

# 2020 Community Employment

Link Associates Profile

**IOWA** | LAW

**LAW, HEALTH POLICY & DISABILITY CENTER**

**David Klein, Director of Technology**

**Tessa Heeren, Assistant Research Scientist**

**Helaina Graves**

**Amy Blessing**

University of Iowa College of Law

Iowa City, Iowa 52242

# Community Employment Evaluation Results Summary



The results of the 2020 evaluation indicate that Link’s Community Employment Program ***Exceeded Expectations*** overall for the calendar year.

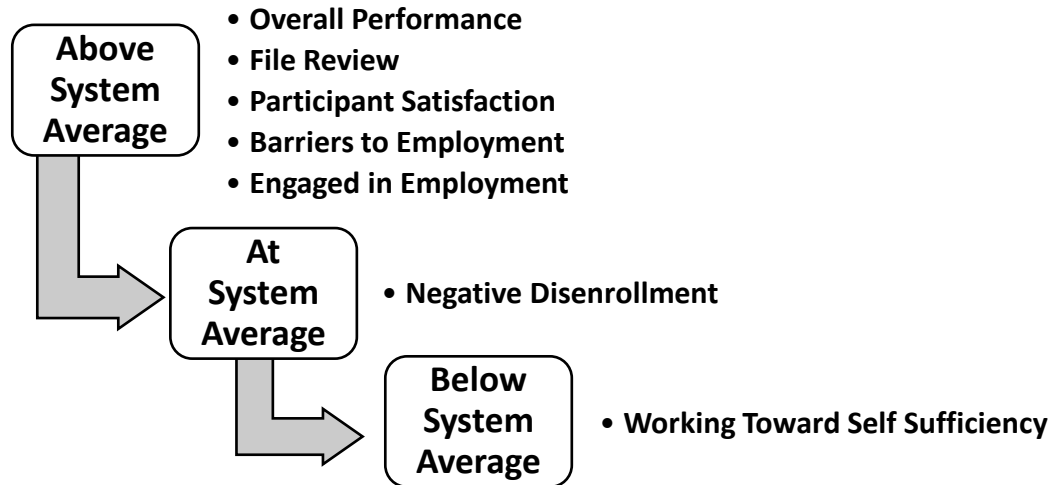
The program received an **overall performance of 83%**, which is about the same as Link’s overall performance of 83% in 2019, and **above the 2020 system average of 67%**.

# Link 2020 Performance Overview

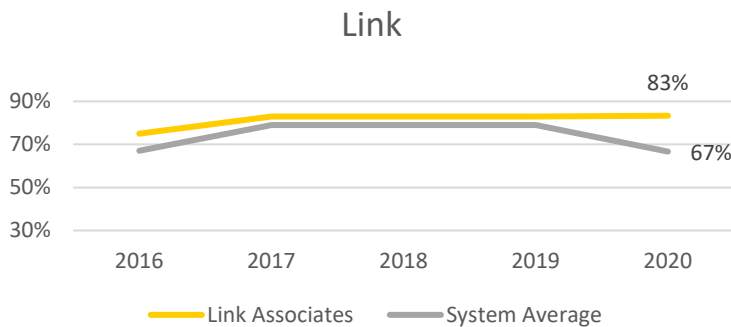
## Purpose

To inform agencies about areas of strength and opportunities to improve participant outcomes and experiences guided by evidence from the evaluation.

**Figure 1. Link Performance in Community Employment Outcomes Compared to 2020 System Average**



## Link and System Average Performance 2016-2020



### Overall Performance

Link's Overall Performance has maintained about the same level for the last five years, ending in 83% in 2020.

