**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Evaluation Information and Resources for RESEA Programs**

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LAURA CASERTANO: With that, I'm going to move us right into today's webinar. Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's "Evaluation Information and Resources for RESEA Programs" webinar.

And I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Larry Burns. He's a reemployment coordinator, Department Of Labor, Office of Unemployment Insurance. Larry, take it away.

LARRY BURNS: Thanks, Laura. And good afternoon or morning, depending on where you're joining from, to everyone. Welcome to the second RESEA webinar of 2019, "Evaluation Information and Resources for RESEA Programs."

This webinar is intended to supplement the current operating guidance, which is Unemployment Insurance Program Letter 7-19 in our previous webinar held last Thursday, by providing a deeper dive into the evaluation related resources available to you. In case you missed last week's webinar or you want to revisit today's presentation, recordings of both webinars will be available on WorkforceGPS in the next few days.

We just want to note that RESEA is a team sport; we're bringing in a lot of different partners to help us implement the new legislation. Today you'll be hearing from our RESEA evaluation partners, both from within the department of labor and also our contracted partners. They'll focus mostly on resources for you to use to develop your fiscal year 2019 RESEA proposals.

As Gay said last week, our goal this year is to give you this information through CLEAR, which would provide you with enough information to justify your service delivery strategies for this transition year and meet the higher moderate cause we'll test. RESEA was designed based on evidence, including some of the studies included in CLEAR.

Having said that, we strongly encourage states to also embrace the spirit of continuous improvement and consider what you might want to learn about and begin evaluating in your programs now to make future programs even better and more effective for the people you're serving. Today, the team will point you on a few resources to begin with thinking about conducting new evaluations and we'll talk much more about this soon.

The members of the team we'll be hearing from today will include myself, Lawrence Burns, reemployment coordinator with the office of unemployment insurance, Megan Lizik, senior evaluation specialist with the department of labor's chief evaluation office, Gloria Salas-Kos with the department's office of policy development and research, Andrew Clarkwest, RESEA evaluation project director of Abt Associates, Sioban Mills De La Rosa, RESEA evaluation technical assistance task leader with Abt Associates.

Before we get started with the presentation, we wanted to get a bit of a feel for where everybody stands currently with their experience using evaluations and research. So we ask, at the beginning, to – (inaudible) – a poll and we'll give you a minute or two here to fill in the poll now to just get a little bit of a sense on where everybody's starting from.

So if you want to take a few seconds to read over this poll question and answer. You can also use the chat feature if you want to provide some feedback that's not covered on the poll question. So if you have some additional insight or an answer that's not listed here, feel free to use that chat feature. So I'll give you just a few seconds to do that and we'll tally it up.

So based on the responses coming in to it, and it looks like the vast majority of people fall into those first two options, either not much or some experience with evaluation and research use in programs. So this information really helps us to shape our technical assistance and the conversation that we'll be having today and also future technical assistance.

So we really appreciate your input on this. For today's agenda, we already covered introductions, but we're also going to be talking in-depth about the RESEA program evaluation that's ongoing, give you some background about the new requirements pertaining to the evaluation research and also talk about evidence resources for states, the current evidence-based and other tools and resources that are available to you.

And also, a little bit about early evaluation technical assistance, we are planning to do some technical assistance to help you guys implement the new RESEA program. So with that out of the way, I'm going to hand the presentation over to Megan Lizik to start talking a little bit about the RESEA evaluation.

MEGAN LIZIK: Great. Thanks, Larry and hello, everyone. My name is Megan Lizik and I want to start off by talking a little bit about our new RESEA evaluation. In September, 2018, DOL's Chief Evaluation Office awarded a new 3-year contract to Abt Associates with the Urban Institute and Capital Research Corporation to provide support on implementing the evaluation requirements in the statute.

We'll be working closely within DOL with our colleagues from OUI as well as from the office of policy development and research throughout this project. The Abt team brings together highly-qualified staff in the many areas the project requires, including and importantly evaluation technical assistance that we'll talk about later today.

Over the next few years, you'll hear from this project in a few ways. I'll run through a few briefly and after today's session, we'll be sharing a one-pager on the evaluation. One of the things DOL has asked the research team to do is to conduct an implementation study of states RESEA programs so we can better understand what they look like, how you're bundling various services to best serve people in your states and what elements might appear new or potentially promising.

This type of information is valuable to you, DOL and others interested in continuous improvement of the RESEA program and for the people you're serving through it. So thank you in advance for your partnership as we and the Abt team begin preparing for this study. Also, as I mentioned, Abt will be conducting evaluation technical assistance under this project.

At a high level, the evaluation TA will help build your technical evaluation knowledge and capacity to meet the requirements of the legislation when you conduct RESEA programs. We are still developing what this looks like, as Larry said, and want to hear from you about what you see as your evaluation TA needs and one of our Abt colleagues will talk more about this later today.

