**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Our Journey Together: Out-of-School Youth Cohort Challenge Review**

**Thursday, June 7, 2018**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Murrieta, CA*

JENNIFER JACOBS: So again, we want to welcome you to today's "Our Journey Together: Out-of-School Youth Cohort Challenge Review." And now without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Lisa Dieterle, federal project officer, Region V WIOA Youth Program Lead of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. Lisa?

LISA DIETERLE: Thank you, Jen. Hello, everyone and welcome to today's webinar in the Our Journey Together series. Today's focus is the out of school youth cohort challenge review. It's just that. My name's Lisa Dieterle. I'm a federal project officer and youth lead in the Chicago region and the moderator for today's session.

My colleague, Sara Hastings in the Division of Youth Services in the national office and myself have worked closely with our partners, Maher & Maher, Amy Landesman and Matt Musante to implement this virtual technical assistance experience with the youth cohort members, some of whom you'll meet today.

DOL's been really excited by the level of interest and engagement sparked by this virtual peer-to-peer training, the dedication of the cohort group and the outcomes and the products you will learn about during this webinar. We received a large number of applications for this TA opportunity, and it was hard to limit our selection to just the team members in this cohort. But we chose the diverse group that we thought could represent the whole, and we hope all of you joining us today will walk away with some valuable tools and insights you can use in your work with youth.

We want to thank Amy and Matt and Jen from Maher & Maher and all of the youth cohort participants for their hard work. Without making you wait any longer, I'll turn it over to Amy from Maher & Maher.

AMY LANDESMAN: Thank you so much, Lisa. And good morning and good afternoon to everyone. We were really excited to hear – to just see how much interest there was in this topic, and to hear about the youth cohort itself. We had a great experience and we're very eager to share with you. Today's webinar we're going to cover a few things. Want to go over the cohort itself, what was the purpose and the structure? Want to share with you some of the engagement and retention challenges that were identified and some of the key insights. And then finally, share with you some of the outcomes. And as Jen mentioned, there's some information in the file share that I will refer to throughout the course of this webinar.

So just to get us started – and we have several people here on this webinar, and so we want to kind of get a sense of who's here and what brought you to this webinar. So Jen, if we could put up a poll, and I'm hoping everyone can answer this simultaneously. You should see two polls. And so for the first one, in your community, when it comes to youth engagement and retention, would you say you're strong at it? Would you say your good at it but not – could do better? You struggle with this regularly, or you struggle with it and you don't know how to address it?

And then the second question is, what would you say is one of your biggest barriers to engaging and retaining youth? Is it getting them to the program? Perhaps it's keeping them in the program? Or maybe it's keeping connected after the program, post-program? And we'll just keep this up for another 30 seconds or so and we'll get a sense of where the group is kind of interested in hearing more about.

And I see you're seeing the results at the same time as I am, and so it looks like the majority of the folks feel like they're pretty good at it or maybe they're struggling and they want to get better. And that makes sense. I think that was probably similar to a lot of the experiences of the folks that we worked with in the cohort as well.

And then it looks like keeping them in the program. Program retention is definitely a big issue, not to say that the early stages, getting them to the program or even keeping post-program isn't. So it's really looks like we tapped on everything here. Great. Okay. Thanks, Jen. Thank you all for sharing and letting us know what areas are of interest to you.

So I kind of want – I just want to jump right in and share with you what the out of school youth cohort was about. What was the purpose and what was the structure? So the Department of Labor proposed an initiative to look at five key areas that they wanted to address using this idea of a cohort model, which I'll explain in a minute.

And in front of you, you see the five different focus areas: the future of American Job Centers, integrating business services across a region, state WIOA, TANF and SNAP partnerships, operationalizing WIOA co-enrollment and engaging and retaining out of school youth. And we'll be focusing on that last one. And in fact, all five of these have been completed, and several of them are having their own webinars in the next couple weeks as well. And so if any of those other topics interest you, you can attend their webinars too.

But for today we're going to focus on the engaging and retaining out of school youth cohort. And so, when we thought about this cohort and the planning team was getting together, our purpose and our idea for the approach was to bring together multiple voices, to bring together different experiences and perspectives and bring them together virtually in an arena so that we could look at the challenge of youth engagement and retention, look at it a little bit deeper, develop some innovative ideas and solutions.

And really our goal was to benefit not just those involved but the entire system. So all along we knew that we wanted to have actually leading up to this webinar so that we could share whatever the cohort accomplished. We could share it with the larger system.

So our focus when we were planning this was to answer the question, what does it take to effectively engage and retain out of school youth throughout the program lifespan? We knew this was a broad topic and we knew that there was a lot of pieces and components to this. But our goal was to develop some kind of outcome that would help the individual cohort team address challenges in their own areas, but as I said, also deliver practical solutions that could be help system-wide.

And our goal was also to focus to create an arena that would serve as an innovation lab if you will, so that we could look at ideas and then these ideas could drive into integration and promote efficiencies and improved outcomes.