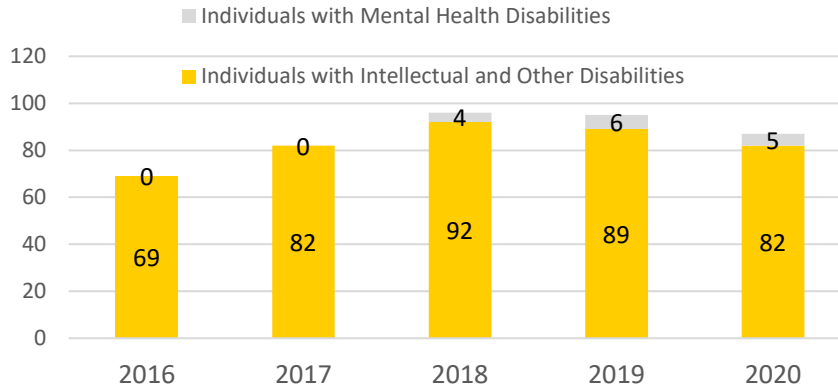
## Agency Overview – Link Associates

Years operating in Polk County	Founded in 1953
Services Provided	Supported employment services, employment skills training, case management, supported community living, RCF/ID, transportation, and adult day activities
Workforce	Over 300 employees
Service Area	Serves more than 900 individuals in the Des Moines metro area.

# Individuals Served

In 2020, Link served an average of 86 participants in Community Employment programming, 82 of which were individuals with intellectual disabilities. Program enrollment increased until 2018 and has remained stable over the last 3 years.

**Link Participants by Disability Type 2016-2020**

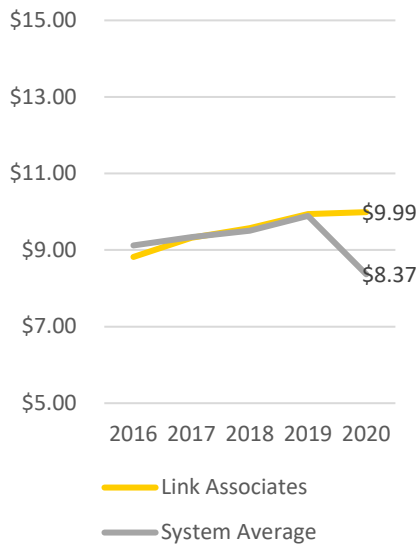


## Participant Earnings

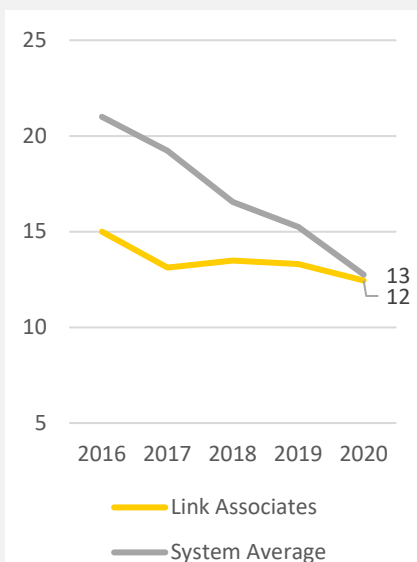
The following figures show trends in participant earnings across three metrics: hourly wages, weekly hours worked, and weekly income.

**Link participants earned a higher hourly wage compared to the 2020 system average**, reporting an hourly rate \$1.62 higher than the system average. Though participants' weekly hours (12) were just below system average (13), their **weekly earnings exceeded the weekly average by \$17**.