Finally, from both of these paths and other parts of the project, the Abt team will be producing user-friendly documents, like tip sheets, briefs as well as more technical reports that will be of interest to you. All of these will be posted on the chief evaluation office's website as well as be shared through the RESEA community of practice on WorkforceGPS. Now I'll turn it over to Andrew to give us a quick look at the evaluation requirements.

ANDREW CLARKWEST: Thank you, Megan. And I do also want to thank a number of the states, as Megan mentioned, some of the implementation study activities. We have actually reached out to a few states on those clarifying calls and states have been very, very helpful and responsive and we really appreciate the information you've given thus far and we look forward to talking to you more.

So today, we're also excited, as an Abt team, to work with states in the coming months to help you learn more about the new evaluation requirements and including how to use existing evidence and plan for evaluating RESEA programs. Now, I'm going to kick off today's discussion with a short summary of the statutory requirements around evaluation and evidence.

Then after that, we'll jump into a summary of the existing evidence and connect you with some tools and resources that would help you explore the evidence on your own. Then after that, we'll discuss what kind of technical assistance our team may be able to provide states and also ask for your thoughts on what kind of technical assistance would be most helpful to you.

But with that, I'm going to jump into the statutory requirements. So as Larry mentioned, the 2018 BBA requires states to use evidence-based interventions and to evaluate those programs that aren't yet supported by causal evidence. And of course, starting in fiscal year 2023, some additional requirements kick in. But then what does that mean for states practically speaking?

As you think about the RESEA programs that you want to implement, and presumably are already implementing, states will need to consult the existing evidence base, that is existing research studies that examine RESEA-like interventions to both inform your program designs as well as your decisions about whether you want or need to conduct evaluations of your programs.

Now, we'll talk to you more about this later today and we'll be providing more assistance to states in the near future about both of those items. Now, I want to say a little bit more about what we mean by evaluation. Of course, evaluation – obviously, we just had a poll on it. It's a broad term that refers to systematic methods for collecting, analyzing and using information that answers questions about projects, policies and programs.

Now, generally, organizations that are interested in evaluating their programs must first sketch out an evaluation plan, which identifies what you want to learn, the research questions, and the methods and data that the evaluation will use to answer those questions.

In the case of RESEA, the statute requires that evaluations examine the programs effect, that is, its impact, on UI claimants' employment outcome, such as employment and earnings and also on UI claim lengths. Now, we talk about impact. This is a crucial concept here and it's necessary for satisfying the statutory requirements.

Now, to say that a program has impact means that the outcomes of those served are different from what they would've been without the program or services. Through RESEA, this means that the employment UI duration of claimants selected for RESEA are different from what they would've been if they hadn't been selected.

Now, this is a tricky question, because we don't actually get to see what RESEA participants' outcomes would've been if they hadn't been in the program and this is what in fact evaluations are for, to address that challenge and figure out how the interventions changed outcomes from what they would've been otherwise.

Now, a number – and some of you may be more familiar with this than others, but a number of methods exist that evaluations may use to estimate program impacts. Some of these provide stronger evidence than other ones do with randomized controlled trials or RCTs being the most well-known and the approach that provides the strongest evidence.

We'll talk more about impact and impact evaluations in later webinars, but won't go much more into it here. I will mention that DOL's Clearinghouse for Labor Research and Evaluations [sic] or CLEAR reviews various types of studies, including impact evaluations. CLEAR also rates the quality of this kind of study.

That is, CLEAR rates how confident we can be that the study findings really do reflect the impact of the program as opposed to something else. And Megan now is going to provide an introduction to CLEAR after which we'll dig a little bit more into some of the studies CLEAR has reviewed.

MS. LIZIK: Thanks, Andrew. So CLEAR is a central source of research and information on labor-related topics and its primary goal is to make labor research more accessible to a variety of audiences, such as state and local practitioners, DOL program administrators and other policymakers, researchers and the public so that it can inform decisions about labor policies and programs.

Basically, you can think of CLEAR as a place to go to see how big of a body of research is out there, what it says about particular programs or strategies reaching their goals and how confident we can be in those findings. CLEAR does this by conducting systematic evidence reviews on labor topics, including studies funded by DOL as well as other studies with published reports and then summarizing each study in what we call a profile.

Profiles are short, plain language summaries of the research that provide information about a study's purpose, context, findings and strengths and limitations. Studies estimating causal impact, like Andrew just talked about, are also rated high, medium or low according to the strengths of the evidence they produced, which again, is a quick indicator of how confident we can be in the results.

And also, as Andrew mentioned, these are the kind of studies the new legislation is most interested in. In CLEAR, we use gas-gauge indicators to tell you the rating of the impact study and I've put those here for your reference.

Finally, some topic areas in CLEAR have syntheses, which try to give an overall summary of the state of the evidence or distill the so-what that comes out of the systematic evidence review, what we know, what the evidence base looks like and where gaps might be for further research and evaluation.

As you begin to think about what your RESEA programs may look like, CLEAR is a great place to go to understand what relevant research has been done in this area and what the findings are for those interventions or bundles of services, in particular, contexts as well as give you a sense for what questions remain.

