

Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless &
Housing Action Coalition of Rhode Island

Government Relations Committee Survey Results



Housing Action Coalition
of Rhode Island



January 2010

Acknowledgments

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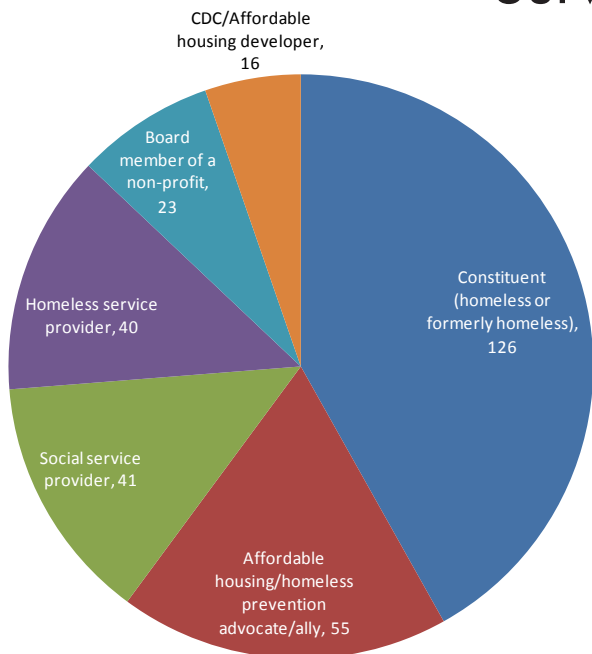
Introduction

Each year the Rhode Island General Assembly holds its legislative session during the first six months of the year. The Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless and the Housing Action Coalition of Rhode Island have combined Government Relations (GR) committees in an effort to collaborate and be more intentional in implementing our strategic advocacy and communications efforts for the General Assembly session. Specifically, we seek to form a legislative platform and influence the state’s budgeting process. Together, we identified key questions we felt needed to be posed to our constituencies in order to fully inform our public policy, advocacy, lobbying, and communications work.

Therefore, in November and December of 2009 we disseminated a government relations survey at the direction of the combined GR committees. Three hundred and one survey responses were collected using electronic and hard copy methods. The surveys were completed by persons who self-identified as belonging to one of the following groups: homeless/formerly homeless constituents (42%), affordable housing/homeless prevention advocates and allies (18%), social service providers (14%), homeless service providers (13%), Board members of non-profit organizations (8%), and Community Development Corporations/affordable housing developers (5%).

The survey attempted to elicit the top areas of concern and the strategies we should use to solve those issues. In addition, questions were posed to various constituencies (i.e. homeless constituents, case managers, organizational leaders) about the best ways to reach them and what assistance they need to become more effective and involved in our work.

Surveys Conducted



Constituent (homeless or formerly homeless)	126
Affordable housing/homeless prevention advocate	55
Social service provider	41
Homeless service provider	40
Board member of a non-profit	23
CDC/Affordable housing developer	16
Total	301