So we knew we were taking on a big challenge here and when we put out the invitation, we knew that we were asking something that was really important of those involved, those who were interested. And the other thing that we did, and I think is really unique to this cohort model was that our focus, and we decided that our focus was going to have a model where the team themselves would define the challenges.

So we knew that questions – was a broad question, but the teams would really hone in on what specific challenges to learn, engagement and retention, and also what deliverables and outcomes they would develop. And we did this because we really believed that the teens would know best what the challenges are, but also the solution. And for those of you who may have seen the invitation when it first went out back in November of 2017, we put that in the invitation because we wanted teens to know that they were going to have a say in really developing where this went.

And so what happened once we put out that invitation? Well, we had 85 applications, which was phenomenal. We were really excited about that. And these applications represented state, local areas, different partners were represented on the applications. We had workforce, we had the public sector, we had community-based organizations, we had criminal justice entities, education, economic development, we had community colleges, we had literacy partners, we had employers, we had youth representatives as part of the team. So the teams are really diverse.

Most teams were between five and seven members and we ultimately chose eight teams to be part of this cohort. And so the teens that we chose – we really made a deliberate effort to have a diversity of teens as well within the regions across the United States, but also rural, urban, regions in between.

So our final eight teams were the Career Center of Lowell Massachusetts, we had the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board of Pennsylvania. And I should say that this is including their partners for all of these teams as well. We had the South-Central Tennessee Workforce Alliance, we had Central Oklahoma, South Dakota, the city of Brooklyn Park, the Ashtabula County Youth Opportunities Program and the Orange County Development Board.

And so we really had, as you can see, we had a lot of diversity geographically. We also had diversity in the type of communities represented. We had some local areas here, we had states. We really tried to get that diversity, and I think we picked well. We had eight great teams, participation and activity were really high. And our biggest regret was that there was – we weren't able to allow everyone into the cohort, but that's actually – these are the eight teams that we collected and I think we did some great choices here.

So let me share with you for a moment what happened to the cohort. What were some of the components to the cohort? So applications as I said went out in November and there was a collection process. We started the cohort in February and we had six virtual sessions between February and May of this year.

We were able to also use within – in addition to the cohort model, we used a platform, a collaborative platform called Moodle. Some of you may be familiar with that. I think it initially was used in the world of academia, but it's been used in a lot of different forms now. And Moodle allowed us to not only post the documents that occurred during the sessions or in between sessions, but it allowed participants and teams to post as well, to share materials, to chat with each other, to review past activities. And it was the platform that all members of all teams had access to, and it was actually used a lot during this cohort, so it was great.

Throughout the cohort, in addition to attending the sessions, the presentations, each team, each cohort team of the eight teams that I just showed before, they did their own presentations where they introduced their efforts locally to engage and retain youth. They highlighted some of their successes and also their challenges, and what some of their goals moving forward were. There were also independent and team assignments, and they varied from reading assignments to intelligence gathering in their communities, to activities to do within the team. And each assignment they were able to debrief on and share with the larger group.

And finally, one decision we made in the cohort, which I'll elaborate on a little bit more but I want to touch on here, is that in addition to the cohort teams, once we identified the challenge we decided to develop challenge teams as well. And those challenge teams would work on the specific challenge areas that were identified, and they were the challenge teams – were the ones that developed the deliverables, which we'll share with you today.

So before we even dug into what were some of the challenges that we were going to focus on, we did spend time as a group looking at what were some of the common challenges and themes that came up throughout the cohort. And I wanted to share a few of them with you now.

So right off the bat, and it's interesting that some of you checked off on that poll the pre-program, getting the people into our program. Outreach, recruitment, marketing, messaging, all of that finding young people and coming up with language and coming up with a message that resonated with young people. That was a topic that we discussed at length. Another topic was the idea of young people who had immediate needs. They either needed a job immediately, versus engaging young people into long-term goals, whether it was career pathway planning or credentialing beyond the entry level jobs, if you will.

A lot of the participants talked about the challenges, behavioral challenges working with young individuals, whether it's around commitment issues or motivation or just kind of "sticking it out" and that was a common theme. Also, stigma that young people face, especially the out of school youth population, whether it was with the employers or in the community, within their family or even with service providers, so looking at those issues. We also had a lot of discussion around the need for support services, substance abuse services, mental health, child care, legal services. All of these were real challenges that providers and members of the cohort were experiencing.

Transportation, probably not a surprise, was a big issue, and that was really across the board. It might have been a different transportation issue in the rural communities, having access to transportation or services being very far from where people lived. But also in the urban settings, perhaps schedules or off hours in just finding employment. And so transportation was actually a universal challenge that came up. Housing and food security were big issues as well as funding. And again, probably not a surprise. You got programs and these teens wanted more funding to work with young people.

So these challenges, again, didn't really matter the region of the country. These challenges came up as common themes across the cohort members. So to address this, and as I mentioned before, we decided that we would be using challenge teams as a way to tackle these. So we spent some time doing the cohort, examining some best practices in engagement and retention and we broke it down very similar to the poll in pre-program, program and post-program areas.

