The Chicago Fed National Activity Index (CFNAI) increased to +0.14 in September from +0.13 in August. Two of the four broad categories of indicators that make up the index increased from August, and three of the four categories made positive contributions to the index in September.

The index’s three-month moving average, CFNAI-MA3, increased to −0.03 in September from −0.15 in August, marking its seventh consecutive reading below zero. September’s CFNAI-MA3 suggests that growth in national economic activity was slightly below its historical trend. The economic growth reflected in this level of the CFNAI-MA3 suggests subdued inflationary pressure from economic activity over the coming year.

The CFNAI Diffusion Index increased to +0.05 in September from −0.06 in August. Forty-seven of the 85 individual indicators made positive contributions to the CFNAI in September, while 38 made negative contributions. Forty-two indicators improved from August to September, while 43 indicators deteriorated. Of the indicators that improved, 11 made negative contributions.
Production-related indicators contributed +0.19 to the CFNAI in September, up slightly from +0.17 in August. Industrial production increased 0.6 percent in September after increasing 0.4 percent in August. However, manufacturing production increased just 0.1 percent in September after increasing 0.5 percent in the previous month.

The contribution from employment-related indicators to the CFNAI remained at +0.08 in September. Average weekly initial unemployment insurance claims decreased to 308,000 in September from 329,000 in August, and the unemployment rate ticked down to 7.2 percent in September from 7.3 percent in the previous month. However, nonfarm payrolls rose by 163,000 in September after increasing by 238,000 in August.

The contribution from the sales, orders, and inventories category to the CFNAI ticked up to +0.05 in September from +0.04 in August.

However, the contribution from the consumption and housing category to the CFNAI edged down to −0.18 in September from −0.17 in the previous month.

The CFNAI was constructed using data available as of November 8, 2013. At that time, September data for 57 of the 85 indicators had been published. For all missing data, estimates were used in constructing the index. The August monthly index was revised to +0.13 from an initial estimate of +0.14. Revisions to the monthly index can be attributed to two main factors: revisions in previously published data and differences between the estimates of previously unavailable data and subsequently published data. The revision to the August monthly index was due primarily to the latter.