**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Evaluating RESEA: How Does It Help My State and Where Do We Start?**

**Thursday, May 2, 2019**

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JON VEHLOW: Welcome to "How Does Evaluation Help My State and Where Do We Start?" So without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to our moderator today, Megan Lizik, Senior Evaluation Specialist and Project Officer for RESEA Evaluation, U.S. Department of Labor, Chief Evaluation Office. Megan?

MEGAN LIZIK: Great. Thanks so much, Jon. Hello, and welcome, everyone. During today's session, we will talk about program evaluation, how to assess evaluability, and how to conduct evaluations to benefit your RESEA programs.

We will also discuss and describe two tools – an evaluability assessment tool and a logic model tool that will help states build their capacity to plan evaluation activities. As we mentioned in earlier webinars, today's webinar is the first in a series of webinars and resources that are part of the evaluation technical assistance we are providing to states who received RESEA funds.

Our evaluation technical assistance, or E-TA, as we're calling it, is designed to be useful to use throughout the stages of your RESEA grant as your designing your programs, implementing them, and possibly evaluating them.

Over the next six months or so, our E-TA will focus on developing and sharing a mix of resources, including both live and recorded webinars and RESEA-specific evaluation toolkit, and tools and templates that are all designed to help build your capacity to use, understand, and develop evidence. The E-TA will cover topics like planning for and conducting impact evaluations, navigating evaluation procurement, budgeting and timeline issues, and assessing data for evaluation.

We will be sharing a timeline soon so that you can be sure not to miss any of these upcoming webinars. We will also work with our OUI colleagues to ensure everything is posted on the RESEA community of practice on WorkforceGPS so you can access the resources at any time once they're posted. In addition to these resources, DOL anticipates that our RESEA E-TA team will also provide some more customized evaluation TA through state-specific or small group conference calls and a review of state materials as those needs are identified.

Finally, the evaluation TA team will also have a dedicated email address where states can send evaluation-related questions and concerns. As we move forward, we plan to adjust our evaluation TA to be responsive to your feedback, thoughts, and ideas, about what you need to help you with your evaluation plan. The objectives of today's webinar are listed here.

Generally, we're going to be explaining what we mean when we use the phrase "program evaluation," and highlight the benefits of evaluation for RESEA programs in particular. We're going to review two tools that will help jump start your thinking about any potential evaluation activities. And we're going to start demystifying some key evaluation concepts.

We know that legislation mentions evaluation. And until DOL releases guidance about what this means for states, we're just starting by providing this evaluation technical assistance for all states to help increase your capacity in using, understanding, and building evidence. Our presenters today are Larry Burns, Reemployment Coordinator in the Office of Unemployment Insurance, in ETA, at U.S. DOL; Phomdaen Souvanna, Senior Analyst from Abt Associates; and Siobhan Mills De La Rosa, Associate from Abt Associates.

Abt Associates in conjunction with its partners at the Urban Institute in Capital Research Corporation are DOL's RESEA independent contractor. They are working with us to develop a suite of evaluation TA products for RESEA programs, and will also be providing one-on-one technical assistance to states interested in building their capacity to use, understanding, and develop evidence, as I mentioned earlier. Before we get going, I wanted to toss things over to Larry and see if he would like to say hello. Larry?

LAWRENCE BURNS: Thanks, Megan. And welcome, everybody, to the webinar today. I just wanted to take a brief opportunity to thank our colleagues across the department and also Abt for putting together these – we're calling them – E-TA, electronic technical assistance, but a series of resources and webinars.

As you may know, the RESEA program was permanently authorized by amendments the Social Security Act that were included in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. So these changes are still pretty recent. These amendments included numerous changes to the program, but the most significant of which are the new requirements intended to increase the availability and use of evidence that supports the RESEA program.

Currently, all RESEA activities must be supported by evidence, and any interventions or strategies not backed by evidence must be under an evaluation. States also may use up to 10 percent of their RESEA funds to conduct evaluations.

We recognize that these requirements are significant change to the RESEA program and that RESEA staff are all starting from different levels of experience with conducting evaluations and understanding available evidence. That's why we are happy to offer this series of technical assistance to help you build your knowledge and capacity and perfect your realistic next steps to take.

I'm very grateful that you're making the time in your schedule to join us today, and hope to see you at future events. I also just want to include a note that we are developing separate guidance specific to the evaluation requirements for RESEA. So we welcome any questions you may have. I just wanted to give a heads-up that we will take all those questions into consideration as we finalize the guidance.

But we may not be able to answer everything today. But we will answer as many questions as we can. With that, again, thank you for taking the time today. And welcome to this first kick-off session of this series of technical assistance. And with that, I want to hand it over to Siobhan because I started.

