Incite, Incorporated

 Transcript of Webinar

 YouthBuild Webinar Series

 Meet the Workforce Innovation Fund Round Two Grantees:
 Grant Project Presentations

 Wednesday, February 10, 2016
JENNIFER JOHNSON: Great. Thanks, everybody. Thanks for participating on the webinar and hosting us. My name is Jennifer Johnson. I'm the project manager for Incite, Incorporated. With me I also have Susan Barksdale, our cognitive behavioral specialist who works on this grant with us. So she'll be chiming in as well when it's appropriate.

So I wanted to introduce Rethinking Job Search, our project that is funded with the Workforce Innovation Fund, and so that's what we'll be talking about today. A little bit of background, Incite, Incorporated is a local workforce board for Linn, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties in Oregon, which is a regional area of four counties. Our funding level is $3 million with – which is a type A project type, and our evaluation firm working with us is Public Policy Associates out of Lansing, Michigan.

I wanted to provide a little bit of background. So one of the problems we identified earlier on is that unemployment can be a very challenging time emotionally, and our workforce centers throughout the state are very good at providing technical skills, things around resume writing and interview skills and enhancing those kinds of skills but really lacked systematically at providing some of the soft skills and emotional support.

So we wanted to address this, and in doing some research we found that there are some supports that are provided in the centers – in similar centers in the U.K., Australia, and Canada. So we connected with some of the partners out there and understood a little bit better what the model is that they're using to incorporate mental health support into their job search systems and found out that they're getting great success out of this. And so that's kind of the basis around which we decided to design this program.

So Rethinking Job Search was developed using the Workforce Innovation Fund grant, and it is implemented in 10 workforce centers which are American Job Centers across the state of Oregon. It's a four-week series of facilitated small group discussions using cognitive behavioral techniques to address social and emotional consequences of unemployment.

We do this using cognitive behavioral techniques developed through a curriculum that was designed by Susan Barksdale who's here, and you're able to ask your questions later, if you have questions around that. And we are educating people on how to think through job search in a way that is productive for them by increasing confidence, motivation, and accountability.

When someone is going through a hard time in life, we want to be able to give them the best tools they can use when they are presenting themselves to a future employer, and we believe that this will be a way that we can help them get jobs faster. So they address – the workshops address the social and emotional consequence of unemployment in order to help rebuild their confidence, motivation, and accountability.

So the target population for Rethinking Job Search is those collecting Oregon unemployment insurance and those who are at least 18 years of age and who have a high school diploma and GED. So that's the requirements for eligibility in the program.
Our recruitment strategy is twofold. First, we are connecting with staff and providing them with the materials in order to act as a referral system in the workforce centers in the state and other workforce centers across the state. And we are also partnered closely with unemployment insurance, and with them we are sending out e-mails to those who are collecting unemployment insurance and informing them of this opportunity. Additionally, unemployment insurance has worked with us to be able to provide job search activity credits towards their UI claim each week using our program.

So prior to our decision, job seekers will complete an assessment of eligibility and job search readiness according to the stages of change model created by Ezra House and Ezra House is a partner that we have out of Australia who has been doing this work for a while. And so we borrowed their model to do this with their permission, and we're partnering with them on this piece. At the end of this project we'll be able to measure the degree to which job search readiness is correlated with outcomes, and so that's one of the main things we'll be looking at.

The facilitators of the workshops completed a 40-hour cognitive behavioral training – facilitator training along with a 20-hour CBT facilitator certification course online. The facilitator training materials were created by Susan Barksdale, and she's here as well.

As far as system alignment, this is a large piece that we're focusing on and concentrating on for developing this in order to bring partners together that haven't necessarily worked very closely in the past in order to help our job seekers.

So some of the partners are the workforce boards across the state, the workforce centers across the state, the Oregon Employment Division through – and we are partnering through data sharing, unemployment insurance incentives, and co-promoting. So the partnerships are the local workforce boards, the Oregon Employment Department, including Unemployment Insurance Division and the Workforce Operations Division, and workforce center staff.

The Oregon Employment Department and workforce boards have been working together in the past to try to make it a more seamless experience for job seekers as they move through unemployment experience. And this is just one more example of how we can pull those partnerships together and make it a more seamless experience. Rethinking Job Search is an innovative program through which these partners can better come together around the job seeker's experience.

At the end of our project we anticipate having 1,000 job seekers that have participated in the Rethinking Job Search workshops. So those are the ones who will be the treatment group compared to a comparison group, which we anticipate having about 2500 job seekers in the comparison group. The comparison group will be made up of those who qualify for the program but did not participate in the workshops but did take that job search readiness assessment that I talked about a few slides ago.

The outcomes that we expect are looking for our 25 percent higher rates of employment three months after completing Rethinking Job Search compared to the comparison group. Participants will have collected unemployment insurance benefits for two weeks less time than the
comparison group, 20 percent fewer individuals in long-term employment than compared to the comparison group, and a 15 percent higher job retention rate. And we'll be measuring for all of those in our evaluation.

One of the pieces of the innovation around the partnership is the way that we are bringing partners together in partner communication. We want to be able to provide a common place for communication, resources, success stories, transparency, and for all workforce partners to contribute to the implementation and understanding and best practice building of Rethinking Job Search.

One of the successes is the beginning of the workshops, which just started this past month in January. The first four workshops started with 29 participants. So each of the starting workshops – so four of 10 centers started. Each of those centers met at least their minimum number of participants required to begin, and we have had great feedback so far from both participants and from facilitators on how they're interacting in the workshops and their perspective of it.

We've created a website at www.rethinkingjobsearch.org that not only informs the public about Rethinking Job Search but allows workforce partners to come together in that common space to share resources, communicate, and ask questions about implementation using a form style.

And we invite workforce partners to participate in that, and so we invite you to check that out as well. This allows us to implement using transparency and inclusion of all workforce partners and reduces the likelihood of using a hierarchy of information sharing. So we're trying to do away with that and make it a very common place that everyone participates and understands how it works.

So the challenges we've experienced, we've had some registration frustration as we've learned a new website, and that's been minimized with a great relationship that we have with our web developer but that we've still had to learn as we go. And so there's been a little bit of frustration on the participants and the facilitators, and so we're learning very quickly on how to minimize that.

And so thank you for your attention. If you have any questions, we'll be around at the end. Thank you very much.