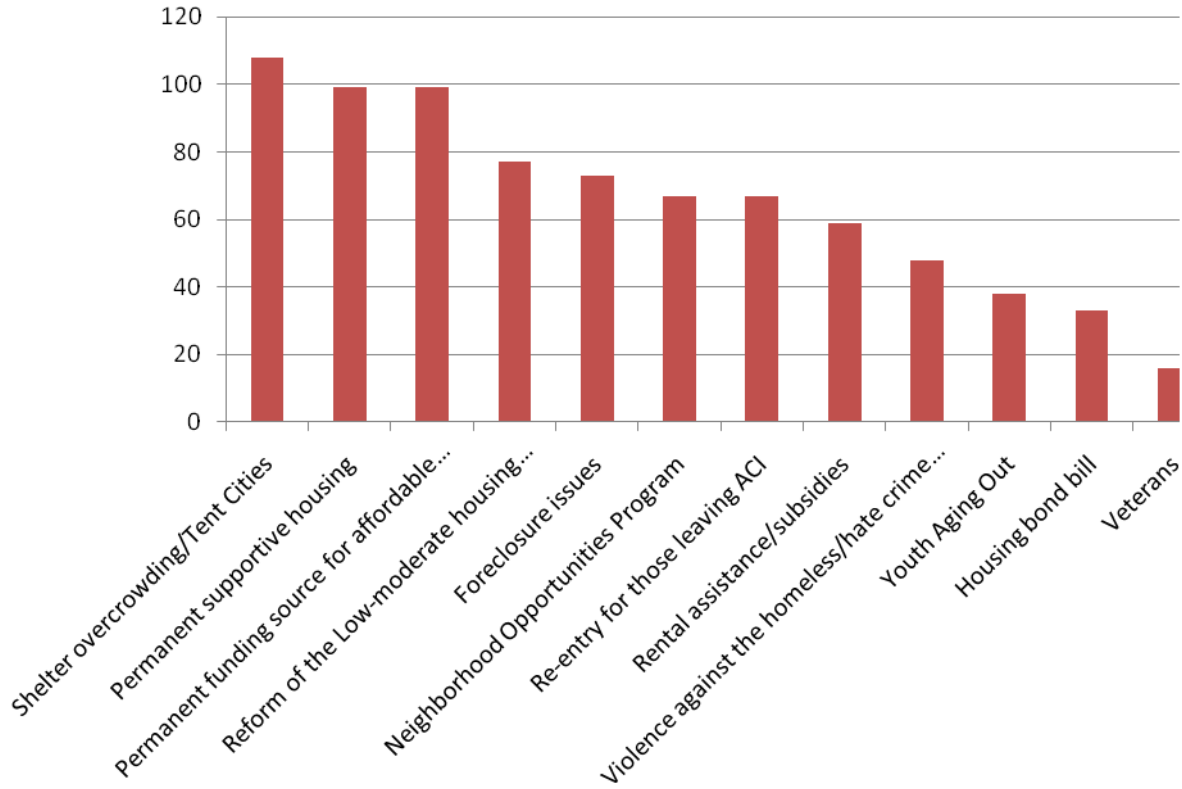
Key Findings

- 1. Top issues to work on:** Shelter overcrowding, the need for more permanent supportive housing, and a permanent funding source for affordable housing ranked as the top three issues stakeholders felt should garner our attention;
- 2. Top strategies to employ:** Public awareness, advocacy, and grassroots/constituent organizing ranked as the top three strategies, closely followed by lobbying and education/training;
- 3. Constituent skill development:** Organizational skills garnered the most responses, followed by conflict resolution, and public speaking. Creating a resume and lobbying closely followed the top three;
- 4. Constituent trainings:** How to find employment was the top response, followed by how to get into housing, and how to access a good case manager, followed very closely by finding good healthcare;
- 5. Case manager trainings:** Client assessment and treatment planning tied for the most responses, and outreach and engagement and self-care for case managers tied for the second most responses;
- 6. Constituent communication:** Homeless constituents felt that Street Sights was the most effective way to convey information to them, followed by flyers at shelters and soup kitchens, and word of mouth.

A series of open ended questions for various audiences rounded out our survey. Responses that were most prominent focused on organizing for change with specific importance placed on increasing housing options/opportunities through increased funding.