SIOBHAN MILLS DE LA ROSA: Thanks, Larry. And a big thank you to everyone who's on the phone today. We appreciate you taking the time out of what I'm sure are busy schedules to sit here and learn some more about how to build and develop evidence. So we're going to kick off today's session with a couple of polls to learn more about your current thinking on evaluation. As you can see, a poll window has popped up asking you to rate your knowledge of evaluation. And by evaluation, we mean those formal and systematic reviews of your RESEA program to help you understand how this program operates, influences claimant outcomes.

I'm going ahead, read the questions, read the answer choices. If everybody could go ahead and take about 20 seconds to answer them, that would be great. So how would you rate your knowledge of evaluations? Your answer choices are: A, I don't know a lot about evaluations, but I'm ready to learn; B, I know some general evaluation concepts but have not planned or conducted an evaluation; C, I've planned some evaluation activities but never played a role in conducting an evaluation, and D, I've planned and conducted evaluation.

So I'm going to go ahead and give everybody a couple of seconds to finalize their answers. I'm seeing a lot of folks are falling into that "I'm ready to learn" category and I know some general evaluation concepts. And I think that that's right on. We're ready to get you all started on these topics. I think, Jon, we can go ahead and close this poll and move on to our next one.

Our second poll is really designed to learn more about what you see as the greatest potential benefits for states participating in evaluations. So what do you see as the greatest potential benefit received from evaluations? Is it A, evaluation helps us learn how to potentially improve our programs; B, evaluations allow us to contribute to the field of study and demonstrate our program's effectiveness to the public; C, evaluations fulfill funders and/or stakeholder requirements; D, other, which we please invite you to share in the chat box; or E, I'm unsure about the benefits from evaluation. And that's OK if you're not sure.

We're really trying to get an understanding of how your team might be thinking about the benefits of evaluations. And we're going to talk more about the benefits of evaluations in the rest of this webinar. Again, if there are benefits that you don't see up here and you'd like to contribute, please let us know. Put that in the chat. All of that information is helpful in helping direct our future E-TA efforts. So it seems like a lot of folks are falling in those top two categories – evaluations list how to potentially improve our programs, and evaluations allow us to contribute to the field and demonstrate our program's effectiveness in public.

That's great. I think we would say those are also some of the top benefits. But I'm excited to dig into that with the rest of you in this webinar. Jonathan can go ahead and close this poll too. All right. And our third and final poll today is sort of a click all that apply. We want to know what are your top three concerns about conducting evaluations?

And your answer choices here are: A, building our capacity to conduct evaluations; B, coming up with research questions about what we want to learn from an evaluation; C, incorporating evaluation procedures like random assignment into existing program operations; D, accessing necessary data and related resources like data systems or technology to conduct evaluations; E, developing internal and external partnerships to facilitate evaluations; and F, understanding, communicating, and using evaluation results.

Your feedback here is really helpful. It actually looks like we're seeing a really good mix. Folks seem to be concerned with all of these areas. And I have to say we are planning to provide lots of ETA products, tools, and templates that will hopefully help assuage some of your fears around these issues.

Thank you all for your feedback. This feedback is really going to help us develop future ETA products, direct our long-term goals to ETA products. So this is really helpful. And thank you all for participating. Jon, I think you can go ahead and close this poll too. All right. So let's jump in. I wanted to kick off this webinar with a little conversation about what it is that we mean by "program evaluation." When we use that term, what are we really trying to say?

And so program evaluation really is the systematic collection and analysis of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of the program that will allow stakeholders to determine the program's effectiveness in meeting its goals, informed decisions about program development, and highlight areas for improvement or promotion of best practices. Broadly speaking, evaluations typically use a mix of quantitative and qualitative data to learn more about the program's implementation and its effects on the outcomes of the population of interest – in this case, REA-eligible unemployment insurance claimants.

Data collection is done systematically so that both successes and challenges can be identified. Measures are collected uniformly across individuals in the program at a uniform follow-up time period allowing evaluators to make reasonable comparisons across claimants, across time periods, and across programs. Many, although not all evaluations, attempt to understand what would have happened to claimants in the absence of the program in order to understand the program's true impact on claimant populations. So why do we conduct evaluations?

There are many potential benefits to conducting evaluations. States that wish to evaluate their programs will have an opportunity to learn more about how RESEA is being delivered on the ground. And evaluators can document program delivery in detail highlighting important areas of variation across sites.

States undertaking process evaluations can learn more about how claimants flow through the program and how they engage at a range of RESEA services and program activities. Process evaluations can highlight which services claimants engage in most regularly and identify at what point in the program claimants are least likely to comply with program rules and expectations.