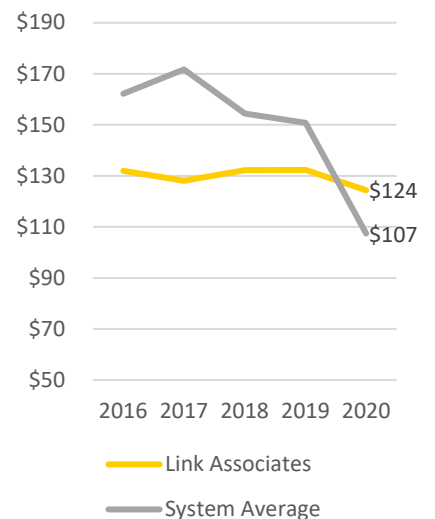
**Hourly Wages 2016-2020**



**Weekly Hours 2016-2020**

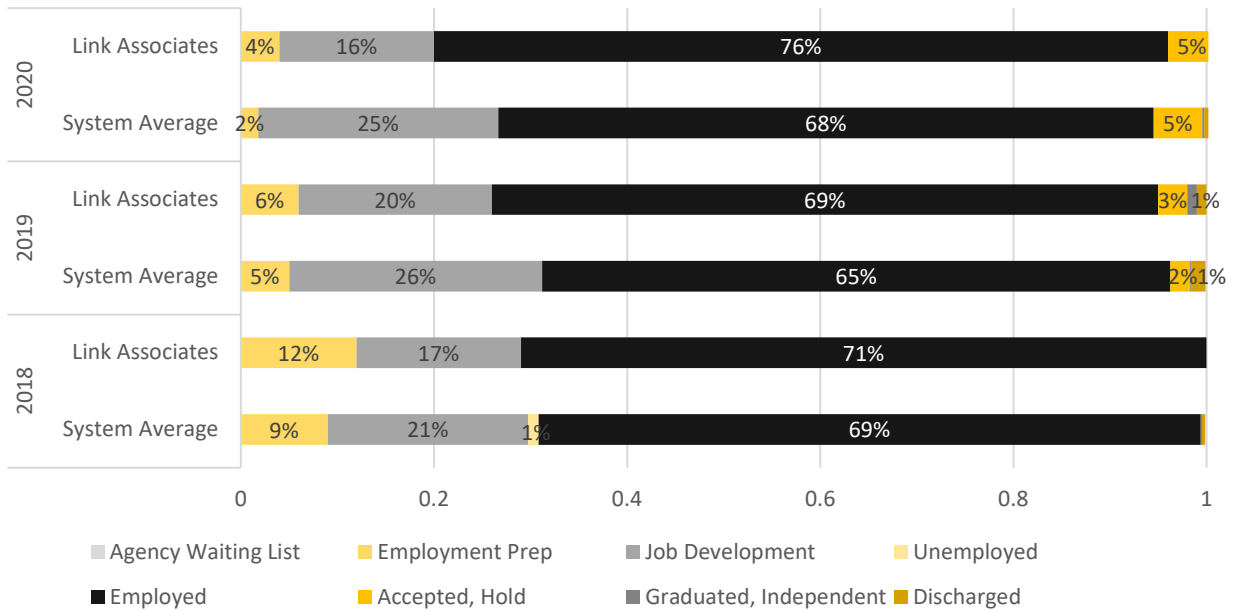


**Weekly Income 2016-2020**



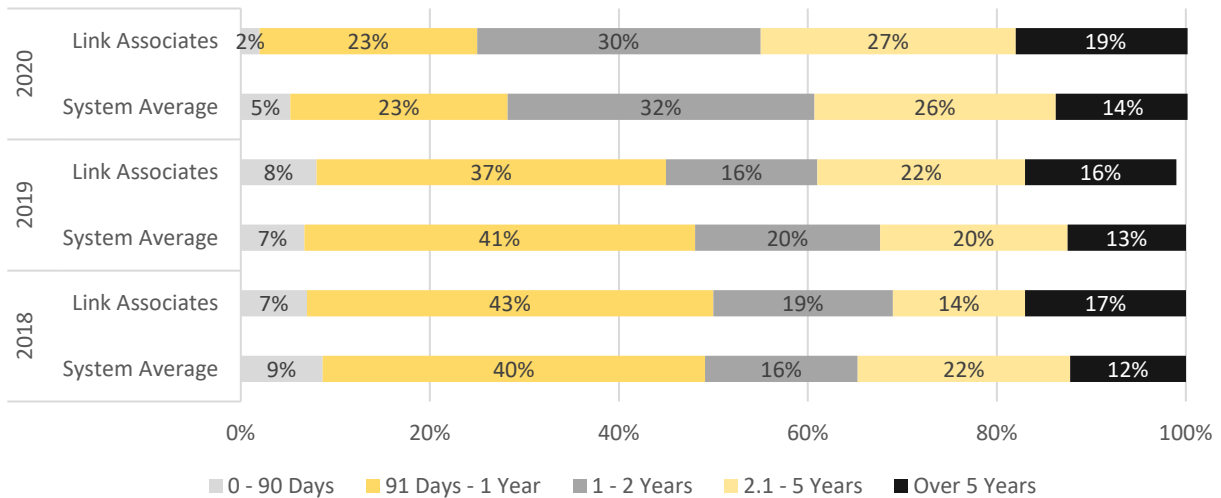
### Employment Status

More than **three-quarters (76%)** of Link’s participants were employed in 2020, above the system average. An additional 20% were in pre-employment, and **5% were accepted in the program but on Hold.**