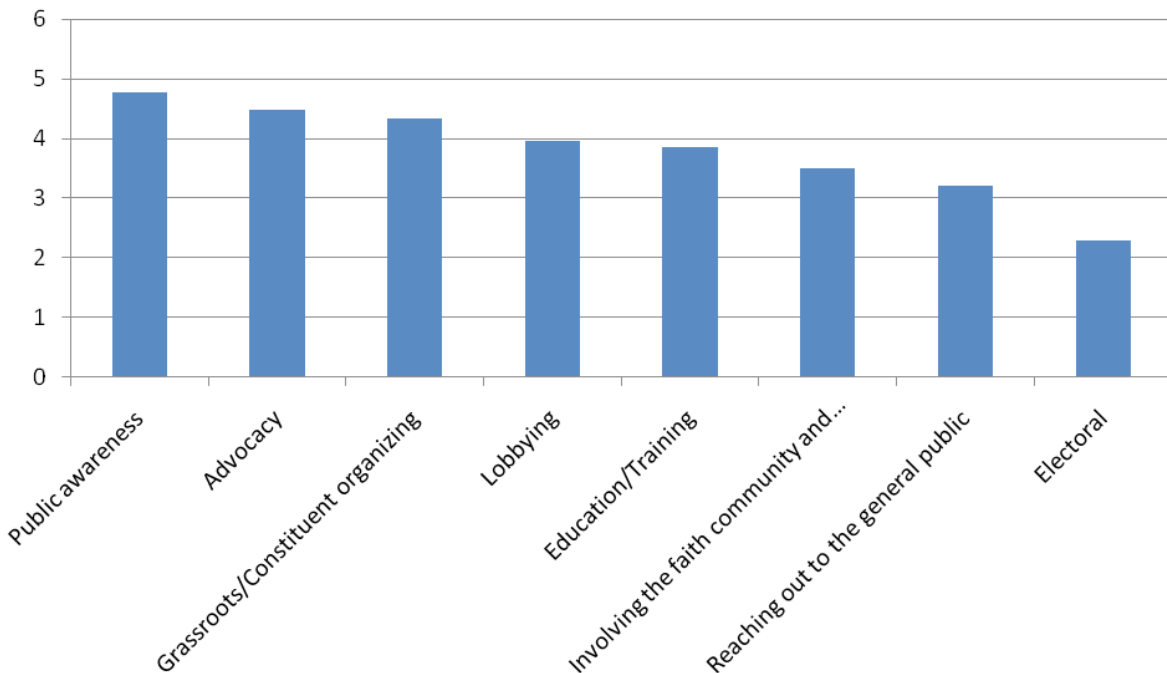
All Respondents Top Issues

Please identify the top 3 legislative/advocacy issues you believe RICH/Housing Action should focus on in the upcoming year?