And from those conversations, several topic areas were identified, and four challenge team topics were formed. And we actually used a virtual voting process for people to identify which team they'd like to work on. And most cohort members were very clear that they would – they really wanted the opportunity to work with staff from other entities. And so we decided that the challenge teams would be a mixture of participants from all the different cohort teams.

And so we got in the habit, and it took us a little bit, but we got in the habit of calling the cohort team the local team and then the challenge team was the team that would be working on some of the youth engagement and retention issues. Each challenge team had about 10 or 12 people in each team, and they represented at least one member from all of the eight cohort teams.

The challenge team was then tasked with meeting independently, and they were able to do this again virtually through group phone calls. But they were tasked with meeting independently to further refine and identify and define their challenge area, but also to develop what their outcomes or their deliverables would be for this cohort.

So we actually narrowed it down to three topical areas. One area had so much interest that we developed two teams. But we had four challenge teams. Two of the teams were dedicated to the topic of empowering youth as active participants, one team focused on using technology in innovative ways through programming, and the final team focused on recruitment, marketing and outreach strategies. And each of these challenge teams, as I said, met independently to work on what the outcomes for their experience in the cohort.

So what were some of the key learnings and takeaways of the cohort? I just want to mention a few of them. Again, this is based on feedback that we received during the sessions, and at the end of the sessions we conducted a survey of our members and we got a lot of great information.

One of the takeaways that I think some members were surprised about was that many of the challenges they were experiencing affected all of the cohort teams. There was a lot of commonality in challenges that they were experiencing. And again, while rural areas definitely had their own specific challenges that were specific to rural areas, they realized that many of the challenges derive from similar needs or issues and even had similar pain points.

Having the cohort teams themselves actually had a benefit that was unexpected for members as well. Just getting as I said the teams – the cohort teams were made up of different partners so you might have someone from the local workforce board. You might have someone from a community-based organization. You might have someone from corrections and so on all on the same team.

And in fact, several of the teams decided to use that time for the webinar sessions to meet before or after. Sometimes they would even meet in one office and call in together. So there was that increased value-add of having the time to meet together. We had one team where the members were spread out across the state, but they would do a Skype before or after to discuss what happened in the session. They did it either in-person or virtually, but they used that time to meet and to kind of talk about issues in their local areas.

Teams also used the time to think about how they can improve communications with each other in the future. It became habit to have this regular check-in. And they also used the time to think about how they could leverage additional local partnerships or even create new ones that they hadn't thought of before. Maybe some relationships strengthened by being part of the cohort team or they realized who was missing, and that – we got a lot of feedback on that kind of universally.

Finally, one of the other key takeaways – excuse me. A couple more is that there were certain topics that surfaced as warranting more exploration on the local level. So we had a lot of discussion around assessment being the critical point of engagement. And in fact, I'll share later one of the deliverables focused on that assessment area as a real critical point of engagement.

Technology really came across on all teams, not just the one team that addressed it. But how to use technology, whether it was for the recruitment phase or whether it was for the later phases during programs or whether it was to address some of the issues that rural communities faces, and if technology services could be delivered with the use of technology. When the different cohort members, cohort teams did their presentations, there was a lot of interest and feedback and conversation sharing on peer centered approaches. And I know that went on in the individual calls as well with the challenge team.

So there was certain program areas that kind of surfaced as really – teams wanted to dig deeper in during the course of the cohort and also after, after the cohort ended. Interestingly enough of course, during the peer presentation, people wanted to hear about the best practices of course. But we also did a section about what didn't work. And the lessons learned from what didn't work out was just as important as what did. So there was a lot of kind of learning from others going on.

And finally, another area that came up in the discussion that probably is – certain communities were feeling it more recently than in past years – was the lower unemployment rate in many areas. It allowed young people to change jobs faster, which could be a good thing. But it was still a challenge when the young people didn't have the skills that employers were looking for or young people were no longer interested in credentialing in career pathway opportunities. And so all of these factors was an area that I think most of the communities involved were still looking at and struggling with or grappling with how they want to address it. And kind of figure out both sides of that equation, the ability for young people to get employment perhaps faster or easier than in past years, but what does that mean also for the long term? And so that was definitely something that the team members were looking at.

So I mentioned we had eight teams on the cohort and we actually wanted you to have the opportunity to hear from one of the teams to talk about their team experience. And so I'm going to introduce Norman Albances right now, who's the program administrator from the Orange County team. He's the program administrator for the Orange County Development Board, the OC Community Services in the Community Investment Division and he was the team lead actually for the Orange County team. And so, we've asked Norman here to talk to you a little bit about the team experience, the cohort team experience. So Norman, I'm going to hand it over to you.

NORMAN ALBANCES: Great. Thanks, Amy. Hi everyone. My name is Norman Albances and I am the program administrator for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Youth Program here at the county of Orange. It's a pleasure for me to be here with you this morning. Thanks so much for Matt and Amy for inviting me to present, to speak about how we at Orange County were inspired by the cohort challenge.