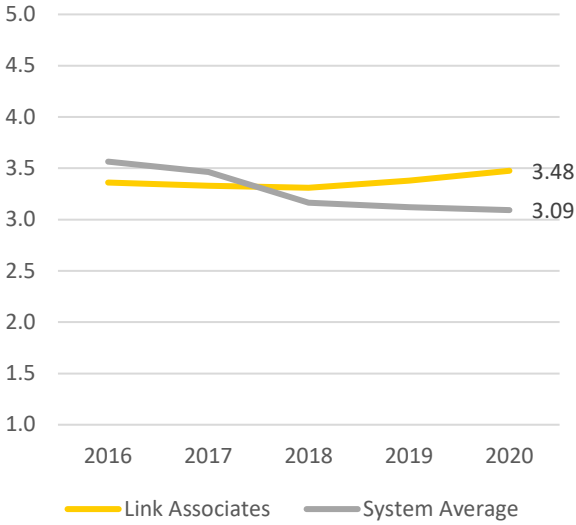


### Community Employment Tenure

People can and do change jobs. An important goal is to maintain employment over time. Employment tenure was measured by length of duration in employment. **Almost half of Link’s employed participants (46%) had worked at least two years** continuously, which exceeds the system average. Another third (30%) had been employed at least one year but less than two.



# Community Employment Outcomes

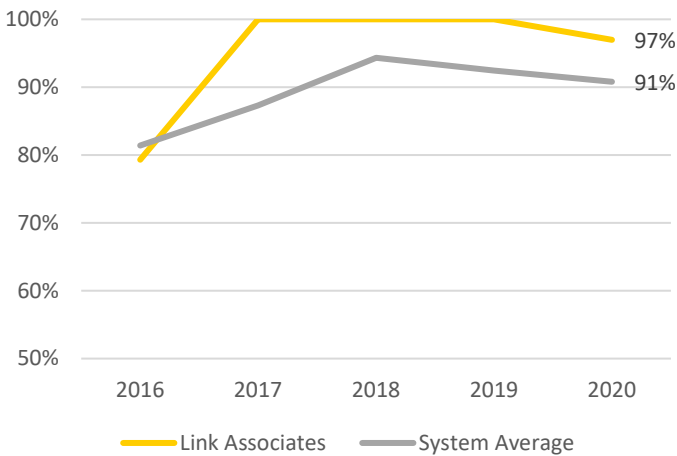
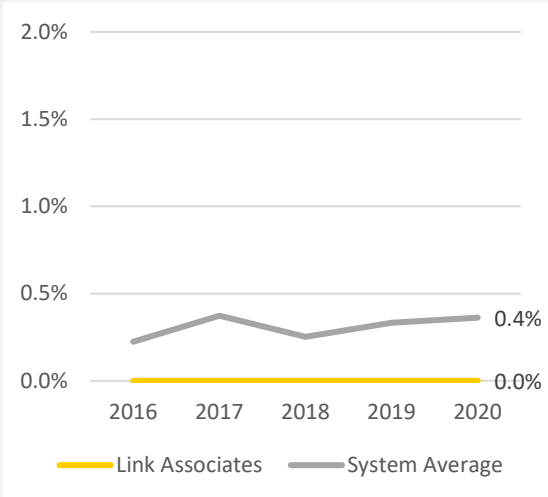


## *Barriers to Employment Meets Expectations*

**Link's average score for LOCUS assessment was 3.48**, above the system average and slightly more than their 2019 score (3.38) and above the system average.

