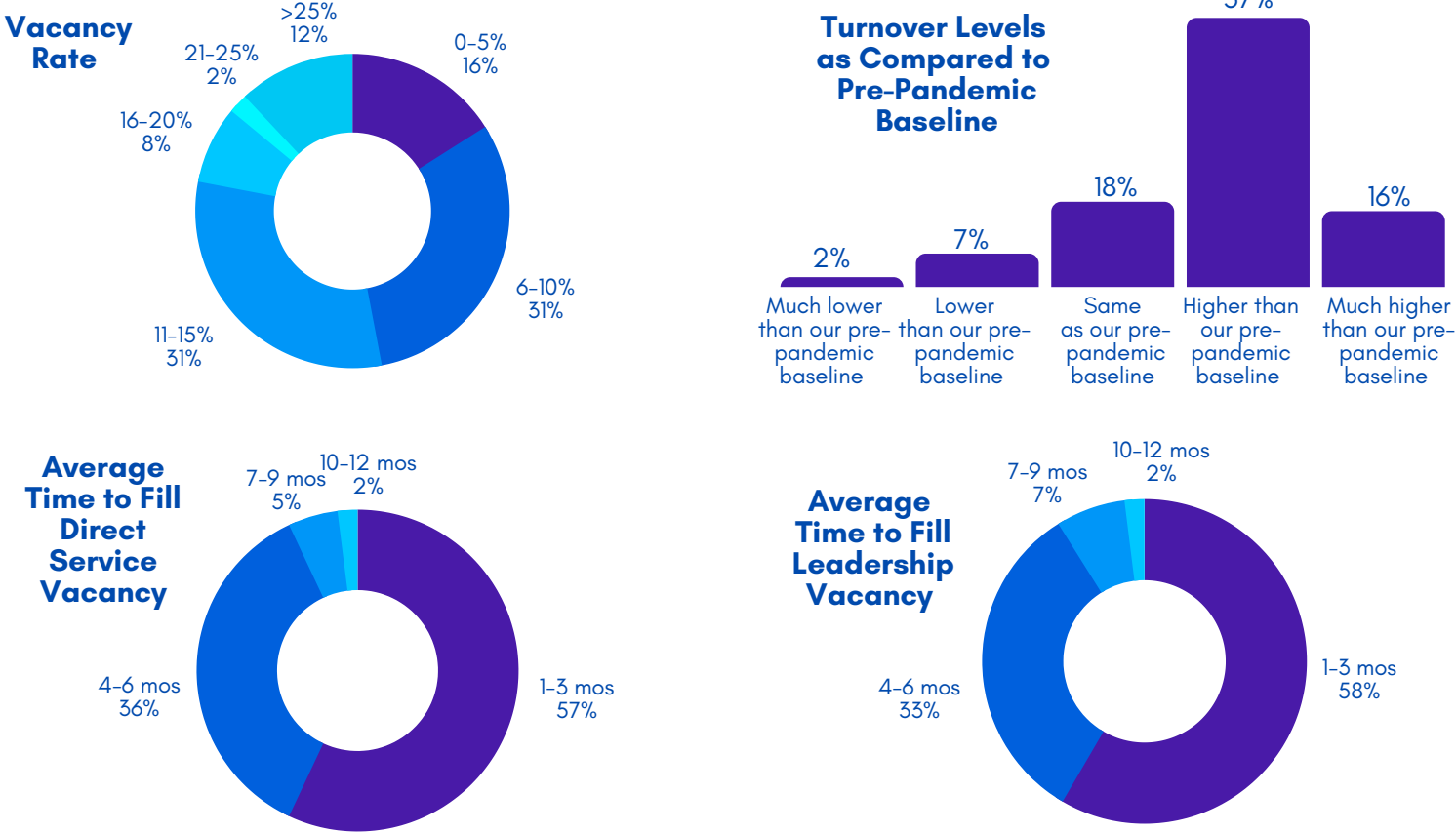
Key Findings, Survey Data, & Recommendations

From April through June 2022, Illinois Partners for Human Service conducted a series of focus groups with 61 organizations throughout the state of Illinois to discuss current workforce issues. The following is a summary of key findings, survey data, and recommendations.

Organizational Participant Data



Vacancy and Turnover Survey Data



The Bottom Line

With more than half of the sector experiencing greater than 11% vacancies and 73% of organizations experiencing higher or much higher turnover than before the Covid-19 pandemic, workforce issues are still pressing for health and human services.

The State of Illinois and funders must future proof the sector.



FOCUS GROUP KEY FINDINGS: WORKFORCE

The Most Pressing Current Workforce Issues

- **Competitive Wages**, including salary and benefits that are attractive to multiple generations of employees and direct service wages that surpass entry-level fast-food and retail compensation;
- **Applicant Pool Changes**, requiring employers to adjust hiring methods, engagement, and training practices to accommodate new hires with varying levels of experience and capacity;
- **Inadequate Reimbursement Rates**, that fail to account for both the increasing cost of doing business and rising cost-of-living expenses;
- **Shift to Remote or Hybrid Service Models**, including the need to address operational shifts impacting relationships, supervision, and service delivery for a hybrid workforce.

Strategies or Opportunities to Engage and Retain Frontline Workers

Many organizations are intentionally focusing on the workforce well-being and ways to show appreciation to their staff and seek their input, as well as recognize and reward excellence.