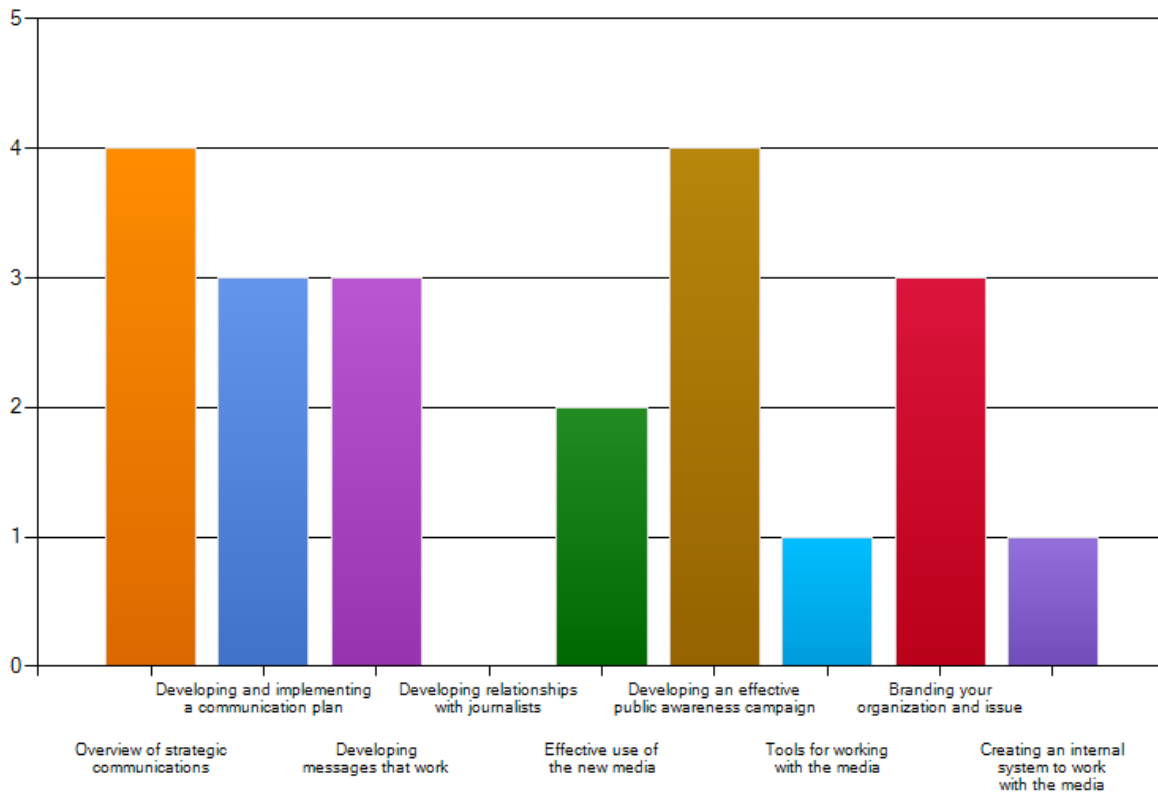


All Respondents Top Strategies

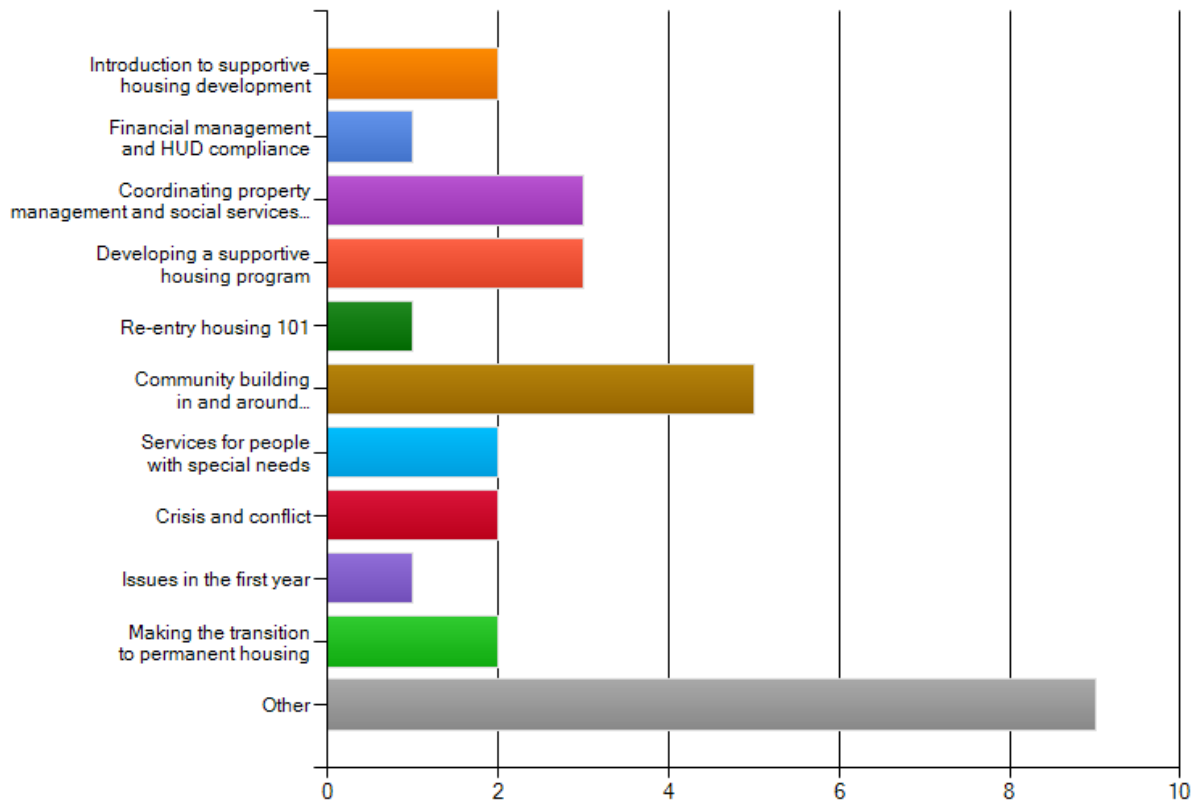
What strategies should RICH/Housing Action pursue to make progress on our goals?
Higher number signifies importance.



Which strategic communications trainings would you find most effective? Choose your top three.
Out of 7 Responses