## *Negative Disenrollments Exceeds Expectations*

**Link has not reported any negative disenrollments in the last five years.**

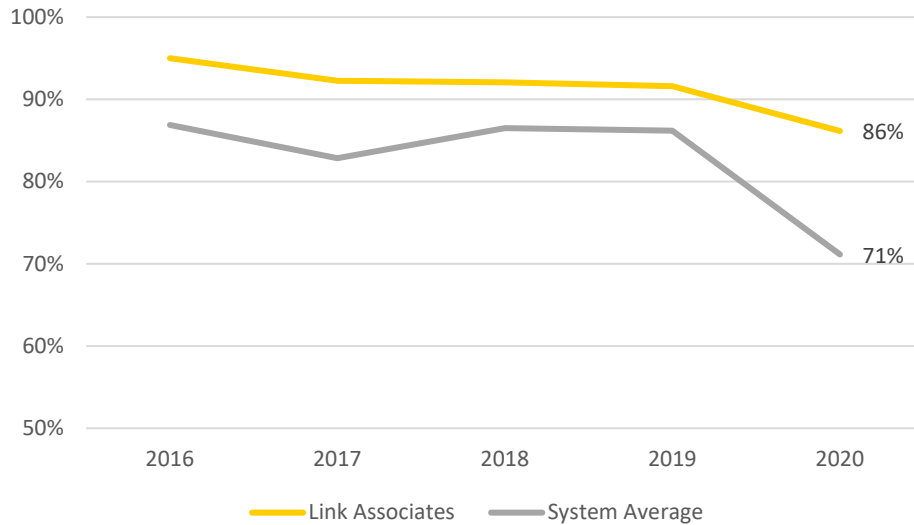


## *File Review Exceeds Expectations*

For 2020, Link scored 97% in its file review, down from the last three years but **still exceeding expectations and above the system average.**

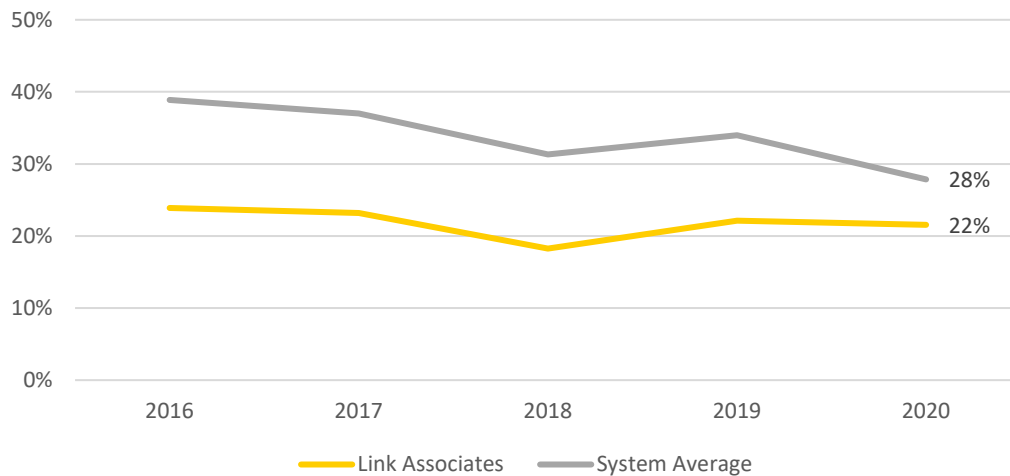
*Engaged in Employment  
Meets Expectations*

Nearly nine in ten (86%) of Link’s participants worked at least five hours per week with minimum wage or higher, meeting expectations and above the system average. However, this was down from 2019 (92%).



*Working Toward Self-Sufficiency  
Needs Improvement*

Over one in five of Link’s participants (22%) worked at least 20 hours per week at or above minimum wage, about the same as 2019 and **scoring a Needs Improvement rating**. This is also below the network average.