Identifying these trends can help states promote practices that seem to encourage positive claimant engagement or strengthen areas where claimant engagement is less than ideal. Perhaps the greatest benefit of program evaluation is to learn how your program influences UI claimant outcomes over time. Special test of evaluation, known as impact evaluation, can tell you the true impact of your RESEA program on claimant outcomes. Other types of evaluation can provide suggestive evidence, but cannot separate out the program's impact from the influence of claimant characteristics on outcomes.

By now you may be asking yourself, well, how do we get started with the evaluation planning process? In the next several slides, we will discuss an evaluation planning process by which states can develop broad learning goals, conduct an evaluability assessment, develop an RESEA-specific logic model, and choose an evaluation design that meets the state's needs. While, each state will develop their plans to build evidence in their own way, this road map may help your team jump start their thinking about building evidence and provide general guidance on how to develop an evaluation plan.

For many organizations, the first step in the evaluation planning process is to develop broad learning goals. Learning goals are broad areas of interest that your RESEA team would like to learn more about. These areas can be as broad and as varied as either RESEA program achieving its goals or can our profiling model better identify claimants who are most likely to benefit from RESEA. We've provided some examples of RESEA-relevant learning goals on this slide, but you should ultimately address questions or concerns that are related to your specific program. And they should generally be things that some additional information will be helpful.

Your learning goals will also inform your research questions, which we'll talk about a little bit later in the webinar. So how do we identify learning goals? To identify learning goals, you want to start by asking your team some broad questions. These include: What problems are we trying to address? And what questions of interest do we have about our program? What about our program do we want to learn in the short-term and in the long-term? And what information would we need to address our problem or answer our question of interest? How can we begin to gather that information?

In addition to consulting with RESEA staff at the state level, you may find it helpful to engage with other stakeholders who work with the program. Engaging frontline RESEA staff and American Job Center leadership can help highlight the issues that are most pressing to those delivering services to claimants. Connecting with state workforce agency leadership and other staff can help align RESEA's research priorities with other learning efforts across the state. Speaking with research partners can help you determine what has already been learned to previous research and what new questions might be of interest to your state and to the field.

Seeking this feedback can help your team consider questions it might not have considered otherwise and can help you build a richer set of learning goals. Once you've established your learning goals, you will need to refine them into specific, testable, and measurable research questions that will ultimately guide your evaluation. In this section, we will discuss two tools – evaluability assessments and logic models – that will help you move from broad research goals to specific research questions that will help shape your evaluation.

So what are evaluability assessments? Evaluability assessments are tools that help you identify all aspects of your RESEA program, narrow down what aspects of your program are sufficiently designed to be tested, and help your team come to an agreement on the core focus of the proposed evaluation. Crucially, evaluability assessments allow program leadership to examine the RESEA program in sufficient detail that the team can begin to create research questions with specific and measurable goals. For example, one of your broad learning goals may be does our RESEA program meet our goals?

Results from an evaluability assessment can help you narrow that down into something more specific, like are RESEA-eligible claimants who are scheduled for a first RESEA meeting more likely to be employed by the second quarter after their claim than RESEA-eligible claimants who are not scheduled for a first meeting? Evaluability assessments also assess your program's potential strengths and challenges in executing an evaluation. This will include assessing whether you have adequate assess to IT and data resources to support an evaluation, or if your program staff have sufficient evaluation expertise to carry out the evaluation themselves.

Identifying these operational gaps early can help you close them, which will strengthen your team's ability to produce a strong evaluation that's likely to meet CLEAR's high or moderate standards. Ultimately, some of the main benefits of evaluability assessments are that they will help you design specific interventions to task in a measurable way, ensure that the program model and what is being tested are well understood by all stakeholders, confirm the availability of data and other operational resources needed to conduct evaluation, and build consensus on evaluation goals to ensure results are relevant to all stakeholders.

So here now you may be asking, where can I find evaluability assessment tool? Both on this slide and on the resources page, we've included a link to evaluation design and assessment tool developed by IMPAQ International to support the WIOA evaluations. While this tool was developed for a different evaluation effort, it is a good place to start if you are looking for a workforce-relevant evaluability assessment.

As you can see in this screenshot on the first section of this tool, the left-hand side includes a number of statements related to state workforce agencies' progress in the evaluation development process. States are asked to rate their progress on each item, which they can then use to identify areas where additional work is needed.

This particular section discusses the evaluation design research questions, but the tool also has sections covering data collection and analysis plans, evaluator selection, participant rates, and reporting. It's important to know that the tool may refer to study participants. These are just the program participants who are being included in your study. So for example, if you are studying the effect of your entire RESEA program on all eligible RESEA claimants, then all eligible RESEA claimants who are in the RESEA profiling score range and who are not exempt will be your study participants.