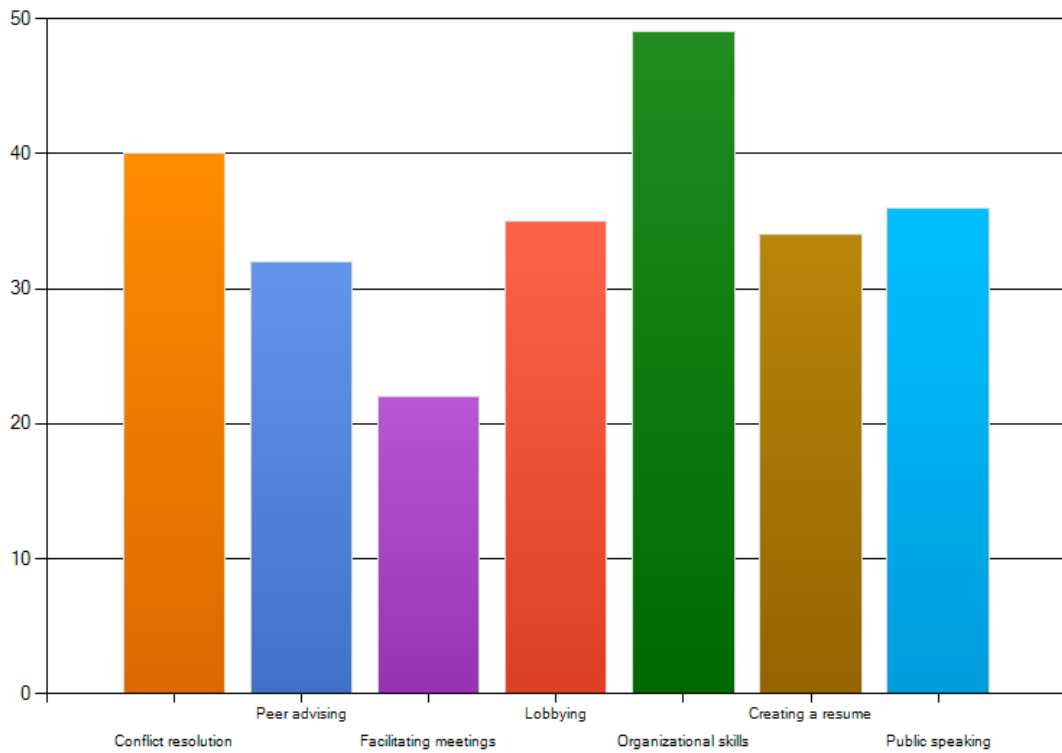


What strategies would be most effective in affordable housing development and property management? Choose your top four.
Out of 8 Responses