So now we'll take a deeper dive into CLEAR and what some of the resources are that CLEAR has and then later on we'll talk a little bit more about what happens if you're thinking about new evaluations. CLEAR includes more than 600 profiles of studies of labor research and most of the literature included in CLEAR's database are part of specific topic areas, like the one I'm highlighting here, the reemployment topic area.

Each topic area is driven by a protocol that outlines the parameters of that topic area's systematic search. This search is intended to find all the literature in a given topic area that meets those parameters. The reemployment topic area will most likely be the most useful ones for you to check out as you develop your RESEA proposals.

It includes studies of interventions that practitioners have tried to help UI claimants get back to work faster. Below is the link to the reemployment topic area where you can find the short profiles of more than 40 studies of reemployment interventions.

While this is good news in terms of being a starting point to find evidence to support the kinds of programs you're thinking of implementing, we realize this is a lot to read through and digest on your own in a short period of time. So now I'm going to talk to you about a few other tools CLEAR has to help you start making sense of the evidence base.

First, the reemployment synthesis. This is a three-page plain-language document that can do a few things. It could tell you what kinds of interventions have been studied so far, such as REA programs, job search assistance services and more, it can also give you key takeaways from that evidence base.

For example, that the majority of reemployment interventions studied have been shown to reduce weeks of benefit received and amount of benefits paid and it gives you a sense of the evidence base in a table format so you can get a big picture overview of what the evidence base looks like, how many studies we found and how positive the findings are in different outcomes of interest in those studies, like employment outcomes.

Finally, the synthesis identifies gaps in the research, which may be useful as you're thinking about how to keep building the evidence base. As a companion to the synthesis, the reemployment supplement piece gives you a more detailed look at the information provided in the synthesis.

It provides a brief description of the findings for all the reports reviewed in the reemployment topic area and includes links that will send you directly to the study profiles in CLEAR where you can learn more about those specific studies and interventions. It's organized by sections that correspond to the intervention categories identified in the synthesis, again, such as REA, job search assistance, profiling and more.

This is a good place to start if you want to find a list of studies about REA, for example, each study's causal evidence rating and its impacts and then link directly to the profiles in CLEAR to learn more.

Finally, I'll mention that while we're only giving you direct links to the resources here, there are also slides in the appendix that can help you navigate the CLEAR website. Now, I'll turn it over to Andrew to continue our journey into the evidence included in CLEAR. Andrew.

MR. CLARKWEST: Thanks. So the research in synthesis that Megan described provides an overview of what's known from studies of reemployment interventions.

Now, we're also in the process of delving deeper into this evidence to figure out the best way to help states understand what's there and how to use it, but since we know that states need to describe the evidence of effectiveness for programs that they're proposing now in FY-2019, we're going to spend a little time taking a closer look at the evidence with you so that you'll be more comfortable exploring it further on your own.

So CLEAR's reviewed, as you can see, a relatively large number of studies and I suspect that you're not particularly excited about the prospect of reading through all 50-plus of them. So here we're going to help you identify a subset of those studies that are of particular interest, because number one, they examine the most relevant interventions and two, they've been found by CLEAR to provide credible evidence of positive impact.

Now, CLEAR's reemployment topic area, as Megan was saying, examines studies of several different types of programs or services that aim to get UI claimants back to work faster. Some of these are more relevant than others. Many of them are relevant to RESEA.

For example, REA programs are, of course, similar to RESEA in many respects and RESEA programs share elements of WPRS programs, including, in many cases, how claimants are selected as well as requirements to participate in some reemployment services and employer contact requirements and job search assistance are also components of RESEA programs.

So we'll keep all of those, but we'll drop these last couple categories that are less relevant. Now, among the set of studies that are of the most relevant programs to you, we can also focus on studies that CLEAR has determined provide evidence that is of good quality.

Referring back to our earlier discussion of impact evaluations, this means that CLEAR has given them a higher on moderate rating, finding that the studies were designed and carried out in a way that allows us to be highly or at least reasonably confident that the effects that the studies found really do reflect the effects of the program rather than something else.

Now, studies with a low rating, it indicates that we can't be confident that the estimated effects reported by the study are due to the intervention. This doesn't mean that the study's results aren't useful for any purpose, but that they should be interpreted with caution.

So now that we've whittled this down to a stead of good quality studies of interventions that are relevant, the next question is what are the studies that actually found positive impacts on the outcomes that we're interested in employment in UI duration? Now, many of the studies that are covered here either don't examine impacts on employment or don't find positive impact on employment.

Only two studies showed a – found positive impacts on both UI duration and employment. Those are two studies of REA programs in Nevada and Florida respectively. Now, those two might be of high interest to you since they're fairly recent and many components of REA programs are similar to those in RESEA programs, but you might also find it useful to look at studies that found positive impacts on employment or earnings.

Here we point you to three of those studies, two that evaluated WPRS programs and one that evaluated job search in Texas. But then with that set of studies, the question is how can evidence from those studies be used to inform my RESEA proposal? So I noticed that somebody actually just asked a very good question about generalizability of similar studies.