So a little bit about the OC. I'm sure you've probably heard from television shows like The O.C., the Real Housewives of OC. You've probably heard about where we are, have an idea of where we're at. So you probably have an idea or a preconceived notion that Orange County is full of beaches and high-class housewives, but Orange County is so much more than that.

For example, Orange County has a greater percentage of English learners than the whole state of California. Orange County is also experiencing a severe lack of housing driving up the cost of living, and Orange County is facing a homeless crisis and the U.S. district judge is threatening to bar cities from enforcing their anti-capping ordinances if they don't come up with new homeless shelters.

A little bit more about the OC. The population is the sixth largest in the United States, sixth largest county with 3.1 million. We at the Orange County Development Board as the local workforce development board, and we administer the local workforce system for 2.4 million of the region's residents, serving 32 of the 34 cities and all of its unincorporated communities. And we have three service providers for our WIOA youth services, the city of La Habra, KRA Corporation and the Orange County Asian and Pacific Community – Pacific Islander Community Alliance or OCAPICA. It's a mouthful. And so all of our team members have more than 30 years of WIA and WIOA experience combined.

So you can see all of our folks here that made up our team. We have a wide array of talent ranging from managers to line staff. Each person had something great to contribute. We also meet in person bimonthly to discuss successes, challenges or opportunities for improvement with our workforce development programs regarding young adults.

So we came together as a group and asked ourselves, what are we experiencing in our community when working with young adults? Some of our experiences are listed below and they include, they need supportive services especially in shelter and transportation. They are experiencing homelessness and have a high level of need. Young adults aren't connecting with society. Young adults are more disengaged than they used to be. And young adults have a strong desire to become independent.

We also laid out our goals, and the cohort had us come together to identify several of them either for ourselves or the program. So they include continuing to strengthen ways to keep youth motivated, ensuring that participants are empowered to have the ability to take initiative towards making healthy, progressive steps forward in their professional and personal lives, listen more to participants to hear what they are up against and to see that they have their own answers to meet their goals, accompany participants in realizing their own potential and to facilitate growth, developing a stackable credential option for young adults, increasing enrollments, adding whole person components to offerings like resiliency, understanding trauma, and creating partnerships with business and educational community for tours, training-to-employment pipelines, apprenticeships, professional community workshops and more.

So there were two overarching themes that were apparent through the process of looking at our goals. One was human-centered design. We really needed to look at any problems that we had with implementing the program and look at it through a human perspective. Most importantly, how do we look at problems and solve them from a young adult's perspective. The other theme was partnerships and outreach. As a region, we struggled to outreach and get the word out to young adults about services that they can receive from us.

So we needed to stop thinking what we thought was good for young adults, and we needed to take a step in their shoes. And we also needed to take a step back and look at things from a macro level. We're so used to doing the same things and get into day-to-day habits and we lose sight of why we're doing things or if they're working for us. So because of the goal part, we were – we prototyped and continued to prototype and test different ways of service delivery using human-centered design aspects and pushing ourself to think outside the box.

So I mentioned that we wanted to look at things from a young adult's perspective. How do young adults communicate these days? We found that they use text or social media, so we surveyed our line staff and they overwhelmingly said that young adults prefer to text as a mode of communication. So what we did is we created a general text number for young adults that they could text to find out more about our program.

They can text a staff person and our – a person in our office will screen them for eligibility and send their information to the appropriate staff. We tell the young adult the name of the staff person, that they will be contacting them within 24 hours to ensure a warm handoff.

Finally, we also are in process of developing online workshops for young adults to complete from at home. These workshops are also mobile-friendly. Young adults are expected to watch several videos and answer questions regarding the videos they watch. Their answers are submitted, and the appropriate staff person will view them and follow up with their client regarding the answers. And we found that young adults prefer to do things online if available, such as even filling out an online interest form about our program.

So young adults weren't the only ones where we needed to take a human-centered design approach with. We also needed to reevaluate the needs of staff working with the young adults. The goals that the staff mentioned, they really needed it to learn how to work better with young adults and keep them motivated.

So we worked with a partner funded through our county's healthcare agency to provide motivational interviewing training. Motivational interviewing is a collaborative, person-centered form of guiding to elicit and strengthen motivation for change. Motivational interviewing is a goal-oriented, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients explore and resolve doubt. Compared with non-directive counseling, it's more focused and goal-oriented.

We're also working with career partners to provide training on how to better work with people with disabilities as well as those who are offenders.

We also want to make sure that staff are well trained, and processors are developed and we're continuously improving. So we're going to implement the Malcolm Baldrige framework into our young adult programs. The Baldrige Excellence framework has three parts, the criteria for performance excellence, core values and concepts, and scoring guidelines. We also encourage our staff to continue learning through opportunities such as conferences sponsored by our California Workforce Association.