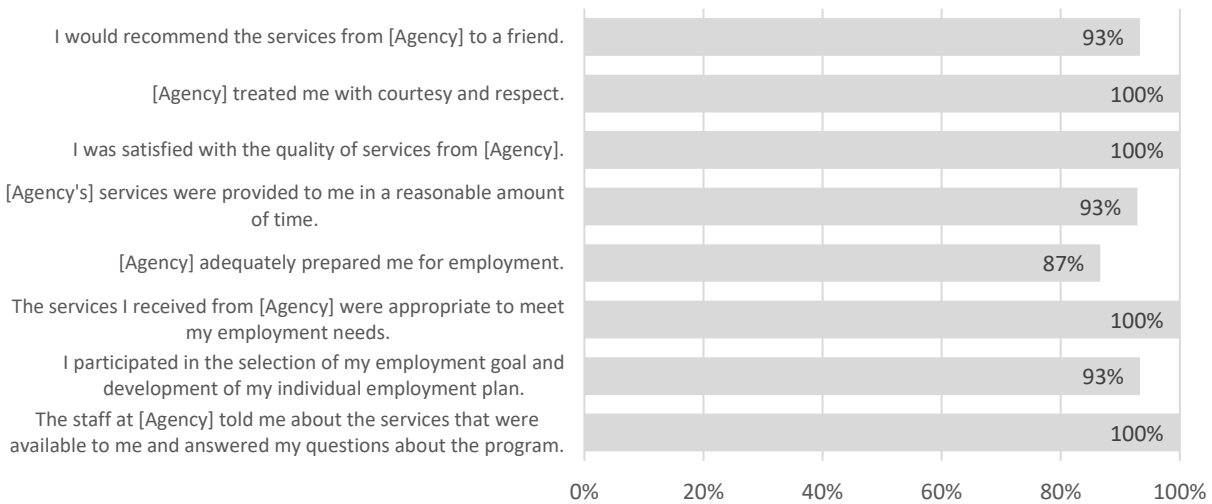
# Participant Satisfaction

Link program participants reported being very satisfied this year with the community employment services they received and the staff who worked with them. The evaluators interviewed 15 program participants (19%) of the 78 Link program participants for whom contact information was provided.

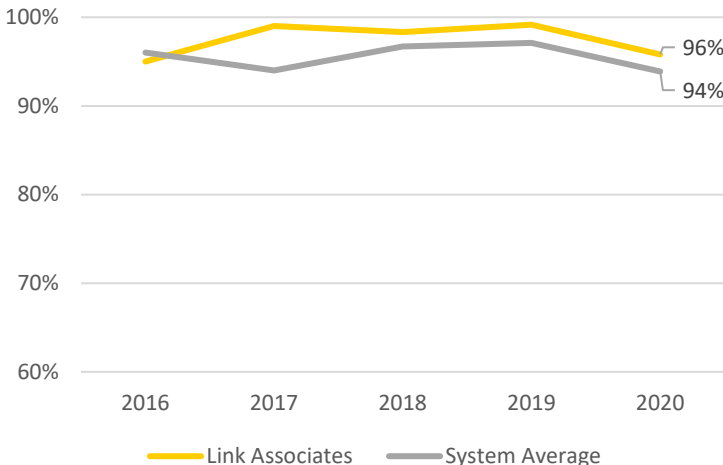
## Participant Satisfaction

Respondents were asked a series of questions to assess their agreement or disagreement with certain statements.

### Link Participant Satisfaction results by item



Among those structured questions, program respondents generally agreed that they were treated with courtesy and respect, that they were satisfied with the quality of services, that the services they received were appropriate for their needs, that the services they received were appropriate, and that they were told about services available to them and their questions were answered. However, participants were somewhat less in agreement about whether they were adequately prepared for employment.



### Participant Satisfaction Exceeds Expectations

On average, **Link participants reported 96% satisfaction with services received**, above the system average (94%).



## *Open Ended Results*

The themes listed below are described in detail in the Polk County Region report. The following representative comments are from Link participants.

### **Staff and agency relationships**

*They have really good staff. That's all I can think of.*

*I like the people. They are always nice to me.*

*They're always helpful. I was just happy with them right now. I'm just very happy.*

*I think so. They talk to me and stuff [on what they do to make me feel included.]*

### **Services Received**

*I work with a job coach ... through Link. I put things in bags for a catering company. There is always somebody there when I get to work from Link [who serves as a job coach]. They actually showed us [how to do our jobs]. They are very friendly people.*

*They are not helping much. They talk to the bosses for me. I do a good job.*

*Yeah, yeah, I've done that. Oh, well, I'm kind of unemployed at the moment so my job developer's having me look for a job. So I can't really explain well on that part yet, but they were helping me with my goals: like how to control, like you know, if you get frustrated. [They say] if you need us to give a reminder. And do you need us to be right next to you or do you need some space? Or like my goal is not to be so talkative and stuff or like kind of role play and stuff like that. Or like putting your shoes in that other person's shoes or whatever. Sometimes we'd meet up and talk virtually about it because of COVID but, yeah, pretty much that's how it'd work, follow up meetings.*

### **Service Delivery**

*Not quick enough with the services. [There has been] no word*

*The workers are easy to reach and get back to me pretty quick.*

*I like that they keep in touch with you and make sure if your needs are satisfied. Like my job developer, who I keep in touch with. His name is [staff]. He always says, "if you have concerns keep in touch." And he does a pretty good job of keeping in touch. He doesn't just not respond. There are situations where something may come up. And he's pretty legit and keeps up with his clients when he needs to.*