We can't get into that too much here, but we can provide some brief information on how you – you know, in a very intuitive level of how you go through the information in the studies. So as Megan mentioned, CLEAR has study profiles that summarize the programs and it also provides links to the original study manuscripts. So we suggest taking a closer look at what the intervention studies would like.

That is, what were the programs components or elements, what were the characteristics of the setting, is it urban or rural, what were the economic conditions, etc. and what are the populations served?

And thinking about those things or thinking about the way that those things align or don't align with your program and your state's current context can help you think about how those studies might indeed provide evidence and suggest that the kind of program that you're planning might also be effective, to use – (inaudible) – questions – term generalizability, which in other words, is how likely are you to see the same type of results?

So if you don't see programs similar to yours, you can still learn from them. For example, you may find that the programs with positive results have an interesting element or a component that you haven't tried yet, but might be interested in implementing in your own state. In that case, you might consider making these changes to your program to better align it with programs that have been found to be effective up to now.

Of course, you may also feel confident in the effectiveness of your current approach and not inclined to change it. If there's not existing evidence for the approach that you're currently using or if you just want to learn more about your program and maybe ways to improve it, you can also propose conducting an evaluation to demonstrate its effectiveness.

So here the reemployment synthesis that Megan mentioned provides links to CLEAR's reviews of all studies in the reemployment topic area. On this, the slide has links to the five studies that I just highlighted. Some of you may be very quick transcribers, but for the rest of you, the deck will be posted on WorkforceGPS and you can access it there to get the links and the links should also be in that reemployment synthesis that Megan mentioned.

Now, we're not going to walk through all the individual studies, but we did want to provide one example of the type of information that's relevant to learn about programs from studies. So Nevada REA is obviously the most prominent example of a study that was found to be of high quality and it was a study that found positive impacts.

In fact, that program was found to have particularly large impacts and DOL has highlighted it as a model when RESEA was developed because of its, and I'm going to quote from the – (inaudible) – integrated provision of REAs with provision of reemployment services. So that combination seemed to allow better access to appropriate reemployment services for UI claimants.

That wasn't the only distinguishing feature of Nevada REA, that was an important one. A couple of other distinguishing programmatic features were the timing when claimants were selected to participate. This occurred two to three weeks after the start of a claim compared to a lot of other states that didn't select claimants for another couple weeks further on into the claim.

Nevada also immediately placed participants' UI claims on hold if they failed to attend a meeting as opposed to other states that had more of a grace period or had opportunities to reschedule. So these are a set of things that you might want to highlight when you're thinking about this thing was – this program was found to be effective, what are the important things to know about that program that might explain that.

Of course, another important element is who was served. For Nevada, the population was fairly broad, limited only to those without an existing expectation of returning to work or who were not already in the training program. Claimants attached to a union hiring hall were also excluded. Now, none of that is very unusual. The setting for Nevada is fairly unique.

Of course, Nevada geographically is a highly urban state with urban areas sort of spread out across a wide area of the state, but of particular importance is that the Nevada REA study was conducted in a – at the height of the recession with Nevada being a state whose economy was very hard hit by the financial crisis.

So it's possible that the impacts of the REA program might've been different under better economic conditions when job options would've been more plentiful and the population of claimants may have been somewhat harder to serve. So these, again, is just the type of things – this is not to say anything definitive about Nevada, but the type of things to look at as you're going through relevant studies.

Now, there are a few other things to keep in mind as you're going through studies. There may be other studies of interventions in CLEAR that would be useful for you to look at, including a number of studies of interventions that were found to reduce UI claim duration, but either didn't study earnings or didn't have an effect on earnings.

When you're doing that, remember to consider the study's rating, which will tell you how confident you can be in the findings. Looking at each study separately will also only answer questions about whether that intervention worked in that specific context, where and for whom. There may be a number of studies that are out there of similar interventions.

We're working with DOL on ways to help synthesize across those, but for now, it's important to remember that any individual study may be a fluke or may be small. And so it didn't find impacts, because it didn't have a large enough sample. It's also important to know that some of this information will be useful to you now and we'll share more insights soon from evaluation evidence on effectiveness of interventions.

The resources we're developing are intended to help you plan for implementation of – or plan for your, say, work on development of your future plans. Obviously, your 2019 plans are coming out now. For the longer term, the evidence base will of course grow and change in the future as more studies are conducted and these additional studies will help us learn more about which interventions are effective. And so what we know and what can be determined to be effective will be – may change in later years from what it is now.

And with that, I'm going to turn it over to Gloria who is going to provide descriptions of some evaluation resources.

GLORIA SALAS-KOS: Thank you, Andrew. And I'm going to get started by just kind of going over what we started with earlier today, which was a poll to sort of understand where everyone is in terms of understanding how – anything about evaluations and evidence.

And that poll tells us that there are people who still want to learn a little bit more and this section is more of a broader overview of the resources that we have available if you really want to know where to start and what's available for our grantees, in particular, grantees that are in the ETA programs and where to start. So as we mentioned in our last webinar, workforce systems strategies is one of those sites.