As you know WIOA has three hallmarks of excellence, the needs of businesses and workers to drive workforce solutions and local boards accountable to the communities in which they're located. The one-stop centers or American job centers provide excellent customer service to job seekers and employers and focus on continuous improvement, and the workforce and the system support strong regional economies and plays an active role in community and workforce development. So California implemented a tool to measure these hallmarks of excellence. And we're going to implement it in our young adult program on a yearly basis to ensure continuous improvement.

We want to also continue hearing the voice of the customer, so we implemented an online customer satisfaction survey for customers, employers, partners and even staff to complete. So we required all staff to put the customer satisfaction surveys in their e-mail signatures so it's easy for individuals to access rather than filling out a paper form after a workshop or after leaving the one-stop center.

The second goal is to develop better partnerships and outreach. We were having a difficult time finding out of school young adults because they don't hang out at the same places like malls, arcades, etc. So we knew we needed to get on social media to reach our target audience. So we created a Facebook ad with a link to our online form like I mentioned earlier and a general number to text us at. So to date, we've reach more than 90,000 people and received more than 500 online interest forms.

We also created a general flier so that all of our service providers could use. I did mention we have three different service providers, so we wanted to make sure we had one unified message across the county and the region. We wanted to keep the flyer simple and easy to read. The blue flier on the left was developed and reviewed by young adults to make sure that the language was something that they understood and that resonated with them. The other flyer on the right side was developed for our education partners so we can send young adults for individual training accounts or ITAs. We created great partnerships with several private post-secondary schools to help us identify prospective participants, and so we can assist them with funding their schooling.

We're also working with a local agency that does advertising on buses in the county. We're working with them to do a four-week advertisement of internal banners across 100 buses in the county starting at the end of this month.

We developed a great relationship with the Orange County Competitive Integrated Local Partnership Agreement, or the OCLPA. The OCLPA is combined of several entities that work with people with disabilities and meets on a monthly basis. Many of the entities have several workforce development programs, so we're working closely to ensure that we're all aware of each other's programs and we can refer and co-enroll participants appropriately. We have a great working relationship with the department of rehabilitation and have staff co-located in their offices.

We're also involved in the Orange County Reentry Partnership, or OCREP. OCREP is a strong collaboration of 160 agencies and organizations dedicated to reducing recidivism in Orange County. And we're also part of the Department of Education's strengthening education and workforce development for justice-involved young adults. It's an initiative that's going to connect young adults who are justice involved with career technical education, workforce development and special education services.

Finally, we strengthened our relationships with adult schools such as the Huntington Beach Adult School and North Orange County Regional Consortium for Adult Education. One of our service providers currently co-locates with the adult school and receives referrals onsite of the students that need assistance with their high school diploma. Starting in July, we're also looking to rent a space across the adult school. Each of our service providers are also linked with a charter school, who is or will be co-located onsite.

The most unique one is the YouthBuild Charter School of California, who's going to be moving into our one-stop center starting in September. And the school's a competency-based drop out recovery school that seeks to provide high school education that leads to a diploma for students who come from low income families or have been pushed out of the traditional school system. Overall, the cohort challenge has helped us inspire to create these great relationships and services for young adults, and we're excited to see where they go.

MS. LANDESMAN: Thank you so much, Norman. And thank you. The Orange County team was super productive during the cohort and they did a lot of work outside in between sessions. And Norman, that was a great overview of some of the things that your team has been working on most recently, the past few months. And I know that there's several questions probably for you and, as Jen mentioned at the beginning of the webinar, please feel free to type in the chat box all your questions and we will get to as many of as we can at the end.

And Norman is staying on the line so that he can answer any of those that you might have specific to Orange County. But thank you again, Norman, for sharing with us your experiences or the team experiences. That was really great. Great. Great information and I'm sure there's going to be a lot of follow-up on that.

So I want to share with you that was – Norman kind of gave us a highlight of some of the work that one of the individual teams did. But as I mentioned before, there were also four challenge teams and these challenge teams were made up of representatives from each of the eight cohort teams. The four challenge teams were each tasked with defining a challenge area that they wanted to look at and come up with some kind of deliverable that could be used locally and for the system. And I want to give you a highlight of what some of these outcomes were.

And so, as Jen mentioned, in the file share on the bottom right of your screen, in addition to today's PowerPoint, there are several of the materials that I will be referring to over the next couple of slides. So I just want to give you a highlight of what there is there available for you to look at.

So first team I want to talk about is the recruitment, marketing and outreach strategy team. And what they did was they convened and they created a tip sheet for you to look at a couple of areas, how to better reach young adults, one section on how to speak young adults' – their language, social media outlets that were worth using when it came to outreach and recruitment, what to do if you're not social media savvy and other relevant facts around recruitment techniques and tips that they have found effective. And so at the end of this webinar or also be available on the page and materials that will be sent to you with the recording, you can actually look at the tip sheet that they developed.

One of the empowering youth teams – as I mentioned there were two empowering youth teams. But one of the empowering youth teams also created a tip sheet. And for them, they focused on some of the key areas that were mentioned before in kind of the common challenges. So this team was really interested in the idea of assessment techniques and questions that focused more on engaging the young person into the conversation versus gathering demographic information or other information that is required or important.