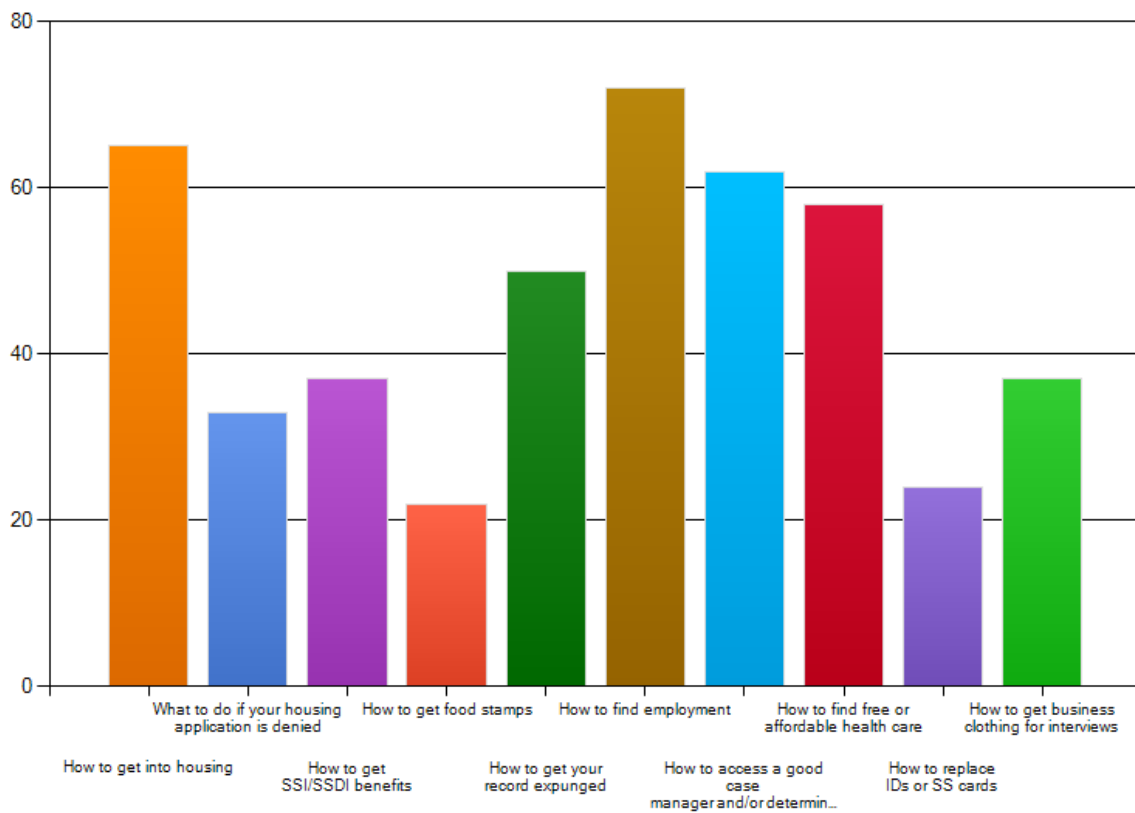
Out of 102 Constituent Responses

What kind of skills would you be interested in developing? Choose your top three.



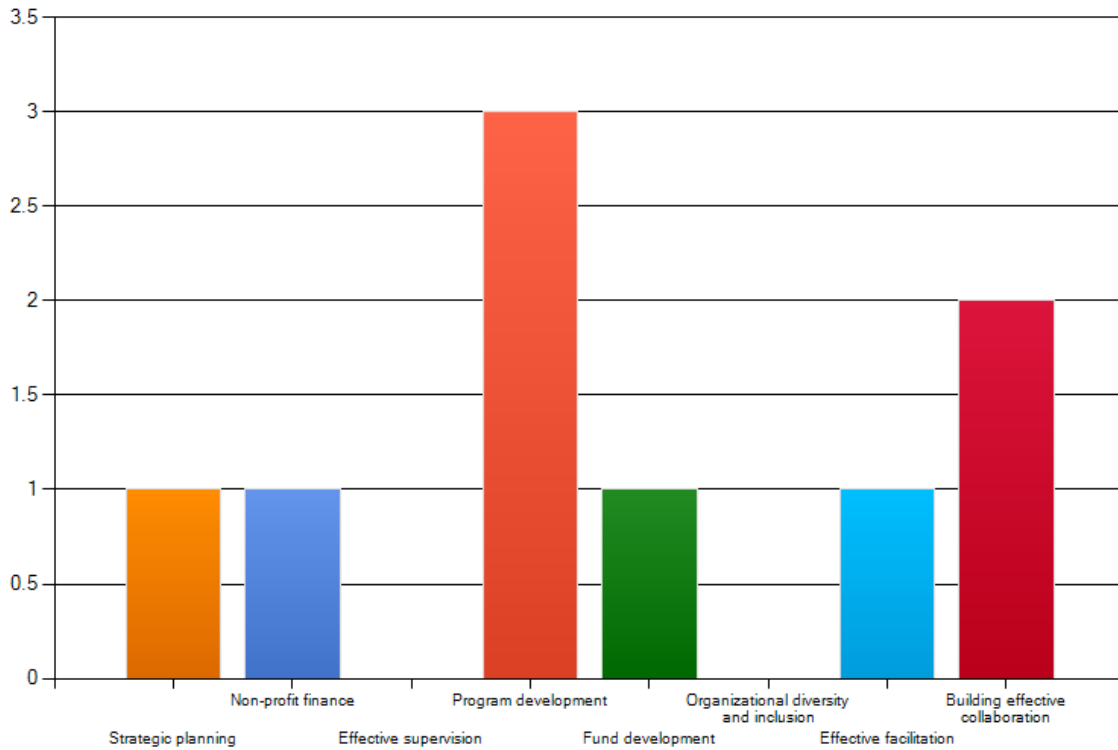
Out of 117 Constituent Responses

Which are the top four trainings that would be most useful for you?