It provides profiles of practices that are in the workforce development system to help you make some informed decisions about outcomes in job seekers in your programs. These resources are peer reviewed by ETA staff and are organized by the types of activities conducted in our programs, target populations and programs like UI, RESEA and WIOA.

It also includes categories, such as geographic locations among others. So if you have an interest in seeing the types of WSS resources that are included in your state, the menu in the resource library there allows you to select search criteria that narrows down all of those resources by state and programs. Likewise, the evaluation and research hub is also a new community.

While it is primarily created to address the evaluation requirements in the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, we think that the current resources can help inform or support evaluation needs of all ETA-funded programs. As a WorkforceGPS member, you can sign up and receive regular updates whenever there are new materials or resources available.

And just to give you an example of some of the work that was done to set up this site, as part of our efforts, we worked with state workforce agencies to identify technical assistance needs and we invited several representatives to participate in this effort. The first set of resources included in the evaluation and research hubs were developed to address their concerns about how to conduct evaluations.

The first one on the list, the evaluation readiness assessment tool, is designed to help state workforce agencies develop a clear understanding of their readiness to conduct rigorous evaluations, identify their strengths and deficiencies, establish feasible steps to improve evaluation capacity and to meet the WIOA evaluation requirements.

A practical format of this tool is intended to facilitate structured dialogue among policy research and program staff, allow the following five evaluation topic areas, evaluation culture and awareness, funding strategies, data management, staff skills, capacity and knowledge and strategic planning. The second item on the list is the evaluation and design and implementation assessment tool.

It's a tool intended for state workforce agencies that are ready to conduct rigorous evaluations. Its main purpose is to highlight the major design and implementation issues that agencies should consider when planning an evaluation project. It is also meant to help identify challenges, potential opportunities in areas where technical assistance or additional resources may be needed.

The evaluation design and implementation assessment tools five sections are organized into the following topic areas. Evaluation design and research questions, data collection and analysis plans, evaluator selection requirements, participant rights and reporting activities. When you have a few minutes, you might also want to visit the evidence says resource page about work-based learning on this site.

It's a literature review developed in response to technical assistance needs identified by the evaluation hub peer learning cohort.

This page identifies 11 different studies that were used – that used rigorous evaluation methods to answer questions, like to what extent were work-based learning strategies effective at raising employment rates and earnings of the program participants relative to non-participants, what other benefits do work-based learning strategies provide to participants relative to non-participants and how do these vary by target population?

These resources – the resources in the related content section of that page are also presented in various forms to help anyone who – to meet the needs of anyone who wants to discuss, replicate or help inform others about the types of program models, targeted populations and research questions, outcomes and evaluation methods that are part of these types of programs.

Finally, as you begin to think about how your evaluations will be included in the later body of evidence, please consider CLEAR's causal evidence guidelines, as Megan mentioned earlier. Think about the study quality and the elements and how higher quality studies can give you more confidence in the findings that have been discussed in this session.

You can learn more about weighting the strengths of the methods used by checking out the guidelines themselves and consider how they can be used to inform the designs of your new studies. And now we'll turn it over to Siobhan who will talk to you about what's next in the evaluation TA.

SIOBAHN MILLS DE LA ROSA: Thanks, Gloria. Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Siobhan Mills De La Rosa and I'm the evaluation technical assistance lead for the RESEA evaluation. I'm really excited to share our initial plan through evaluation technical assistance with you today and I look forward to hearing more of your thoughts on what tools and resources would be most helpful to you.

As Megan mentioned earlier, DOL has contracted the Abt team to provide evaluation technical assistance to states applying for and receiving RESEA funds. We're designing our evaluation technical assistance, or ETA as we're calling it, to be useful to you throughout the phases of your RESEA grant as you're designing your programs, implementing them and possibly evaluating them.

To this end, our ETA will likely include a mix of resources to guide your evaluation efforts. We plan to develop a range of materials as well as a webinar series that looks for a number of key evaluation topics to help to build your capacity to use, understand and develop evidence. Well, we want to hear more from you about what your ETA needs are.

We anticipate we may cover topics like planning for and testing impact evaluations, navigating evaluation procurement, budgeting and timeline issues and assessing data for evaluation. We also plan to do more customized ETA through state-specific or small group conference calls and review of state materials once we know more of what your needs are.

In addition to these resources, ETA team will also have a dedicated email address so states can send their evaluation related concerns. At the end of the day, the ETA team wants to be a resource to you as you look to plan and implement your RESEA program. Let's talk a little bit more about some potential ETA topics.

The list you see on your screen is really designed to get your team thinking about the kinds of evaluation topics we'd like to learn more about over the coming months. This list certainly isn't final and we're going to update it once we hear more feedback from you about what your needs are and what you'd like to see. First on the list here is evaluation capacity building.

ETA in this area will introduce staff to fundamental evaluation concepts and terms, provide an easy-to-understand review of the evidence base, provide tools to help your team assess the program's readiness for evaluation and explore the types of evaluation designs and what you can learn from them.