But they were really also interested in assessment survey questions and tools that would really engage young people. So they have a section in their tip sheet around questions that they have found to be effective during those initial conversations. They also share some staff tips and techniques that they have found.

There were two members on this team that were part of Orange County, and so Norman mentioned that there was motivational interviewing that were for all staff in Orange County. Those two staff members who was on this team in particular shared a lot of motivational interviewing techniques that they had learned with their team, and several members of their challenge team had also participated in motivational interviewing trainings as well. And so they thought it was important to share some of these techniques. And finally, they offer in their tip sheet several case scenarios and examples, where they were able to use some of these assessment surveys or some of the other techniques mentioned in the tip sheet as a way to engage young adults. And so they share their case scenarios with you in this tip sheet.

The third team, and unfortunately it's not available for download just today but will be coming soon, was the technology team. And they were tasked with using technology in innovative ways throughout program resources through our programming. And so their resource guide will be looking at relevant technology tools and just kind of an overview of how technology can be used in programming.

They're breaking it down into different things, the program as well as where technology might fit in those different phases. They're also offering recommendations and precautions for how to use technology effectively and appropriately and things to pay attention to as well as some tips or resources or tools that are no or low cost.

And finally, instead of me introducing the last outcome, we've asked Yolanda Scott, who was the team lead for the other empowering youth team, to share with you not only the deliverables that her team developed, but also just what her experiences are as part of the challenge team. So I'm going to hand it over to Yolanda Scott, who's the program manager of youth services at the Central Oklahoma Workforce Investment Board.

YOLANDA SCOTT: Thank you, Amy. Thank you all for joining us today. As said, we were working on a little bit more focused challenge tasks. And it was interesting as Norman was talking that they were talking about the human-centered design, and that happens to be one of the deliverables that we used for our challenge team. And it was based on that design.

So if you see on the slide here, this is just a quick shot of a deliverable that we used for our challenge team that is a quick at-a-glance. When we were working together as our challenge team, we talked about tip sheets, we talked about best practices, we talked about all different things that we could use as a deliverable.

And in researching, I came across a visual in WorkforceGPS in some of the resources that were available, and I saw something similar to this image and it just caught my attention. We all in our profession are busy, and if you're like I am, if given a white paper or a long article, I tend to put it aside to get the things that I can do quickly. And so I thought that this might be a tool that people can refer to in a quick way, and it's easy to digest in the end, so to just kind of keep us cognizant and mindful of what our goals are at hand.

So I'll go through briefly each one of these slides individually to kind of talk about what it is in alignment with this human-centered design. So the first one is the observation, and it really is just trying to understand our clients and what it is that they need for 16 to 24-year-olds. And a lot of times they don't know, but we can look for patterns, patterns of behavior or kind of thinking about what the barriers are and put aside up-front assumptions that we may have. So whether it's transportation, whether it's just systemic things that sometimes we end up falling into, and a lot of times we may have just done it the same way all the time. And if you go down and look at TEGLs and look at policy and those types of things, it's not necessarily written. So making an observation overall of what the issue is that we're dealing with.

So the next part is the ideations. The team includes the providers and the youth that you're trying to serve. So one of the main things that our whole challenge team – I kept trying to bring the focus back to is the fact that we need to engage and include the youth in the process. I think sometimes we get busy doing things that we know work, but a lot of times we don't stop for a moment to ask the students what they want or ask the youth what they want. So in this ideation on the image, you'll see I've got pictures of the adults and the youth all collaborating together and talking about ideas and brainstorming some ways to address the issues that's been identified.

Norman also talked about rapid prototyping. And it was interesting in the whole process of this challenge because we were actually practicing exactly that. We were kind of given some open-ended direction and we had to just jump in and do it. And I thrive on those type of things, but I know that it's difficult sometimes to do that.

But the idea is to just try it, use the information that you have and go with it. It's not going to be perfect the first time, and as long as I think we understand that, you test it and retest it and you keep working until you get there. So a quick project, come up with something to test and then go with it, whether it's a summer program, whether it's an activity, whether it's a concept for a workshop. But the prototyping is just going ahead and implementing that concept.

User feedback – so I've got the youth here. What worked? What didn't work? How do we make it better? What did we miss? I was able to use, Amy referred to us talking about what didn't work. And I was very transparent in our conversations of some projects that we're working on here in Oklahoma and the things just didn't work.

And we have reiterated two or three times, and it just did not yield the results that we were looking for. But we have enough dedicated people on the team who were willing to ask these questions. And with that information, go back to the drawing board and decide again, how do we go at it at a different angle to have the success that we're looking for? So once again, not only – I'm sorry. Not only are we asking the adults at the table, but we're talking to the youth.

An example even with a project that I did yesterday, we had this grand workshop for the month of June. Everything was ready to go and participants. We had volunteers, everything. But the youth just didn't show up, so the two that we had, we asked them just really honest questions. Why aren't they coming? What did we miss? And so we got some really good feedback and one of the comments from the young lady that was there said that if I hadn't read your flier, I wouldn't have been here either.