As I mentioned before, we've included the link to the tool on this slide, but it's also available on the resources slide later on in the presentation. And you can find it on the WorkforceGPS evaluation and research hub web page. So how do we use evaluability assessment results? The result of your evaluability assessment will help you refine your broad learning goals into more narrowly focused research questions but explore your program's influence on a particular population's outcomes of interest.

Evaluability assessments will also highlight operational gaps that you will need to close or work around to successfully execute the evaluation, including addressing gaps related to IT resources and data availability, identifying staff or developing partnerships with organizations that have appropriate evaluation expertise, and creating evaluation procedures that you can train staff in. Another tool that can help you formulate evaluation plans and complete your evaluability assessment are logic models. Logic models are graphical representations of your RESEA program and how it operates.

Logic models show your program's inputs, which is like staff time, RESEA funds, and other resources that go into delivering the program, activities like meeting with AJC staff to create an individual reemployment plan, provision of reemployment services, the eligibility assessment, and other activities the program does as a regular part of its operations, outputs for the immediate results of the program like improved job readiness skills or enhancing labor market knowledge, and outcomes, which are the expected short-term and long-term goals of the program like reduced UI duration, faster return to employment, and improved earnings.

Logic models are meant to, in a very visual way, show how inputs and activities – what we might think of what goes into RESEA – are related and are linked to outputs and outcomes – what we might think of as what we get out of RESEA. Ultimately, logic models can help illuminate how the program is expected to drive changes in employment outcomes. This slide shows a very generic RESEA logic model. For your logic model to be most effective in planning your evaluation, it should reflect your specific program design and include key program details that you think are essential to achieving outcomes.

For example, outputs could include counts or evidence that the activity has happened, like saying you want to identify 20 ineligible claimants per week. What is the value of logic models? They really help your team conceptualize your entire RESEA program, the inputs and activities that go into that program, and the program's likely immediate short-term and long-term effects. Many people are visual learners. And this graphical representation can help your team build a shared understanding of what your program is meant to do and how it is meant to do it.

By articulating why and how you expect your program to work, you can identify a focus for your current or future evaluation activities and pinpoint gaps in the relationships between services and outcomes that need to be addressed. Ultimately, your evaluability assessment results should allow you to build research questions like the ones in this slide. In general, research questions will fall into three types. The first are impact questions. Impact questions will ask about the program's impact from claimant outcomes. Another way to think about this is that impact questions will ask whether the RESEA intervention alone caused changes in claimant outcomes.

Studies that answer these types of questions are those type the legislation is looking to, to demonstrate whether RESEA intervention caused an improvement in employment outcomes for UI claimants. A second question type are outcomes questions. Outcomes questions will ask whether your program is meeting its goals but will not be able to tell you about the program's impact. For example, answers to outcome questions can tell you how many claimants were reemployed after being selected for RESEA. But they cannot tell you whether claimants became reemployed due to the interventional loan or due to characteristics of the claimants themselves.

A third question type are process or implementation questions. Process and implementation questions will help you understand how the intervention is working on the ground. Answer to these questions can highlight important variation in service delivery, illuminate potential best practices, and identify areas to strengthen. They can also help you better understand the results of impact or outcomes studies so you can better understand what strategies or components to a program were included in the study, and how they were bundled together and delivered to achieve certain results. In general, when creating research questions, you should be trying to create research questions that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound.

That is to say, research questions should 1, identify a specific intervention that is being tested and what effect you're looking to measure; 2, know what information will be used to measure success and how this information will be collected, and if appropriate, quantified; 3, be attainable within a reasonable time frame; 4, relevant to your RESEA program and/or your states and DOL's priorities for labor research; and 5, time bound. In general, we want to measure outcomes of interest over a uniform time frame that makes sense for the intervention.

So for example, it might be reasonable to measure RESEA claimants' employment outcomes after the second quarter of their initial claim, since by that point, they will have sufficient time to engage in RESEA services and to find employment. Following these guidelines, will help to ensure that your research questions can be answered in a way that is helpful to program development and implementation.

With that, I'm now I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Phomdaen Souvanna, who will talk more about choosing an evaluation design type.

PHOMDAEN SOUVANNA: Great, thank you, Siobhan. So as Siobhan mentioned, in this section, I will describe different evaluation designs you may choose to conduct once you have defined your research questions. Evaluation design is preferred to the method used to answer your specific research questions. Specifically, evaluation design choices will determine how you assign RESEA-eligible claimants to intervention services, compare claimant outcomes, and analyze outcomes data that determines the intervention's influence on claimant outcomes.