ETA in this area is really designed to help staff build familiarity with evaluation concepts and tell our staff to use evidence to inform program development and evaluation design. Ultimately, it's to help you meet the statutory requirements and meet your own state needs. Second on the list is impact evaluation. As Andrew discussed earlier, the statute requires interventions to be supported by causal evidence.

ETA on impact evaluations – (inaudible) – the kinds of evaluations designed to lead the causal evidence, how you can incorporate impact evaluation procedures into your existing program and what methods and analytical tools you can use to ensure your findings detected to program's true impact. Third, we can provide ETA on the practical pieces of planning and conducting an evaluation.

These include topics like how to design evaluation, budget and advertise for evaluation services, procure a third-party evaluator, set appropriate evaluation timelines, protect human subjects of research and securely store and share data. ETA guidance in this area will focus on the practical day-to-day consideration that you all need to think about to ensure your evaluation runs smoothly.

Finally, in conjunction with DOL, we can provide additional help on implementing the statutes' evaluation requirements. Some information, like the exact requirements for high or moderate causal ratings are not yet available. When this information is released, the ETA team could help states interpret this information and make an action plan.

Now I'm going to take some time to hear from you. In a moment, we're going to post a few poll questions to learn more about the ETA you'd like to see. Please use your mouse to make your selection. You have 20 seconds to read the question and select your answer. All feedback will be provided to the ETA team to help refine our ETA strategy.

So our first poll question, which key elements of program evaluations in evidence are the most important to you? And you're going to see two polls pop up on your screen here. The first is going to be focused on planning and capacity building. So your options here are evaluation culture and awareness, funding strategies, data management, staff skills, capacity and knowledge and strategic planning.

Go ahead, we're going to take a couple seconds, you can select as many options as you'd like and this will really help us think about what kinds of topics should we be hitting in the next couple of months. I'll give everybody a couple of seconds.

All right. And it looks like folks are really interested to see more on staff skills, capacity and knowledge as well as data management and strategic planning.

So we'll be sure to hit up those very important topics in our next set of ETA. The second part here is going to ask you about evaluation design and implementation. So you should see a second poll pop up and your options here are going to be evaluation design and research questions, data collection and analysis planning, evaluator selection, participant rights, including the protection of human subjects of research and reporting.

So go ahead, take a couple minutes. Again, you can select as many options as you'd like, but this will really help us think about what evaluation design implementation topics are most important to you. It looks like we're seeing a lot of evaluation design and research questions. That's sort of the bread and butter of what we're doing here.

And then data collection and analysis planning, I like that, too, as someone who collects a lot of data all the time, I have to say. It's a great topic. We'll give everybody a couple more seconds just in case you have some stragglers. I think we can go ahead and close that poll too. So now we're going to move onto our final poll and that is really about what kinds of ETA resources are most helpful to you.

And your options – you have a couple of options here and again, you can select as many as you'd like, but these include extensive written guidance, this might include toolkits of interviews, sort of your more detailed and better kind of resources, short written guidance, like desk guides, checklists, tip sheets, that kind of thing, webinar series, which could sort of tackle a range of different topics, depending on what we're hearing back from you all, round tables and group question and answer sessions, a peer learning community, one-on-one conference calls with ETA staff and then ETA staff review of your written material.

Those might include review of a piece for third-party evaluator procurement, evaluation design plans, things of that nature. It seems like we're seeing a pretty good mix across the board here of what folks are interested in. Looks like there's a big interest in written guidance, both extensive and short as well as customized TA with the ETA staff.

So that's great for us to know. At this point, that should've summed up what I talked about. Again, we're really excited to work with you. There is an email address you can send your evaluation-related concerns to, it's RESEA@abtassoc.com. It is at the end of these slides. So no need to write it down. But we look forward to working with you. And at this point, I am going to hand it over to Megan.

MS. LIZIK: Great. Thanks so much, Siobhan. In just a minute, we're going to be getting into the questions and discussion.

So if you have those or as they're coming to your mind, feel free to put them in the main chat, but before we dive into those, we did want to give Gay Gilbert, our administrator, the office of unemployment insurance, to have some closing remarks for us. Gay.

GAY GILBERT: Oh, thanks, Megan and hi, everybody. So there – as I was listening to the webinar, there were several things that I wanted to kind of share with you and observe, I guess, as we kind of move through this transition year and I guess that's one of the big things I'd like to reinforce, that this is a transition year. But having said that, we have to prepare for the real deal.

So during this transition year, it is my sense that we – that most of you are operating RESEA programs that are currently covered by the way we currently define high and moderate causal evidence. We designed the program to be that way. And so I have a fair comfort level that most of you are OK. I do strongly encourage you, though, however, to do your own evidence review and to start becoming familiar with that.

So if someday an auditor comes up to you and says, how did you, in 2019, know that your service delivery design for RESEA was higher or moderate causal with regard to being supported by higher or moderate causal evidence, you'll be able to answer them.