So that was an "Aha" moment for us to say, you know what? We need to make those connections and they have to be ongoing, which was another common conversation that we had with our challenge team about building relationships.

So iteration, this is take two. You'll see down at the bottom. You got to do it again. It's one of those try, try again. So using the feedback that we received from everyone involved in the process, go back and make appropriate changes and just keep testing it until you fine tune it. And it's going to take a couple times, but once you've done it then you find a model that will work most of the time and then you're able to go back and use the same model for different projects.

And then implementation, once again, once you've figured out what works and we can share it with everyone. And that's kind of the part of the challenge of the cohort team that I enjoyed with this is because we got a chance to hear from folks from across the country on things that were working.

And so I have taken a lot of those personally to try to implement. And you just have those "Aha" moments like, oh. I didn't think of this or I hadn't thought about that. Or a lot of times we have thought about it but you get caught up in that routine of things and it just needs to be brought back to your attention.

MS. LANDESMAN: Thank you, Yolanda. I just – was there anything else you wanted to add? I'm sorry.

MS. SCOTT: Well, no. I would – that's kind of – that's the primary deliverable that we had. But we did have some others, just kind of a template that you can use on your own. I believe it's in the attachments in the file share, where you can kind of sketch down the type of things that you're doing that work and be able to have a reference to. And the other thing that our challenge team was interested in is having the opportunities to have these conversations on a regular basis.

And so I threw out an idea of us meeting once a month just to be able to kind of have conversations and have a topic. And so one of our deliverables inadvertently became one wonderful Wednesday. So we'll be doing some calls with the individuals that was on this cohort challenge team on the first Wednesday of the month at 1:00 o'clock, just to kind of bounce some ideas off, brainstorm. We'll keep it brief. It'll be almost like a virtual stand-up if you will. But just remember, we'll be hitting those types. And then sometimes just being each other's cheerleaders and filling out some resources if necessary.

And then the other thing is just surveys, but that's that feedback, making sure you can get some surveys and getting that feedback is really necessary. And it's all about the human-centered design, and it could be at every level, it could be with your client, the youth that we're serving, but it's also with your business partners.

When we're having youth counsel meetings at a certain time during the day, businesses finally said, that's in the middle of our work day. Have it at 7:00 in the morning so that we can attend. And it's quick fixes a lot of times as long as you're willing to ask the questions, recognize that you fell short, and then make changes accordingly.

MS. LANDESMAN: Great. Thank you. Thank you so much, Yolanda. And as I mentioned, Yolanda was one of the team leads. And each of the four team leads, I will share with all of you that first it was volunteer and they helped not just make sure the calls continued regularly, but also really helped facilitate, shape the conversation. And it was great to see the feedback from the teen members and from the e-mail exchanges just talking about, as Yolanda said, just like the peer exchange and the sharing, but also the accolades towards the teen leaders as well as the products that came out of it and the tip sheets.

And I just wanted to clarify one thing that Yolanda mentioned. She was correct that in addition to the six-screen shot that you saw on her first slide as well as your individual slides, there also was a blank template that she used in the file share as a resource for you today as well. So that's all in the file share as well as the other two team tip sheets that I referred to before.

So thank you very much, Yolanda. I mean like I said, it was great seeing not just the challenge team, but going back to Norman and the cohort teams, just seeing all the e-mail exchanges and the information sharing and the updates as we did different sessions, the updates that Matt and I received. It was really great to see how much work was done during this cohort, through the cohort or separately and outside the cohort but during this time. And so I thank both of you for sharing with us your experiences both as a cohort team and then the challenge team perspective.

I'm now going to hand it over to my colleague, Matt Musante, who co-lead the cohort sessions with me. And you guys have submitted some really great questions, and some for us, some for Norman, some for Yolanda. So I'm going to hand it over to Matt and he'll try and get through as many questions as we can in the remaining five minutes we have.

MATT MUSANTE: Thank you, Amy. Thank you, Amy. And thanks to Norman and Yolanda for your presentations today. And thanks to everyone listening today and participating. And we've captured some questions that people have, both for Amy and myself as well as Norman and Yolanda.

So I'll start with a quick question. We were asked why did you do virtual sessions versus having cohort participants come in face-to-face? And the reason we structured it the way we did was because this cohort model of taking a hard look and examining a pretty broad issue and then using the wise perspectives of multiple teens throughout the country to create innovative solutions that can be beneficial to the entire field, that's stuff that is going to take a lot of time. It cannot be accomplished in a two or three-day retreat with all the teens.

So we leveraged several virtual sessions for everyone to connect as well as some smaller breakdown sessions for challenge teams to connect. So in order to pull that off, it had to be virtual. But we did use the Moodle platform, which Amy referenced as a landing ground for all of our collaborative work to live. And in between sessions the cohort members could communicate with one another about what they were working on, they could do polls, we had our session recordings there, PowerPoints. So we were able to simulate an in-person environment as much as possible using our virtual tools.