Selecting an appropriate evaluation design is one of the most critical steps in your evaluation planning since different evaluation designs tell you different kinds of information and envelope different levels of planning, staff, and data collection. This webinar provides a very high level overview of three kinds of evaluation design. Our next webinar in the series, What Evaluation Design is Right for Me, will delve into these design types in more detail. In this webinar, we will discuss three evaluation design types. These are impact studies, outcome studies, and process and implementation studies.

Impact studies provide evidence about whether or not key outcomes of interest, such as time to reemployment and earnings, can be attributed solely to the program or intervention. Impact studies typically use an experimental or quasi-experimental design to create two groups of study participants – one that receives the intervention being tested and one that does not. These designs spend significant effort to ensure that the group that does not receive the intervention is equivalent to the group that does receive the intervention on important observable, and in the case of random control trials, unobservable characteristics.

Since the group that does not receive the intervention is statistically equivalent to the group that does receive the intervention, impact studies can confidently attribute differences in claimant outcomes between those who receive intervention and those who do not to the intervention itself.

Impact studies include two kinds of studies – random control trials and a quasi-experimental study. Since random control trials assign study participants to groups randomly, it is considered the gold standard of program evaluation, and is the strongest design for demonstrating that the intervention alone caused claimant outcomes. Outcome studies affect program progress on achieving established goals.

Depending on how developed the program is, the outcomes evaluation may focus on immediate program outputs, short-term outcomes, and/or long-term outcomes. Unlike impact studies, outcome studies do not compare the outcomes of claimants who do get the intervention to those who do not. As such, outcome studies cannot demonstrate that the program alone led to changes in outcome. Process and implementation studies document how the program is actually operating. Implementation evaluations are important for helping to determine whether a program is being implemented – (inaudible) – and why or why not.

The evaluation design type you select will depend on your state's evaluation goals, proposed research questions, and available resources to support the evaluation. Each type of evaluation has benefits and challenges or limitations. Impact studies are beneficial for determining whether or not the program alone causes changes in claimants' outcomes. Impact studies can also tell you the direction of the effects, that is, whether the program has a positive effect, negative effect, or no effect on claimant outcomes. Executing a strong impact study can be challenging.

First, impact studies – whether using a randomized control trial or a quasi-experimental design – requires establishing a comparison group consisting of individuals who are similar to those who are receiving the intervention. As such, impact studies often require large sample sizes.

A second limitation is that impact studies require more sophisticated analytical expertise. Outcome studies are beneficial for documenting whether the program is achieving its established goals. Outcome studies can typically be performed using data that you're already collecting and thus does not require developing new data collection tools or processes. Unlike impact studies, outcome studies do not require high levels of statistical expertise.

The main challenge or limitation of outcome studies is that you will not be able to directly attribute the cause of the outcome to the program or intervention. Implementation studies are beneficial for describing how the program is actually operating on the ground. By documenting how the program is being implemented, you may be able to identify promising practices, areas that need improvement, and/or program components that you would like to learn more about in future evaluations. When combined with impact and outcome studies, implementation studies help to provide contacts that can help to explain findings from the impact or outcome study.

For example, you may find that claimants do not perceive the activities that take place during meetings with their case managers to be particularly helpful for finding employment opportunities. This may help to explain why the increased number of meetings does not have an effect on shortening the length of time to reemployment. Implementation studies do not require advanced statistical expertise. Since implementation studies are focused on documenting and describing program operation, implementation studies may utilize qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, or draw on existing research to understand claimants and their barriers.

This information may be useful in refining the program logic model and program operations. Implementation studies, however, cannot tell you whether the program is meeting its performance goal or to effectiveness of the program or intervention. Let's walk through an example of an RESEA evaluation.

Suppose you are interested in learning about the effectiveness of offering claimants two RESEA meetings compared to offering only one RESEA meeting. With this goal in mind, our research question may be, does offering a second one-on-one RESEA meeting help claimants return to work and leave UI more quickly?

Answering this research question would require conducting an impact evaluation design study as we are interested in measuring the effect of offering two meetings on claimants' return to work.

To test the impact of the program, we will assign RESEA-eligible claimants to one of two groups – one group that is scheduled for one RESEA meeting, and one group that is scheduled for two RESEA meetings provided claimants are still receiving benefits by the time of the second meeting. In this assignment, we will need to make sure that claimant characteristics are similar across the two groups. This helps to minimize the potential that specific claimant characteristics such as age or gender are not confounding the results.

We will collect data on two specific measures – employment in the second quarter after the start of the claim, and duration of UI benefits. We will then compare differences in outcomes between the two groups to determine the impact of offering a second one-on-one RESEA meeting. So the process does not end with the conclusion of the evaluation.

Evaluation should really be built into your program cycle of learning and doing. It's important to remember that the evaluation process is iterative. What you learn from one evaluation may lead to changes in your program which you may want to test in a future evaluation. Or its initial results could spark an interest in learning more about your program impacts for a particular subgroups of claimants.