So this is going to be a journey together and again, we're going to be providing more technical assistance along the way to sort of help you with that, but this really is going to require states to start to dig into this challenge. When the program folks on the Hill created this legislation, I think they clearly intended to push for the building of new evidence.

In fact, in our conversations with them, they were clear about the fact that while the Nevada study was great, it's now becoming a little dated and it also doesn't accommodate, I think, a lot of the differences in the way the states operate. So that's why the implementation study is going to be really important to us. We're going to learn a lot more about sort of what are the nuances in the way you all deliver your programs.

It's going to help us understand where there might be gaps or opportunities to build new evidence and that's going to be really, really helpful. I will say that as you all are digging into this challenge, the focus, when you do evaluations, is on doing good evaluations and rigorous evaluations.

In order to start down the road a few years out when we're required to do some required percentage of studies that have the high and moderate causal evidence, that means that the studies that you've done to build evidence as states and perhaps as we have done with you will need to get that higher or moderate rating and that means that the studies have to be rigorous.

And so we are going to – you are going to need to truly build your capacity in this arena. And kind of following onto that, I would say that as you're thinking about how to do that, the partnerships are really important.

I strongly encourage you to start to develop new relationships, if you don't have them already, with your labor market information directors who may be resource-oriented with your local or your state universities to – who might partner with you on evaluations and in some cases, may even help subsidize them. So this is a partnership endeavor, I think, and really encourage you to make some new friends out there if you don't have them already.

So those are kind of the things that I wanted to hit on really quickly, but I know we want to get to your questions and answers. So I'm going to turn this back to Megan and Larry. Thanks, everybody.

MS. LIZIK: Thanks so much, Gay. So Larry and I are going to be co-moderating the questions here and we had a few already come in. Feel free to keep typing those into the chat. Larry, do you want to kick us off with a couple of answers?

MR. BURNS: Sure. It looks like we had a couple questions come in that are related to each other. And they're asking if we choose to prove an intervention, are we required to evaluate it? So as Gay was mentioning, the intent of this legislation is to do two-fold when it comes to the evidence-based requirements.

One, it's intended to increase the use of evidence-based stratetgies, but it's also intended to grow the evidence base so we know more about it. But in – around this particular quesitno, if we're using something that's already proven, the law doesn't require that you evaluate a proven strategy. So when we did the webinar last week, we did talk about there is that evaluation requirement for new things that aren't backed by evidence.

It has to be while they're in use under an evaluation at the time of use. So there is that requirement there, but if you're using something that's already established, it doesn't apply. Megan, I know we also got a question on the generalizability and transferability. I think Andrew might've hit on that a little bit during the presentation, but I didn't know if you had anything else to add on that.

MS. LIZIK: Yeah. This is an interesting question. So the question is is there any guidance on the generalizability and transferability of similar studies? And I think this is a question that shows a keen amount of understanding of what systematic evidence review can – are doing and what reviews of individual studies mean and how to sort of take that and apply it to your own context.

So CLEAR itself, the ratings that CLEAR gives of causal impact studies only reflect the extent to which a given study shows a causal effect so that in an internal validity, not the extent to which the causal effect would be expected in different outcomes. That's a question of external validity. So the validity of applying the conclusions from that study outside the context of the study in which it was done.

And so this is the kind of question that we're going to be grappling with under the research project and as we have information to share with you, we can, but for now, we're suggesting, as Gay said, to sort of focus in on the set of studies that this program was designed on and that CLEAR has taken a close look at to see what you may want to be using to inform your own designs this year.

MR. BURNS: In that context of CLEAR, I also noticed we received a couple questions asking if we'd have time to do a walk-thru during the presentation today and we don't have the ability to do that right now, but I will say that CLEAR, when it was developed, there's a lot of resources out there. In our previous webinars, we included some screenshots, but it is designed to be as user-friendly as possible.

So when you get in there and start looking around, and especially with the synthesis that's out, it's really going to direct you to where you want to go. So it is purposely designed to be extremely user-friendly. And if there is additional TA needs around it in the future, we'll definitely add that to the potential list.

MS. LIZIK: Yeah. Definitely. And just to also remind you, in the appendix for the PowerPoint – so if you look at the FileShare in the bottom left-hand of your screen and you download today's PowerPoint and you look at the appendix at the end, you can see that we have some screenshots of CLEAR along with some red textboxes and things that will orient you to what you're looking at and how to find it.

But we can certainly take a look at kind of what your needs are that you shared today and if a demo is needed, we'd be happy to do that.

MR. BURNS: So we also received a question that's asking about a practice of using best practices and incorporating monitoring guidelines and there's a question here about whether or not we'll have something similar included in the template. I'm assuming by template, you're referring to the RESEA state plan that we're currently working on.

For FY-'19, the application looks very similar to what we've used the past two years in '17 and '18. We are currently working on a draft new template for a statutorily required RESEA state plan. It's going to have several new evaluation areas. That state plan will be subject to public comment. We're looking for your input. We hope to get it out as soon as possible.