All right. Okay. I answered your question. Next I'm going to hand it over to Norman. You were asked will the workshops in Orange County still be available to the youth in Orange County or will it be open to anyone that will be online? Norman?

MR. ALBANCES: So unfortunately, we're going to keep the workshops here for us just because they're specific to the needs of our participants. We found that the workshops needed to be a little bit longer because we usually pay for our participants to come in. We pay them a stipend to sit in there and attend a workshop. So you can reach out to me and we can kind of help you. We did it through Google Forms, so it's pretty simple. So if you need assistance with it, then just let us know.

There was also another question about if, do you actually learn from online workshops. And I think that goes back to our whole prototyping human-centered design, and figuring out if this actually works or not, since this is something that we're just testing out. We're going to see over the past few months and the next few months to see if it actually works or if, actually the youth prefer it or they take something out of it rather than having to go into an office and do it.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thanks, Norman. And while I have you, there's another one for you about your outreach with social media. This person – this participant said, I think it's great to use Facebook ads and online social media to attract new participants. You said you were able to reach 90,000 individuals and received 500 interest forms from those people. How are you able to track the data further to see how many people, how many of those interest forms were eligible for your program, began the program, and then the number who completed your program?

MR. ALBANCES: So this is something new that we've been doing. They do fill out an interest form into a google form, and all of the results from those forms go into a spreadsheet. So we are tracking to see how many are coming through, and then how many are being referred over.

And we're currently in the process to see how many are actually being enrolled in the program. We do get a lot of interest forms from everywhere throughout Orange County, even LA county and surrounding counties too. And it really depends on what they're not – if the young adult follows through and also meets the eligibility criteria for WIOA.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thank you, Norman. Okay. Let's see what's next. We have a couple other questions coming in. For the human-centered design group, what service do they – did you use for the texting line?

MR. ALBANCES: I think that one's for me again. So we use Google Voice. It's a free service, so you can go onto Google Voice and it will give you a free number that you can use either for calling or for texting, but we primarily use it to text the young adults.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thank you. I believe this one's for Yolanda, so Yolanda correct me if this is not for you. Besides referring to community resources, how do you help with life issues such as lack of housing or food and security? Were there specific, concrete, programmatic ways to help address issues like this?

MS. SCOTT: A lot of times, with those type of needs, we have a strong partnership. So we are working obviously on referrals. We actually have a pretty strong partnership with our home and city housing authority that we're continuing to build, looking at the self-sufficiency housing program.

And of course, we have also visits that's here locally that will work with food pantry and clothing, those type of things. And so we really just try to communicate as much as possible with our partners, and so if there's something that we under the WIOA cannot directly address, then we at least have a go-to or a partner that can help address those needs.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thank you. And I'm going to combine two questions here for Norman that are similar. So one is aside from Facebook and bus ads, what other methods have you employed to find out of school youth? And then of the social media outlets, which ones have you found most to be most useful?

MR. ALBANCES: So for social media it's interesting. We found that Instagram wasn't as useful because we found that a lot of the young adults that are looking at our ads don't click on the links to them. So usually the link goes to the interest form for them to fill out so we know to contact them, so we actually found that Facebook ads worked better than Instagram ads.

And also, the second part of the question is other than we're doing social media and bus ads, we've been really working with our community partners, especially the adult schools because the adult schools are on both under WIOA just like us.

They have the exact same performance requirements, and so we're really trying to work closely with them to find all of those that are in their high school equivalency programs trying to get their high school diplomas, and concurrently enrolling them in our WIOA Title I program at the same time.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thank you. And this one can be for anyone here, meaning Yolanda or Norman or Amy too. What is the most effective form of media to reach youth without internet access on home or personal computers or both?

MS. SCOTT: I have to be honest. Just I think sometimes we pin too much on media and technology because we still, just like the comment that I made early. The young lady said, if I hadn't have met you then I wouldn't have come to the event. So I think we really need to kind of leverage all of those things, not just the media and solely rely on that, but just that as one of the tools.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thank you, Yolanda. And Norman, did you want to address that question as well from your perspective?

MR. ALBANCES: For us, I think we've been really trying to pound the pavement recently and just kind of going out and doing it the old way of getting out and walking and looking, going to places and talking with youth in the skate parks and other locations. So if they don't even have access to social media or internet, it's really kind of word of mouth is one of the best things for us.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thank you. And thanks to everyone for your great questions. Sorry if we didn't address your question. We tried to get as many as we could in. And to tap things off, I'll hand it back over to Lisa Dieterle.

MS. DIETERLE: Thank you, Matt. And thank you, everybody, for participating in today's webinar. That's a big thing to Maher & Maher and to all of the youth cohort members. We hope you enjoyed the reports out from the youth cohort and have gleaned some valuable tools and learning that you can use in working with youth. Again, thanks for joining us and today's presentation and resources will be available on WorkforceGPS.

(END)