It is also possible that the evaluation findings are not what you expected, thus prompting you to go back to your logic model to determine where the program needs to be tweaked. For example, an implementation study might identify one or more promising practices. You may want to test these practices to see if they cause improvements in claimant outcomes. The implementation study findings may also suggest missing practices, such as providing child care as a support for employment. Based on this finding, you may want to add new program services to address the gap. You may then want to learn more about whether or not the new service improves claimant outcomes.

Communication of evaluation findings to key stakeholders is critical for making sure the evaluation is useful. Findings for an evaluation may help to alert frontline staff and other states to best practices and new approaches to serving claimants. They may also help alert employers to the quality of the services you provide to jobseekers, as well as provide DOL and other stakeholders with information about the effectiveness of your program for improving claimant outcomes.

Depending on the audience, you may choose to share the evaluation results in the form of a report, brief, and/or webinar. We will be providing more information on disseminating evaluation findings in future webinars, so please stay tuned. So now I'm going to turn it over to Larry for closing thoughts and next steps.

MR. BURNS: Thank you very much. And I just wanted to end with a few closing thoughts into next steps on this. First, we just want to mention that we're really excited to have this opportunity to provide you guys with technical assistance on evaluation. This is the first in a series of events we're going to hold to help get everybody up to speed and build capacity. As we get more and more into it, I anticipate you're going to dig in and have more questions and have more feedback for us. So we welcome that.

But also, I want to just highlight that this presentation is talking a lot about evaluation in general. And I wanted to loop back a little bit to some RESEA-specific things to keep in mind while you're thinking about these concepts we've presented today.

First, we wanted to mention that the current evidence we're using to support RESEA is based primarily on the REA program. So although the REA and RESEA program are similar, RESEA is not the same program. It does offer additional resources and activities beyond REA. So we just wanted to highlight that the REA studies we're using now aren't a full match to RESEA. And that's why we're really emphasizing and encouraging people to start early to start developing the information we need about the RESEA program to meet the new requirements of the current permanent program.

Also, we talked a little bit earlier about continuous improvement that evaluation is a process. I know a lot of times when I think of evaluation some of the feedback where you received was concerned that the REA and REC wasn't a successful model, wasn't working. That's not the case at all. The evidence does support the current RESEA model. But the intended legislation is for us to learn more and continuously improve and make the program better. So thinking of it in terms of a way of enhancing what we're already doing rather than starting from scratch. So again, we want to reiterate that we built our – (inaudible) – based on evidence and we'll continue to grow that in the future.

And the statute and the new requirements that are rolling in require that we develop more and more evidence to meet this program simply higher rating of evidence we need. Another point we wanted to mention is that evaluations do take time. As we talked about today, it is a process to set them up. And when you start collecting resources and information as soon as we can because we wanted people to start right away with working on evaluation. And you have the 10 percent and the FY19 funds available to help with the evaluation.

And the other thing we just wanted to mention is that in the course of evaluations partnerships with local universities or other evaluation providers but more so with other states that may be having similar issues or want to explore other resources or ideas that maybe so much yours, just because we know the 10 percent set aside for funds is somewhat limited. So reaching out to potential partners now is a key next step you can take.

And with that, we want to just have you start saving some dates. We will be sending out more logistical information and definite dates once we have it. But we do have some upcoming sessions, "Which Evaluation Designs are Right for You," which will be the week of May 20th through the 24th; "What Evaluation Details Do I Need for a Plan and How Long Will it Take," the week of June 17th; and "Procuring and Selecting an Independent Evaluator."

So again, we will send out more information with logistics once we have it. But we want you to just pencil in those upcoming sessions, and we really encourage you to attend those.

And lastly, we want to just provide links to some of the resources we discussed today. This webinar will be archived and held on WorkforceGPS so you can revisit it at any time and access those links directly. But we just wanted to make sure we summarized some of the resources we talked about today or in previous webinars to have them all here for you. And with that, I'm going to hand it back over to Megan for our questions.

MS. LIZIK: Great. Thanks so much, Larry. And thanks also to Phomdaen and Siobhan for covering a lot of information during our session today. We tried to leave adequate time here to answer some questions, and some are already coming in. If you have questions that are coming to mind, please feel free to write them in the chat, and like Larry mentioned earlier, we'll try to answer as many as we can. Before we get started, Larry, did you want to interject any final thoughts for folks?

MR. BURNS: Just a final thing I'd like to mention is we are working on guidance. We're developing operating plans for fiscal year 2020 RESEA and also a separate stand-alone guidance document specific to the evaluation requirements. So again, some of the questions we may not be able to answer today because we're still deliberating on our end. But any questions you have will help inform our development of the guidance. And we will try to answer everything we can answer today. So I just wanted to interject that before we got started.