### **Pandemic and Quarantine**

*In March I was looking for jobs with a career specialist, but they stopped for a while. We had been going to all different stores and stuff, but they didn't hire me.*

*Yes. I can't really think of anything, to be honest. Well, we did social distance when they needed to support me. We did things over Zoom instead because of COVID, so we do things virtually instead of meeting face-to-face, but we still kept in touch through email and stuff like that. Oh, they did pretty good. They've kept in touch with me really well.*

### **Impact of Services**

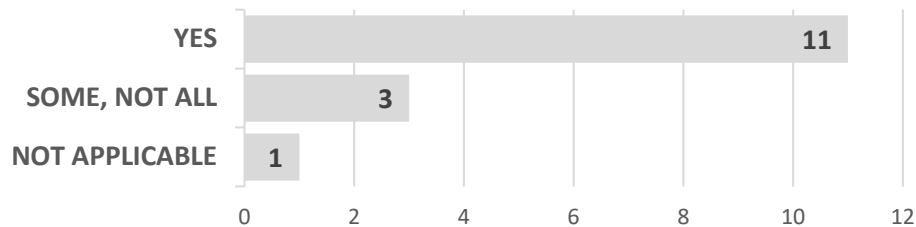
*Well, they give me a lot of compliments, and they're really, really, nice. Just that. I like my job.*

*I'm meeting my goals. I meet my goals. I like to have help meeting my goals. It's always nice to have help with that.*

## COVID-19

During the satisfaction interviews, participants were asked three questions in addition to questions normally asked to assess satisfaction with the program.

### 1. Have your needs been met by your Supported Employment team since the Governor's Health Disaster Emergency Declaration on March 17th?

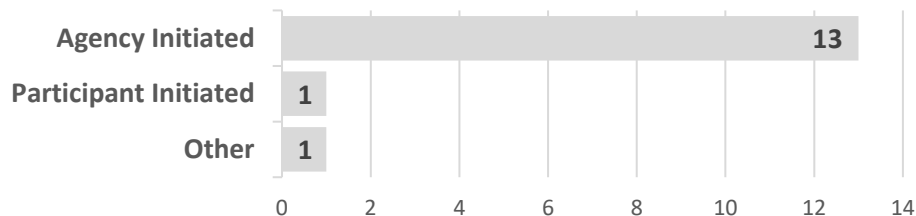


Of the 15 participants who responded to this COVID question, 11 responded “Yes,” 3 responded “No,” and 1 responded “Not Applicable.”

When asked to elaborate, 9 respondents explained that basically nothing had changed, though some added that there were some minor differences, such as meeting by video, wearing masks, and social distancing. Two indicated that they have been looking for work. One stated that they haven't had needs. One stopped working and is looking for employment. One has stopped working and is not seeing staff.

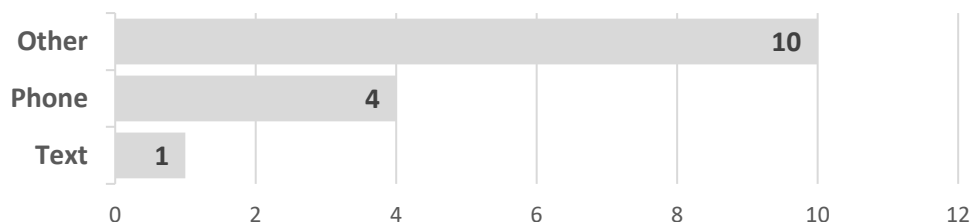
Of those who responded that some, or none, of their needs were getting met, 1 stated that they had stopped looking for work and had found employment. One indicated that they had stopped looking for work. One was not sure, but their needs related to work. One indicated that they did not have needs that did not get met.

### 2. Who initiated contact between you and your team since mid-March?



Of the 15 respondents, 13 responded that contacts were initiated by the agency, 1 responded “Participant Initiated,” and 1 responded “Other.” The participant who responded “Other” stated that communication was through a staff supervisor.

### 3. In what ways did you communicate?



Of the 15 respondents, 10 responded "Other," 4 responded by phone, and 1 responded that contacts were conducted via text. Of the respondents who responded "Other," 8 indicated that they communicated with staff in person. One responded that they communicated via digital video (Zoom or Facetime). And one responded that they communicated by phone to another Link staff.