It's in the works now, but please keep an eye open and if you have suggestions on ways we can improve that state plan, right now it's designed to closely mirror what's required by statute, but we'd love to hear some feedback on that state plan when it publishes in the federal registry notice. So please keep an eye open for that. It should be hopefully very soon.

MS. LIZIK: Great. The next question that we got was about the research synthesis categories of studies into five different impacts. Two of them are short-term employment and long-term employment and what are the timelines on short-term and long-term. You can look at the protocol that outlines the parameters of the reemployment systematic review that made up this topic area that will tell you a lot more of this kind of detail.

For the purpose of this review, long-term is defined as outcomes at least one year from the start of UI benefit and short-term was less than that.

MS. GILBERT: So this is Gay. One of the questions that came up as it relates to the control group that we utilized during the course of the REA program, as probably many of you know, we discontinued the requirement to use a control group over the last year or so, because we were moving to common measures to align with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and moving away from a forever evaluation design.

Little did we know we were about to have this new statutory requirement. Having said that, we – there are some challenges, I think, with the control group. I guess if we had it already plug-in play, some of you may still have some of your programming, actually, that you might want to find out if you have the opportunity to use.

One of the challenges we're going to face, though, moving forward is as we get more money for the program and the more claimants we serve, the more difficult it will be to actually have a control group. And so we're going to have to get real creative about how we get to effective evaluation design without that. So I – this is one where I think where we do not intend to mandate all states go back to a control group.

If an individual state would like to re-implement the control group in the way they have, they are free to do that. I think this really – you need to really dig into the kinds of things we want to evaluate before we really understand what it means about control groups and the like. So I think, again, as we do the – Megan, if you want to follow along on this one, please do.

I think as we get into the implementation study, again, it's going to give us some areas of opportunity and it'll start to inform our thinking on this, but Megan, if you'd like to jump in, please.

MS. LIZIK: I think that's really it, Gay. I mean, I think you guys are coming up with great questions here and I think some of them the answer is still evolving a little bit at this point, but anything that we – you know, we'll take all of your questions today and work on an FAQ document that we can put out there to make sure that we get all of your questions answered.

And to the question about what are the expected evaluation deliverables for 2019 if we're trying to build capacity, sort of along that same line we will be releasing some different materials throughout the course of the year and making you aware of some that will help in this.

So we don't have a specific timeline right now, it's evolving, but stay tuned and as we have more to share, we'll be making sure that you know about it. Larry, did you want to take one more question before we close out?

MR. BURNS: Yeah. So there's one question here and it's a really important point. So I want to make sure I get this one. But there's a question, are there plans to incorporate RESEA into WIPS, which is the WIOA performance system, to have common measures with other ETA programs? So we are doing that in an indirect way.

As you guys know, starting in fiscal year 2017, we required RESEA participants be co-enrolled or co-registered, depending on the terminology used, with the Wagner-Peyser employment service. And within the WIPS system under the Wagner-Peyser program is a UI claimant data element. I believe it's Element 401 in the record layout if you really want to get into the weeds on it.

But regardless of that, as you are working with the Wagner-Peyser staff, it's really important that RESEA participants are being appropriately identified in their system, because what that will allow us to do is pull out that – those participants at the subset of the Wagner-Peyser data and allow us to do some analysis, including the common measures.

So we are planning to align with the other ETA programs and we're doing it via the Wagner-Peyser program to help reduce burden on the RESEA programs since the data is already collected there. So really important that you're working closely to make sure that data is being entered correctly in that system so we can get at the RESEA participants.

MS. LIZIK: So with that – yeah. Go ahead, Larry.

MR. BURNS: OK. I was going to say with that, we're also – in response to both this webinar and the previous webinar, we will be doing some written FAQs if we didn't get to all the responses and all the questions today. So we just wanted to highlight that for both webinars, we will be putting some FAQs together.

MS. LIZIK: Exactly. So if you have any further questions, feel free to type them in the main chat. Otherwise, you'll see we do have some emails at the end of the PowerPoint, you can follow up with questions and we'll work together with our colleagues in OUI to make sure that all of the questions are answered.

And thanks so much for joining us today. It was great to speak with all of you and we look forward to doing it again soon.

MS. GILBERT: This is Gay. I had – saw one other question up here I wanted to speak to and that is is CLEAR where you should be going to look to see what's proven? Again, we are in this transition year. We're going with the definitions of high and moderate causal evidence that are in CLEAR today. So yes, that is where you need to go and our partners at Abt are helping us add elements to that list and they're working on that as we speak.

Also, if any of you, in your states, have any evidence you'd like to contribute to CLEAR that we aren't aware of, we would like to know that and over time, obviously, we're going to want to be absorbing the evaluations that you all do into CLEAR, particularly, as we rank them as high or moderate causal. So CLEAR is the place to go today. We are using the definitions that are in CLEAR today and that is your best source.

MS. LIZIK: Thanks so much, Gay. And again, thanks to all of you for joining us today. We look forward to talking to you again soon.

(END)