



The value of a CEDAH (Central Database of Available Hours) in any area

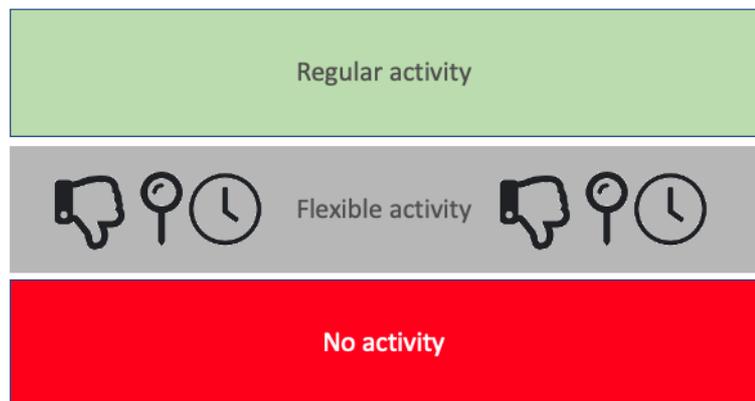
Deployment of Emergency Workers. Businesses re-hiring their staff. Childcare. Volunteering. In each of these activities there is a need by many people for flexibility in day-to-day arrangements. The same is true of other sectors. This Flexible Layer across any local economy can be powerful in both opening opportunities and cutting costs. It becomes vital in a pandemic.

Making this complex, individualized, part of any economy equitable, visible and legitimate requires a new tool. It is called a CEDAH (Central Database of Available Hours). Developed in British government programs, now fully Americanized, it has been launched by public agencies and non-profits in Los Angeles County and is easily replicable.

Exploring the Flexible Layer

In jobs, public services, business, volunteering and other activities there is a part of the activity that needs constant flexibility. Variables in any case might include times of demand or supply, locations or individual requirements.

The flexible layer in any economic activity



This can be made tangible with some examples:

- **At-home childcare:** Some families need, and can afford, a sitter for perhaps all-day every Monday to Thursday. Many households don't require, or can't afford, formal childcare at all. But in-between are parents who might need a few hours this afternoon, they don't know yet. Tomorrow morning Mom might have a videocall with a client and need a professional to keep her kids in the garden. Saturday there could be a medical appointment for which, again, childcare would be needed.
- **Volunteering:** Some are happy to donate every Friday and Saturday at a charity shop. Most people don't formally give their time at all. But there's a gray zone of individuals who could give some spare hours tomorrow if they fit around obligations like online meetings, perhaps the day after, possibly Sunday if they get a study assignment completed on Saturday. But the person won't travel more than half a mile from home and will only support seniors who have been trained in Covid awareness.

The Flexible Layer can be significant but invisible. In the mainstream labor market, for example, [35%](#) of American adults now rely on at least some “gig work”, much of it off-the-books. (This was before the pandemic. There is wide expectation it will increase after.) Yet there is negligible publicly or philanthropically funded support for those who need this Flexible Layer compared to the unemployed or candidates seeking a move to better skilled jobs.

Some other characteristics typical of this gray zone in any part of the economy:

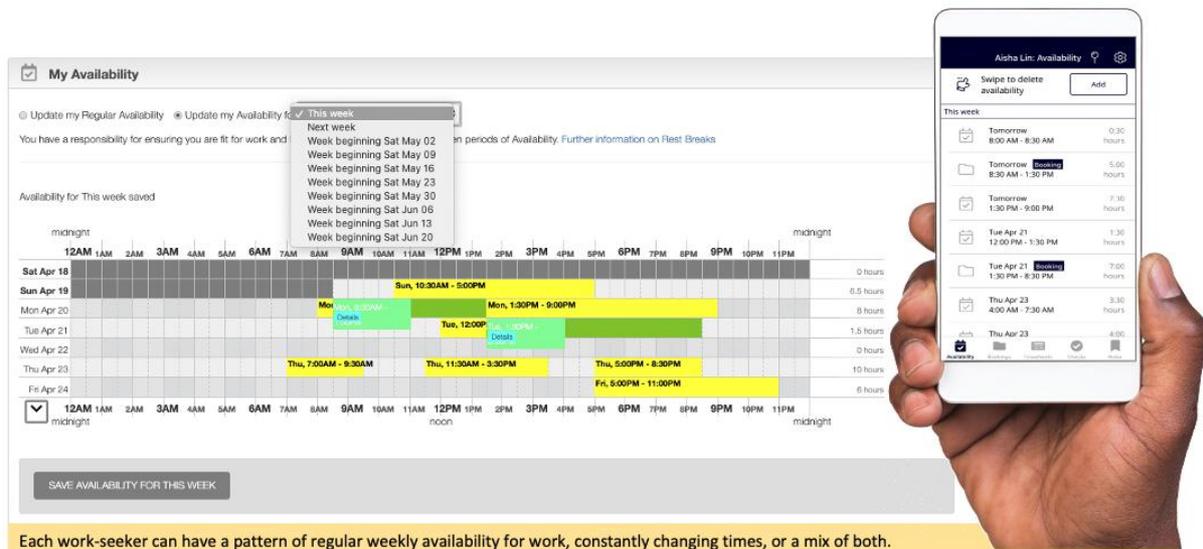
- **Lack of data:** Activity is very granular, often arranged informally. Even extensive data gathering operations such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics [cannot measure](#) what’s happening in the Flexible Layer.
- **Exploitative:** The Flexible Layer can offer rich pickings for companies seeking high returns from matching demand and supply. In formal labor markets for example, services like Uber [subsidize](#) heavily to reach dominance then apply a [business model](#) that cheapens and commoditizes workers.
- **Inequitable:** Again, using research into the formal labor market (because it offers the best data we have) we know irregular employment is skewed towards [the young](#), [women](#), [minorities](#) and the [lowest-income](#) households.
- **An entry ladder:** Many people [can’t](#) commit to regular hours of work or volunteering. They have medical issues, studying or family commitments that fluctuate day-to-day and have to take priority. Improving the Flexible Layer offers them a personalized ramp into the economy. Otherwise they are too often marginalized by services focused on regularity.
- **Disparate:** There are so many ways to engage in the flexible Layer for even one activity. No one knows where to start. For example, there are many thousands of “gig work” platforms, some of which haven’t recruited any buyers, others which will close imminently and many that support illegality. There is no equivalent of services like [official platforms](#) that offer a “public option” for job-seekers and those that employ them.
- **Influenced by local bodies:** Breadwinners will travel many miles to do a full-time job. Someone doing 1-2 hours work won’t go far. Decisions made at City Hall can really impact.

The potential of Flexible Layer s in any activity is often wasted. For instance, it is generally accepted many people would give increments of their time for tasks in their neighborhood. But it is so difficult to arrange, those hours that could enhance other citizens’ lives never become visible or utilized.

Creating a healthy Flexible Layer locally

Opening the potential of this expanding part of the economy requires more than another website or app. The solution does have to involve technology; individual transactions are so complex. But it needs to be a sophisticated underlying platform that can be repurposed by any local business, non-profit or public agency for their users.

For the supply side (individuals offering their time), the platform must be built around protections, control, stability (if desired) and progression pathways. For the demand side (households, businesses or public agencies) there has to be quality and alignment with evolving local needs.



Enormously detailed data has to be captured and, once anonymized, shared. Accountable local bodies should run the underlying service; fostering regular relationships, intermediaries who act as employer of record and other facilities often absent in Flexible Layers at present.

This all exists and is called a CEDAH (Central Database of Available Hours). A CEDAH for Los Angeles can be seen in early videos at www.cedah.video. Volunteering simply requires a CEDAH with all pay, charge, tax, benefits and intermediary charges turned off. That configuration takes 20 seconds. The platform is a Java Enterprise application running on secure servers in California.