MS. LIZIK: Great. Thank you so much. So let's start with some questions we got early in our presentation today. Larry, we had a question about Wednesday plans are going to be due. Can you speak to that question for us?

MR. BURNS: Sure. So as an FYI, we do have right now a separate register notice. It was published on April 5 with comments and feedback due June 4th. Again, it was published on April 5th with comments due June 4th. And that FRN is for a proposed RESEA state plan. That state plan closely mirrors every part of it that are in the statute regarding RESEA, and we're seeking feedback on it. I'd love to give a definitive timeline about when the due dates will be, but a lot of that is contingent on what type of feedback we get during this comment process.

We are interested in launching the state plan during the FY2020 RESEA cycle. Again, I don't have a definitive deadline. But if all goes well, will likely be sometime in mid to late fall when they would be due. That's just my estimate right now. It may be early or later depending on the comments received. But that's for this year.

In future years after the RESEA plan is approved, we hope to have a much earlier start for states to do that. And in that case, in future years after 2020, we imagine the state plan would probably be due sometime in late summer. And that would give ample time for us to review and have some back-and-forth to provide additional technical assistance if needed.

So again, this their implementation year, so there's a lot of things up in the air with trying to get approval for the state plan. But the FRN is out there if you want to take a look and provide any feedback or comments on that.

MS. LIZIK: Great. Thank you. And we received another question about guidance. Would you like to say any final thoughts about that? I know that you've mentioned that you are working on evaluation-related guidance a number of times.

MR. BURNS: Yep. Like I said, it's in development now. I don't have an estimate. But when it's time, it still requires some additional clearance and some completion. But I will say a little bit about our strategy for issuing the guidance. Similar to previous years, we're going to be issuing an FY2020 REC operating guidance. And it's going to be different this year in one sense that we're going to be issued as a joint youthful/TEGL. So it'll be going out to both the Workforce and UI sites of the system.

That's going to have the usual due dates, period of performance, any changes to the program design. The evaluation requirements we're going to issue in a separate guidance document. That way it lives on beyond the FY2020 operating guidance.

So we'll have at least two guidance documents coming out in the near future for 2020 – one just the regular grant process with the due dates and all that. But then a separate one is going to go into the specific evaluation requirements. Both of those are under development now. We'll keep you guys posted as we progress on them. But they're in the works.

I just wanted to highlight again that in the future when we do REC guidance, our current plan right now is to do joint youthful unemployment insurance program letter and training employment guidance letters similar to what we've done for other programs with other WIOA partners and also the best program. So you're going to see two guidance documents that mirror each other. Thanks, Megan.

MS. LIZIK: OK. Great. So moving right along then we got another question about, does this mean we are going back to an REA-styled control group? This is a good question. But I think the short answer is really that DOL doesn't have current guidance on what you should be doing right now especially in terms of a control group like this.

Like Larry said, DOL is working on some guidance. And at this time, we just strongly encourage states to be starting to think about different types of evaluations and how those studies might be conducted. So more information about evaluation requirements should be clear in the future.

Another question that we have that came in was about the CLEAR website. And the question is whether it will eventually provide a summary indicator of the size of impact along with the grading of the level of rigor and the study methodology. This is a really great question. And we are working on thinking about ways that some of the requirements we have for RESEA can be leveraged with CLEAR and help continue to make it clearer in CLEAR what ratings different interventions might be getting along with the indicator or rating of the quality of the study.

So we are aware that there are some opportunities here. We're thinking about the best way to be doing this. So stay tuned. And thanks for your interest in CLEAR. OK. We have another question that came in about despite varying types of evaluation, my understanding about the RESEA evaluation requirements is that dates are eventually required to conduct an evaluation that can provide causal evidence, which I believe can only be done by net impact type of evaluation. Is my understanding, correct?

And I think this is a perceptive read. The language in the legislation, it does appear to be encouraging us to be looking at studies that are providing causal evidence, so looking at and producing more impact studies. So I think that's one side of this. I think the other thing, though, to keep in mind is sort of where your programs are in terms of the evidence-base supporting them, what kinds of innovation you're working on, and how ready they are for evaluation and of what kind of evaluation is right for you.

So this is why we started with the topics that we started with today to provide you some tools to begin thinking about this and learning about different types of evaluations. And like Larry said, I think more direction will come out after DOL is able to release its guidance. But we thank you for this question and your perceptive read of the legislation. OK. We have another question that came in about when will the REA impact study results be available?

This is another study that Abt Associates is conducting under contract with DOL. And you can look for those results on DOL's chief evaluation office website later this summer, in summer 2019. OK. We have another question that came in that I'd like to ask our colleague, Siobhan, to take. This question is about whether you have any comparison of how evaluation and assessment have helped you improve a particular program?