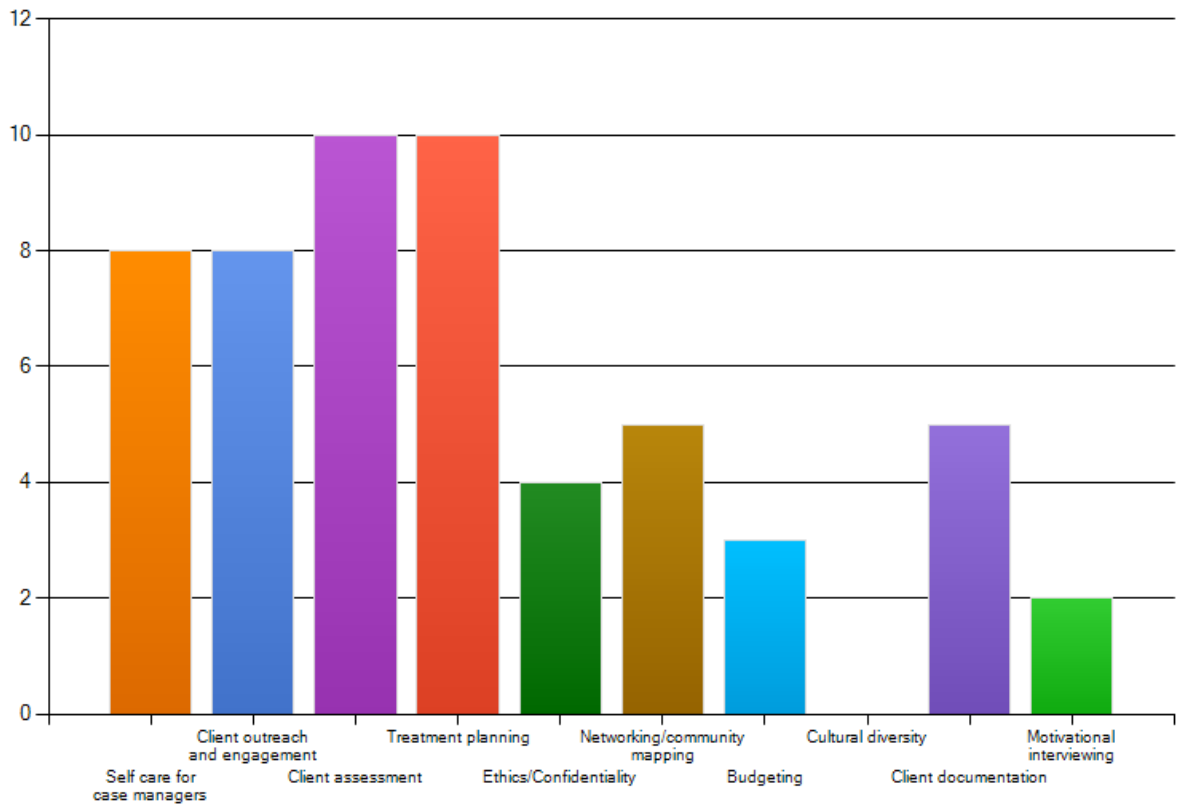
Out of 3 Responses

What kind of organizational development trainings would you find most useful? Choose your top three



