

Identification of Facilitators and Barriers to Accessing Retained Skilled Job Coaches: A Needs Assessment

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Background

- Direct Service Professionals (DSPs) experience high rates of burnout and turnover, often due to heavy workloads, limited support, and insufficient training⁵
- Many DSPs enter the field without formal preparation, and professional development is inconsistent across organizations¹⁸
- Gaps between DSP skill levels and certification standards highlight a clear need for targeted training assessment¹⁵
- Competency-based training has been shown to reduce turnover and improve workforce stability, making it a promising lever for organizational investment⁴

Methods

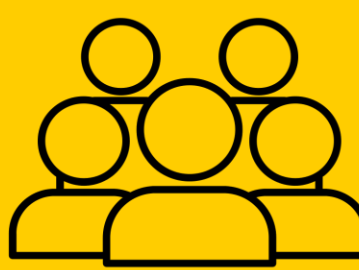
Survey Development

- 1**
- Developed by U of I LEND staff & students
 - Based on ACRE competency domains
 - Mixed-methods design (Likert-scale, open-ended, ranking items)



Survey Distribution

- 2**
- Distributed via professional email networks
 - Convenience and snowball sampling
 - Administered using Qualtrics
 - Opened 2/20/26; Closed 3/13/2026



Data Collection

- 3**
- Data collection period: ~3 weeks
 - Anonymous, voluntary participation
 - Adults (18+)
 - N = 296 responses



Data Analysis

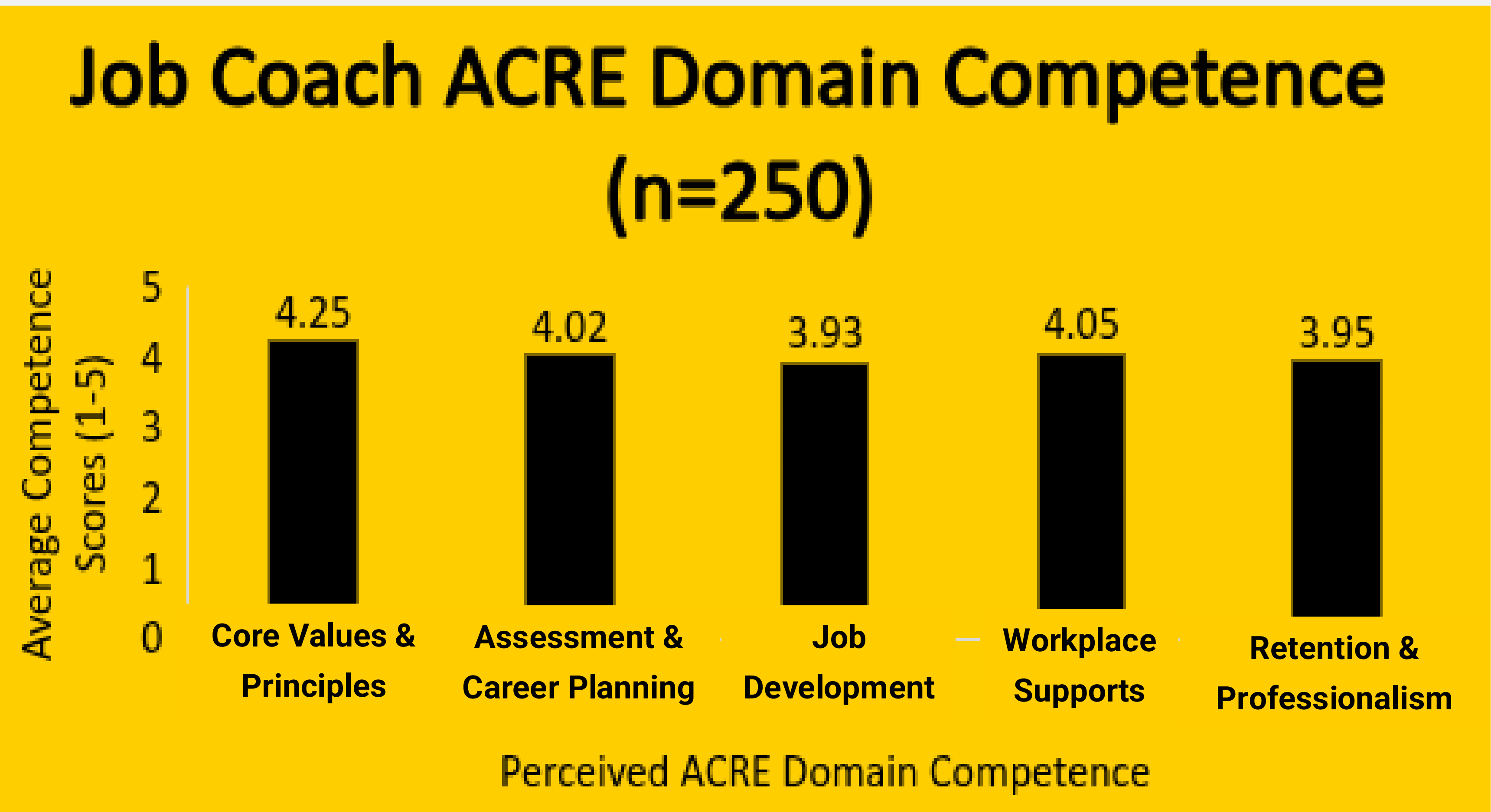
- 4**
- Quantitative: descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages)
 - Qualitative: thematic analysis