These include:

- Incentives and benefits, including gratitude bonuses and resiliency payments;
- Interactive formats to elicit direct feedback, such as surveys, town halls, stay interviews, check-ins, and listening sessions;
- Educational programs and behavioral health supports;
- Staff happy hours and all-staff retreats.

How COVID-19 Pandemic has Fundamentally Changed Operations

The shift to a hybrid work model was cited as the most significant operational adjustment.

The ramifications of this change have been mixed and dependent on area of service.

Challenges related to new hybrid models include:

- how to facilitate staff engagement, training, and supervision;
- how to address high levels of employee stress and encourage retention;
- how to fairly manage a staff with both in-person and remote employees.

Hybrid models offer staff flexibility and, in some cases, increased access for clients. However, it is not an option for all services or all roles within an organization. Leaders are still navigating the cultural swings that result from the intermittent presence or complete absence of an in-person workforce and communal workplace.

"We have five generations of employees in our workforce, so having the appropriate mix of benefits to meet differing needs is difficult. Older staff members want certain benefits that younger staff don't want to pay for. It is quite a challenge."

Joel Johnson, TASC

"When people with convictions have served their time, they should be able to gain employment. If that were possible, hundreds—if not thousands—of people could be employed by our workforce."

Michael Glanz, The ARC of the Quad Cities Area

"While the expansion of funding in human services means more services available to help meet the needs in our communities, it also means more people are needed to provide those services in a time when the workforce is already thin."

Trish Fox, CYFS

"We could double our capacity, and we still wouldn't be able to meet the demand for services."

Joe Bernard, Spero Family Services

"We've been telling legislators for years that we need to build capacity in human services. With the expected influx of demand from upcoming changes in pretrial services and the 988 service going live, on top of pre-existing waiting lists, we do not have enough workforce to meet that demand."

Sherrie Crabb, Arrowleaf

"We are experiencing a lack of qualified or even marginally experienced applicants. We get so much pressure from our state agency to provide services, increase capacity, and overload our staff caseloads. It is a perfect storm for catastrophe."

Dianne Schultz, The Baby Fold



FOCUS GROUP KEY FINDINGS: PHILANTHROPY*



Ways the Philanthropic Community Can Help Stabilize and Strengthen Workforce Investment

Unrestricted grants are much appreciated and highly effective, allowing for direct workforce support in ways that suit an individual organization's needs and unique circumstances. It was noted that during the pandemic, the philanthropic community provided flexible grants and more opportunities for organizations to use funding at their discretion.

Moving forward funders should provide:

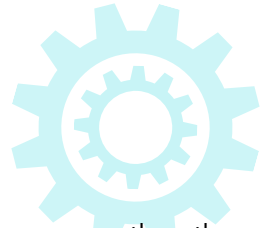
- Grants for general operations, advocacy, technology, and capacity building;
- More unrestricted and discretionary funding streams;
- Assistance with the costs for credentialing and professional development;
- Support for development and communications professionals to enable organizations to share successes and attract new funders;
- Reduced application and reporting requirements to allow organizations to dedicate more time and resources to their missions.



Funding Recommendations for More Effective Workforce Support

Commit to trust-based philanthropy models that:

- Include long-term, flexible funding to build capacity for the future;
- Promote the value of health and human services as occupations;
- Frame the sector as foundational to communities.



*Historically, Central and Southern Illinois have had less access to private philanthropic funding sources than the Chicagoland area. For more information on this disparity, please see Illinois Partners for Human Service's report, "[Government is the Foundation of Well-Being](#)".

Additional information can be found in the 2022 Research Supplement [Methodology](#), the [Chicago Focus Group Summary](#), and original statewide workforce report, "[More Essential Than Ever: Rebuilding the Illinois Health and Human Services Workforce in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)."

"What we really need from philanthropy is recognition that we have a leap to make to be prepared for the future and be able to bounce back from unexpected shocks. I'm calling it future-proofing our sector. To best partner with us, they need to help us advance our readiness and our resilience, so that we can do the same for the populations we serve."

Evelyn Diaz, Heartland Alliance

"Compliance costs money. Not only are applications burdensome, but the expectations for implementation are also a bit unreasonable if there are not more administrative dollars to support the work."

Linda Tortolero, Mujeres Latinas en Accion

"I believe there should be an emphasis on work-life balance, mental health supports, and paid leave. Philanthropists should consider making gifts specifically for taking care of the staff. Having more unrestricted opportunities so people can have that space to reset would be great."

Shammie Brown, Greater Chicago Food Depository

"The idea of trust-based philanthropy includes the understanding that organizations know exactly what they need internally and don't need it to be prescribed. A streamlined process that can work for everybody that leverages technology and allows leaders to make the decisions needed to create the best environment for our team members en masse is really what we need."

Dara Munson, Family Focus

"Sometimes it seems like philanthropic groups want to feel good about helping a person somewhere instead of solving the systemic problem."

Gary Huelsmann, Caritas Family Solutions

"One thing that comes to mind is the complexity of reporting. Way back when, the reporting templates were shorter and the budget was simple, asking for personnel and fees. Now the budget alone can be two pages long, there are narratives, and multiple forms. Many grants are due at the same time. The reporting aspect is a lot of work on its own."

Griselda Piedra, PODER

"We have about 2000 pages of contracts from our 35 grants that we need to understand and stay on top of to generate reports at the right time for each. This becomes so complicated that we need to hire high level professionals to manage grants. We need reduced administrative burden for state and private grants."

Mark Mathews, EveryChild