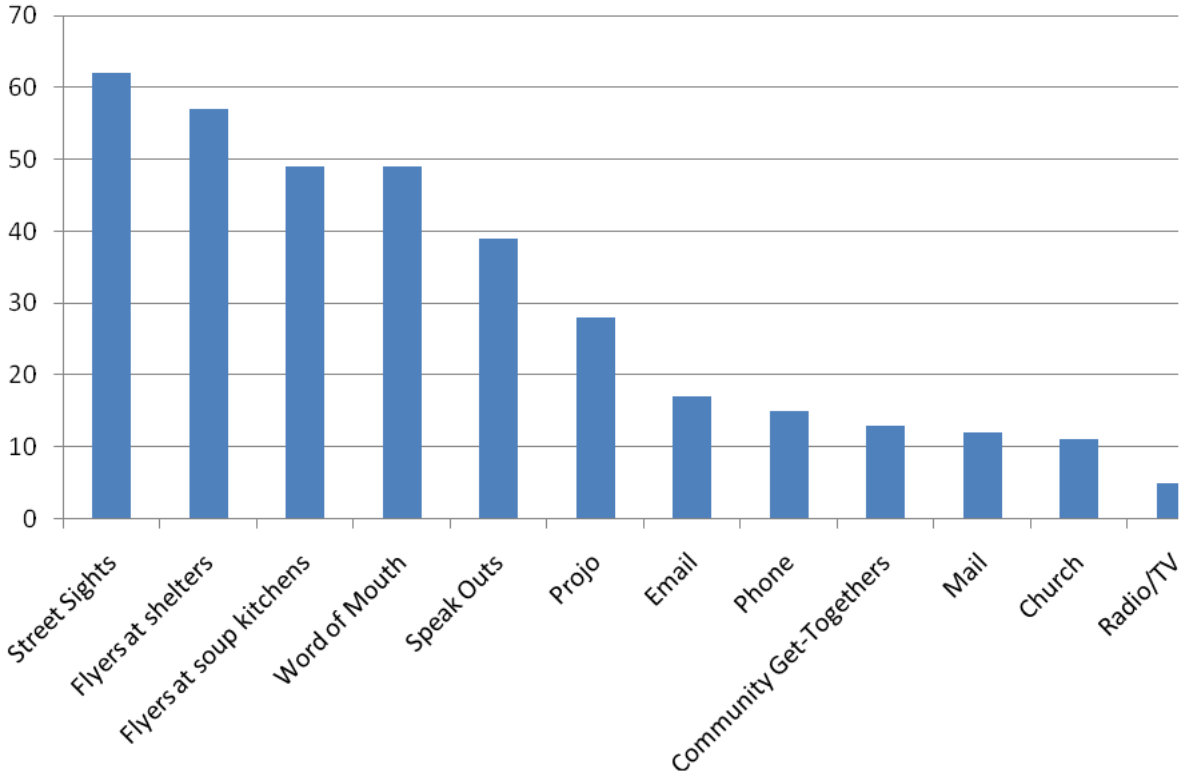
Out of 20 Case Manager Responses

Which case management trainings would you like to see RICH conduct next year? Choose three.



Constituent Survey Responses

How can we best get information out to you?



Service Provider Survey Responses

Out of 32 service provider surveys taken in person, these are the most highly ranked issues by level of importance for the open-ended questions

Most Pressing Issues:

Unemployment, Homelessness, Basic Needs: 10

Lack of affordable housing: 5

Funding: 4

Transportation: 4

Other top issues: Lack of resources, budget and staff cuts, lack of housing for those with felony records.

Want to See Changed

More affordable housing: 4

Better employment: 3

Additional funding: 3

Other top issues: Shelter system, affordable health care, rental assistance programs, transportation, perceptions

Challenges with this Issue

Funding: 8

Vested interest in current systems: 3

Lack of housing: 3

Other top issues: Lack of resources, economy, increase in the homeless population, political issues.

Opportunities for Making a Difference/Change

Informing the public/public support: 3

More government involvement: 3

More cooperation between agencies: 3

Other top issues: Less need on assistance, find more fixable buildings, lobbying and advocacy.

Key Ally Survey Responses

Out of 40 key ally surveys taken in person, these are the most highly ranked issues by level of importance for the open-ended questions

Most Pressing Issue

Lack of funding/cut funding: 18

Foreclosure: 7

Housing: 5

Collaboration: 3

Other top issues: Homelessness, healthcare, decreasing resources, lack of necessities

Want to see changed

Building permanent supportive housing: 11

More effective funding: 6

Quicker processes: 3

Stronger government leadership: 3

Other top issues: Increased NOP funding, better economy, universal healthcare, more unification

Challenges with this issue

Funding: 7

Government: 3

Apathy: 3

Poor communication with constituents: 3

Other top issues: Governor, ineffective politicians, decrease of resources, lack of staff

Opportunities for making a difference/change

Effective, strong organizing: 13

Education for all: 9

Better legislation/legislators: 9

Change in attitudes: 6

Other top issues: Funding, getting state reps more involved, advocacy, public opinion

Constituent Survey Responses

Out of 126 Constituent Surveys, these are the most highly ranked issues by level of importance for the open-ended questions

Most Pressing Issue:

Housing in general: 33

Homelessness: 30

Housing for those leaving prison: 15

Unemployment: 13

Other top issues: Finding a job, healthcare, access to food/food stamps, drugs and alcohol, permanent affordable housing, funding

Want to see changed:

Housing options: 18

More support/informational meetings: 17

Shelter system: 16

Building more awareness: 10

Building permanent supportive housing: 10

Other top issues: -Better access to affordable housing, access to health care, preserving the city (no graffiti, etc), support for all homeless-not just those who have traditional service providers, stronger government leadership

What is getting in the way of change:

Politicians: 29

Funding: 18

People's minds and attitudes: 18

Ignorance about the issues: 13

Other top issues: Greed, sticking with traditional ways, bureaucracy, the governor

What will make change possible:

Funding: 27

Increased Awareness: 26

Find ways to tell stories of individuals: 15

Banding together: 11

Who can make change possible

Everyone-united effort: 45

Politicians: 29

Non-profit groups: 10

The Homeless Community: 8