References & Abstract

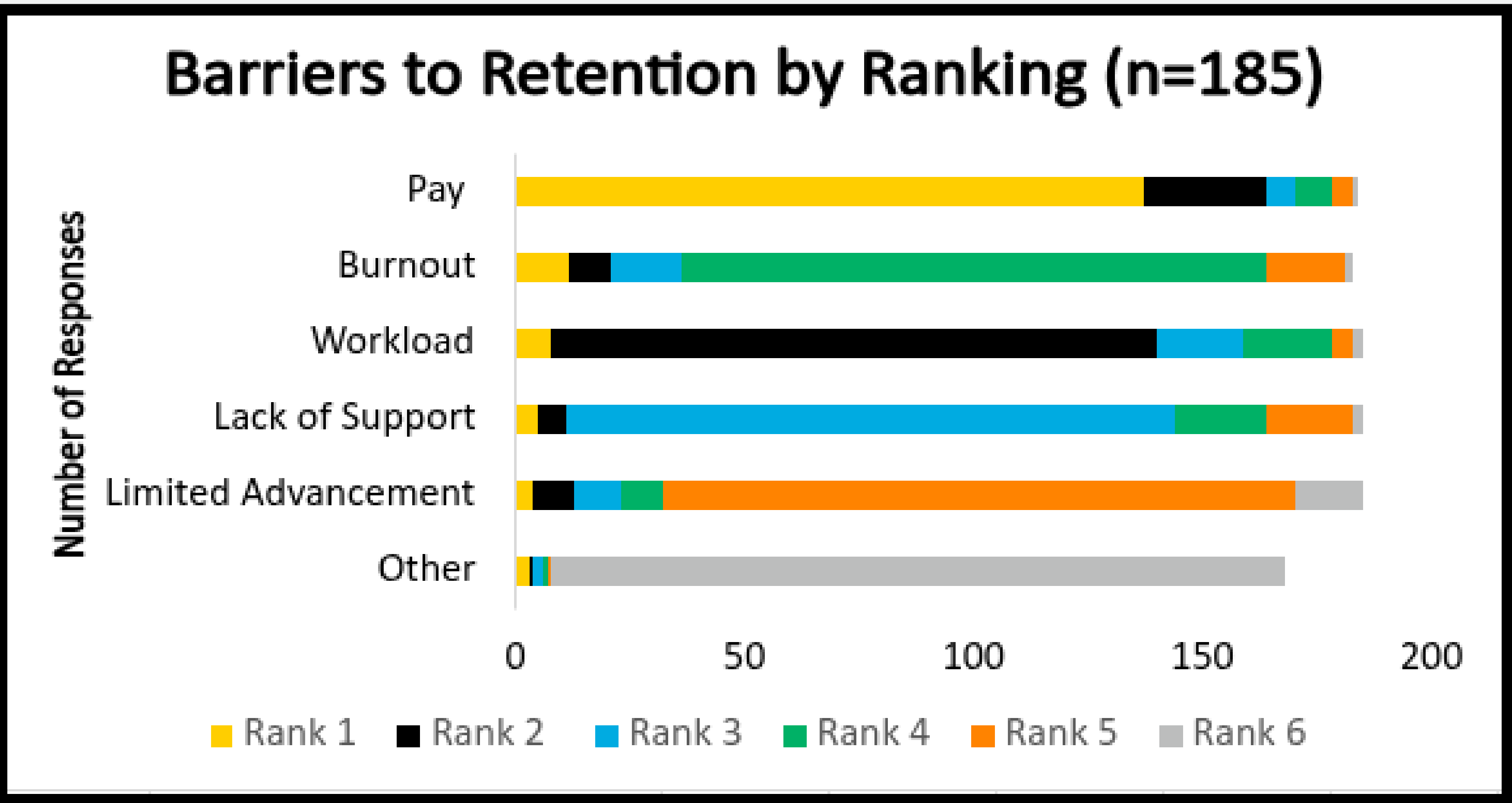
Results

- Participants reported generally high competence across Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) domains, with average scores clustering toward the upper end of the scale (approximately 3.9–4.3), suggesting strong perceived skills in core job coaching areas.



Barriers to Retention

- Barriers to retention varied in importance, with pay most frequently ranked as the primary concern, while factors such as workload, burnout, and lack of support were more often endorsed as secondary considerations.



Discussion

- Strong competence reported in **person-centered, relational, and values-based practices**
- High confidence in **inclusive communication, interviewing, employer engagement, and workplace supports**
- Workplace support skills (e.g., job analysis, fading, behavioral strategies) were **consistently endorsed across participants**
- Some variability suggests differences in **training, experience, and role expectations**
- Lower confidence in **technical and systems-level competencies**, including:
 - **Policy/legal knowledge**
 - **Benefits systems**
 - Translating assessment into **actionable career plans**
 - **Job customization and negotiation**
- Neutral responses likely reflect **uncertainty or limited confidence**, rather than lack of skill

Training & Workforce Implications

- Strengthen training in: **Benefits and policy navigation; Translating assessment into practice; Advanced job development skills** (e.g., customization, negotiation)
- Address organizational needs: **Clear career pathways; Access to ongoing professional development**
- Participants reported feeling **valued, supported, and connected**
- Most indicated **short-term retention intentions**
- Ongoing concerns: **Pay; Workload; Limited advancement opportunities**

Limitations

- Self-report data from DSPs only (potential social desirability bias)
- Focus on perceived (not objective) competence
- Variation in roles/settings may have influenced how items were interpreted