

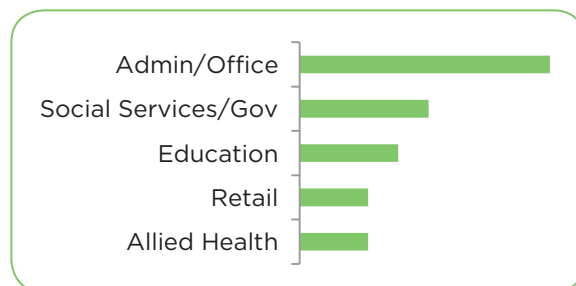
Income Growth Initiative

During February 2019, the staff of The Bridge Fund of New York City launched a survey to explore the development of a comprehensive Income Growth strategy. The survey consisted of 17 questions that covered our clients' work experience, educational attainment, general finances, work satisfaction, and interest in participating in job training or schooling. Clients who received financial assistance from the program within the past three years and reside in unsubsidized housing were identified as the ideal sample for the survey. Staff began interviewing them by phone. To expand the reach of the survey, an online version was created, delivered to clients via The Bridge Fund of New York City list-serv. By the end of March, more than 250 former clients had completed the survey, the results of which are summarized below.

- Of those surveyed, 89% thought that they did not have enough income to meet all of their expenses.
- The average monthly income per respondent was \$1,976. Well over 65% of households surveyed have just one wage earner. In households with more than one wage earner, incomes would probably be higher.
- Survey respondents indicated that an increase of more than 25% in their income would be required for them to reach financial stability.

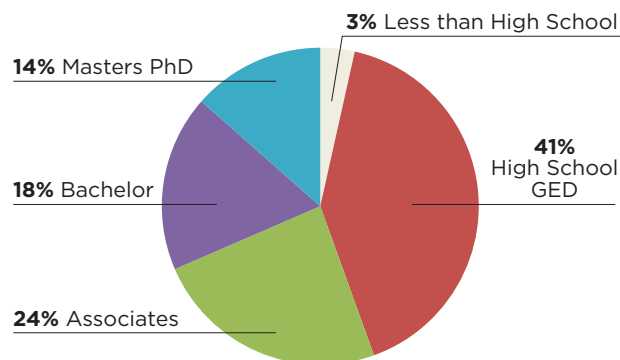
- The majority of respondents indicated that they were unhappy with their current position.
- More than 70% were actively looking for a promotion, an entirely new job, a second job, or a part-time job.
- The majority of the clients surveyed work in the following employment fields: Administration/office work is by far the largest category, followed by Social Services/Government, Education, Retail and Home Health Aide.

Top Five Employment Fields



- Less than 3% do not have a high school diploma. Most have high school or Associate degrees.

Participants Completed Education Level



- The top five training programs requested include in-depth software training, general computer literacy, higher education (GED, Bachelors or Masters), nursing and medical office training (records and billing).
- Two distinct demographic groups demonstrated the greatest need for, and interest in, receiving Income Growth services from The Bridge Fund: working mothers over 35 years of age and young Hispanic and African American adults (19–24 years old) with a very limited work history.
- All want to increase their monthly take-home pay but lack the resources, knowledge, and connections to effectively navigate today’s job market or identify free or low-cost training programs geared to their specific needs, interests and abilities.

The Bridge Fund is uniquely positioned to provide effective Income Growth services to our clients. For almost three decades, case handlers have helped many clients better manage their finances and apply for outside benefits and services to improve their financial profiles.

We know that some clients working as Home Health Aides, making only \$15 per hour, have gone on to complete Associates

degrees at CUNY and become Licensed Practical Nurses. On average, LPNs in New York City earn \$47,300 a year. High school graduates interested in Information Technology careers can be referred to Per Scholas, which offers free training programs that lead to certifications in Web Development and Systems Administration, usually within 18 weeks. Graduates reportedly earn an average \$36,000 a year to start in this field.

It is our belief that it’s not necessary to try and reinvent a program when there is already an experienced and credentialed provider of that exact service. This idea forms the central thesis of The Bridge Fund’s Income Growth Initiative. Our clients are better served through The Bridge Fund acting as a referral and networking conduit rather than attempting to provide in-house services.

This network approach begins with the community colleges in the city; they have the courses, staff, and capacity to handle our clients’ needs. Initially, we want to focus on computer literacy, as it is one of the services most commonly requested by our clients. It is a critically important skill in today’s job market. Expanding technological confidence helps with the chances of being hired and career advancement.