The potential of Flexible Layers in pandemic response/recovery

A fragmenting economy, and unpredictable lifestyles, demand a healthy Flexible Layer to rebuild resilience. Immediate applications include:

- **Deployment of Emergency Workers:** As public sector staff are moved to frontline services some will just shift entirely from, perhaps, reception duties to serving the homeless. But a colleague might need to retain an unpredictable 40% of his time around the normal role and be willing to work on homelessness while aspiring to community service near home. A healthy Flexible Layer can ensure prioritization while empowering individual preferences.
- **Subsidy/Stimulus:** As public or philanthropic funds are dispersed to communities, a CEDAH can apply rules that allocate funds precisely. It could target, administer and report on interventions ranging from \$2,000 used to subsidize home support for diabetics within a deprived area to identifying maximum gain from a \$1m investment in training people who worked reliably but remained on minimum wage.
- **Incremental Hiring:** It is unlikely jobs will return on day one after phases of lockdown. A restaurant might have 20 staff of which 12 would typically have worked on any given day. The owners are unlikely to immediately resume their old rotas when re-opening. They might need to open with 50% of tables blocked off, could try lunchtime today then decide about tomorrow, run with 6 staff this evening but maybe grow that next week. If offered the chance to re-hire their staff through a local CEDAH they get instant visibility of availability

and accounting/audit tools. Staff are exposed to other potential employers when not needed. And of course, they can be taken back to normal rotas at any time.

- **New forms of activity:** In the UK “Peer Navigators” were trialled. This scheme trained a pool of 100 provenly reliable flexible CEDAH workers with at least some customer-facing experience. Strugglers in the labor market were then offered 10 one-hours of a matched Navigator. It’s a cost-effective, auditable, way of reaching to those who don’t like computers and individuals needing a confidence boost.

The screenshot shows a web interface for making bookings. The main section is a grid showing the number of available workers for 'St. John's: Exercise Assistants' at 'Our Main Building, 90804' over the next ten weeks. The grid has columns for hours from 12AM to 11PM and rows for dates from Saturday, April 18 to Friday, April 24. A 'DONE' button is at the bottom left. To the right, a 'Role' details panel shows: 'St. John's: Exercise Assistants', 'Workers offered this role: 13', 'Workers accepted this role: 10', 'Bookings for this role: 133', 'Issued by: St. John's Residential Care Home', 'Fixed hourly rate: \$55.00', 'Checks required', 'Credentials', 'Preferences', 'Top-up Roles', 'Geographic range', 'Summary', 'Description of work', and 'O'NET Classification: 39-9021.00'. Below the screenshot, a yellow banner reads: 'Businesses can create their own roles (types of work). These are offered to eligible local work-seekers. Each can accept/reject. If too many reject, payrate can be easily increased.'

Launch in a pandemic

Launching a CEDAH in any area needs a first pool of demand for hours. Our open sourced [manual](#) explains how to do this “Market Making” in any area. Finding that pool in a pandemic is demanding because sectors that would normally provide it (hospitality, events, retail and so on) are diminished.

But public sector spending is increased. That is the easiest route to launch. A cross-department approach by cities, counties or states would quickly identify activity that would benefit from going through a CEDAH. A project manager can then align it and plan a timetable to switch-on.

About us

CEDAH technology sits in a [non-profit](#) that emerged from UK government programs to create better labor markets for hourly workers. In the US, four national philanthropies funded exploration with a lead taken by [Pacific Gateway Workforce Partnership](#), a 501(c)3 set up by the City of Long Beach, CA, workforce board to explore innovation in the workforce system.

Preparation for a launch in Los Angeles County won the US Conference of Mayors’ prize for best community economic development initiative in America. That launch was [accelerated](#) for the pandemic with a focus initially on [childcare](#) for essential workers. Skills4Care, the non-profit arm of Cambrian Homecare vets and acts as employer of record for the work-seeker. [WorkLongBeach](#) runs in parallel to support residents needing work that fits around other issues in their lives.