MS. DE LA ROSA: Sure. I think this is a great question. If I'm understanding it correctly, what this person who asked this is really asking, do we have any real life examples of how evaluation has helped programs improve? So I am going to use an example that some RESEA-specific example that it is sort of a workforce services example. So many of you may be familiar with the piece evaluation. This is an effort to cast career pathways programs in various sites across the country.

One of the sites, (Diorp ?), is large national organization that operates a very intensive training program, sectoral employment training programs for young adults in a couple of the nation's star cities. And they have often seen some criticism about the population that they serve. And so they participated in a robust randomized control trial study that included an implementation study as well. And they found that their programs did have real impacts on employment and earning to these young people, which was great.

It sort of helped them have conversations between stakeholders, employers as they were going to hire their graduates, foundations who may have been interested in funding parts of their program. It was an opportunity for them to say, hey this works. But their implementation study was also really important. They were operating at, I think, eight sites at the time. So they were able to identify some best practices around things like mentoring, advising, engaging with the folks they were serving. But then they could roll out to all of their sites.

And so I can't speak for the Diorp organization or the folks that participated in the evaluation. But I would guess that they would say that the evaluation highlighted some really fantastic aspects of their program that then they could roll out nationally. So I think that's a good example of how you can use evaluation results to talk about your program with people who are outside of your program and to improve from within.

MS. LIZIK: Great. Thanks so much, Siobhan. There's another question that came in that I'd like to ask Larry to take about combining the RESEA state plan with the WIOA combined state plan proper.

MR. BURNS: Sure. We've received the feedback quite a bit about the idea of combining both plans. And I will say one of the things with the RESEA plan when you look at the legislation is very, very prescriptive about what we need to include and some of that information we do need to collect on an annual basis. So in the short-term, just due to the nature and depth of information we need for RESEA and the frequency we need it, we are planning to have it be a separate annual plan.

We are facing longer term after this implementation process of maybe trying to look for an opportunity to combine the two. But at least in the short-term, it's going to be its own stand-alone plan while we work through the implementation and try to get the program up and running under the new requirements.

MS. LIZIK: Great. Thanks, Larry. And we got another question come in about, if a state is currently operating a, quote, successful RESEA program, i.e., high entered employment rates, high completion rates, isn't there a possible detriment to doing research projects that impact current program design such as instituting control groups or changing service delivery in the name of research? This is a really great question and I think has a couple of different answers.

First, I would say that if you have a program that has these high ended employment rates and high completion rates, we would really love this kind of program to be studied and learned about so that potentially we can see what it is you're doing and learn about it so that it could benefit other states in their continuous improvement, first of all.

The evaluation could also help you, if you were running a program like this, see what pieces of it might be particularly driving impacts and what pieces you might tweak to see if you can even improve on those results further. So I put that out there as sort of some arguments on one end of the spectrum.

I think also, another thing to keep in mind is that we aren't looking to have an evaluation be detrimental to your program, right? I think that there's a lot of ways to think about evaluation design and meeting your learning goals and objectives that allow you to do what you're doing and learn more about it. So for example, you might want to think with your independent evaluator about doing a design that doesn't necessarily compare your current program to a nothing state or a business as usual, someone who can't get into the program. But say your current program model lists another version of that program model or even a third version that might add or subtract some elements from the first two.

So a smart and thoughtful evaluator can help you think through designs to answer questions and address these exact finds of concerns. So this is a great question. And we'll look forward to revisiting it, I think, throughout our time together thinking about evaluation designs and building capacity for evaluation, building, using and developing evidence.

So with that, I think we have reached just about the end of our time together today. I did want to ask Gloria to answer one other question that came in here about save the date as we're thinking forward to our next webinars together. The question is, are save the date timelines going to be held daily during the weeks listed?

GLORIA: Yes, Megan. Thanks for sharing that question with us. And just to clarify, we are having one session each one of those weeks based on topics that's listed on the save the date slide. Tentatively, we are scheduling the next session for May the 22nd. So we do have a specific date for that session. The next two are in the works. And once those dates are finalized and approved and also our WorkforceGPS announcement systems, you'll get announcements and WorkforceGPS that'll tell you that they've been scheduled and encourage you to register for them as you see those announcements come out.

MS. LIZIK: Great. Thanks so much, Gloria. And with that, we are at the top of our hour. Thanks so much for joining us today. I have some contact information for you here on the slide. If you have further questions, you can feel free to reach out to us or send your questions over to our RESEA evaluation TA inbox on the bottom left-hand side of the screen.

And we look forward to speaking to you again soon. Thank you.

(END)