**WorkforceGPS**

**Forming Consortia to Evaluate RESEA Programs**

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GRACE MCCALL: And welcome to "Live Q&A Session: RESEA Evaluation Consortia." So without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator for today, Megan Lizik, senior evaluation specialist and project officer for RESEA evaluation, United States Department of Labor, Chief Evaluation Office. Take it away, Megan.

MEGAN LIZIK: Great. Thank you so much, Grace. We're so glad to have you with us today and to see your interest in DOL's RESEA Evaluation Consortia opportunity. We think it can offer many potential benefits to states, and we see the consortia as a great vehicle to help you produce high-quality evaluations, which is the first step toward your intervention getting higher causal evidence ratings.

I'm excited today to moderate our live Q&A session. I also want to take a minute to thank everyone who's taken time to send in your questions either during earlier webinars, to the RESEA evaluation TA team, to OUI, and to others.

Today's session builds upon several of the evaluation TA series of webinars we've held over the past year. During those we've spoken frequently about the importance of building a base of rigorous usable evidence on the effectiveness of RESEA interventions.

As a way to help states generate that kind of evidence, DOL announced an opportunity to participate in an evaluation consortium where you will get high-quality technical support from our evaluation TA contractor. We know you have a number of questions about these consortia. Our plan for today's session is to give you more information on questions like how will they be formed, what's required, and what benefits will participating states get out of it.

As we've done in previous live Q&A's, we will start by answering a set of questions that have been asked to date, and then we'll open the floor to answer further questions from you. We're looking forward to a lively discussion.

As a reminder, there are two ways that you can answer – or that you can ask questions. First, you can type your questions into the chat box at any point during today's session. These will come to our DOL and our evaluation TA team privately, and we will answer as many as we can in the second portion of our webinar.

Or when we open up the phone lines, you may ask your questions over the phone. If you choose to speak today, please remember to share your name, your agency, and the state you're calling from.

Before we begin with the Q&A, I would first like to hand our presentation over to Gay Gilbert, the administrator for the Office of Unemployment Insurance, to describe DOL's expectations for states in conducting evaluations and provide a general overview of the consortia opportunity. Gay.

GAY GILBERT: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm really excited to be with you to talk a little bit more about our consortia TA opportunity for RESEA. I think my role is to just kind of – (inaudible) – level federal a bit before Megan and Larry and others talk to you about the more specifics.

Let me just start by reminding you a little bit about evaluations generally in RESEA land. We published our evaluation guidance back in October, UIPL 01-20 and TEGL 06-19. And one of the key messages in that guidance was that states are expected to begin evaluations for RESEA in FY 2020.

And we – this has a lot of really good reasons about why that was necessary, and then an important one and I think one that will be an important part of the conversation as we think about what our consortia are going to evaluate is that RESEA is a new program.

We have some evidence from our prior REA program, but we now have this new thing that has actually encouraging states to implement new and innovative strategies for reemployment, all of which we want to be able to evaluate so we have evidence moving forward when your funding actually depends on it.

And that's also just expanding causal evidence generally. We want to create a community of – or a culture of evaluation and evidence and being sure we're doing what works. And then of course we know that rigorous evaluations, which are critical in this scenario because of the need to have evidence that is either high or moderate causal in terms of its impact, we – those rigorous impact evaluations are critical, and they take a long time to implement.

And we also know that your – in your state plans that you're going to be sending to us in the very near future, you're going to have to describe sort of what is your plan to meet the evidence and evaluation requirements. And on that note, I am so excited. We actually did publish yesterday our FY 2020 operating guidance which formally transmits to you the requirement to submit your state plans.

We've been messaging to you for quite some time now that those state plans essentially mirror what's in the statute. But there are huge chunks of that state plan that really speak to the evaluation requirements.

So again, this is something you've heard us say already before. We – there's three ways to improve to make sure you have a quality impact evaluation. You want to use a strong design like a random assignment.

You want to be sure you have a large enough sample size, and this is a critical reason why we think that it's going to be important for having consortia because sample size is a challenge even in large states in some cases. So important that we're looking at ways to partner across the states.

And then working with an experienced independent evaluator. So those are all things we've talked with you about before, and I'm sure those have sunk in at this point.

So with that – I'm sorry. Hand it over to Megan. Megan, is this where I hand over to you?

MS. LIZIK: Sure. I'm glad to give the overview. Today we're here to talk a little bit about the consortia opportunity that DOL put out. This is one option that we see as being a way that we can help you support high-quality impact evaluations that have these large enough sample sizes that Gay just talked about.

So in many cases that would involve joining other states in – by pooled evaluation. The consortia allows data from multiple states to be pooled together. Sample size increases. The potential for budget increases there, and sort of leveraging resources across states so that overall the burden to all states is decreased while the quality of your evaluation increases.

The consortia states and their evaluators will also receive ongoing expert technical assistance from our RESEA study team. This can include all kinds of things from helping refine research questions to developing parts of your RFPs like your scope of work, consulting on your evaluation design, and generally troubleshooting to overcome challenges along the way.

And it's because of the benefits that DOL sees to doing these consortia evaluations that we put together the opportunity we're talking about. So thanks again for expressing your interest to continue the conversation with us.

Again, today we're here to answer some of the common questions we've been hearing, and then following today we will be working closely with our evaluation TA contractor to help us learn more about interests and ultimately help identify potential consortia pairings that appear to be the best fit to invite to participate in this opportunity.

Once DOL has identified the interested states that are good candidates to work together, we'll work to talk with you about that and then support you in developing agreements that would be needed for a consortia to operate. And we'll talk more about next steps at the end of today's webinar.

In case any of you missed it, you can also view our most recent webinar on the evaluation guidance that Gay mentioned in the top link here on the slide. You can also find the RESEA evaluation and evidence resources page on WorkforceGPS where it links to all of the prior RESEA evaluation TA webinar series are posted.

With that I'll introduce our presenters for today. We have Larry Burns, reemployment coordinator with the Office of Unemployment Insurance, ETA at DOL. We have Andrew Clarkwest, a senior associate with Abt Associates, and we have Siobhan Mills De La Rosa, associate with Abt Associates.

And now, we're going to turn it over to Larry to kick off today's Q&A.

MR. BURNS: Thanks, Megan, and thank you for everyone on the phone who could join us today. So want to jump into questions and start with the first question.

Question one. Some states might still be weighing in the pros and cons of joining the consortium and wondering what factors should consider – be considered when deciding about whether or not to do so.

There's several factors states should take into consideration when making their decision. First, states should consider the value of increased evaluation quality. Beginning in fiscal year 2023, states must be able to link a percentage of their RESEA funds directly to interventions with a high or moderate causal evidence rating, and they must show a demonstrated capacity to improve employment earning outcomes for program participants.

To meet these requirements, it's imperative that evaluation designs we implement now are of high quality. The customized technical assistance available under this opportunity will complement and enhance the value provided by our experienced independent evaluator.

DOL's eval TA provider will work closely with each state consortia and its evaluator during the life of the evaluation, helping to ensure your evaluation is of higher quality and providing your state the opportunity to learn along the way. Working with the evaluation TA contractor also prevents – presents on-the-job learning opportunities for states to help build your internal capacity to conduct future evaluations.

Second, states should also consider the sample size needed for their evaluation. That is how many claimants – such as how many claimants will they need to enroll into the study in order to evaluate the interventions that are interested in.

For an intervention to qualify for high or moderate rating, the evaluation must find statistically significant impacts. A larger sample increases the odds that the study will be able to produce statistically significant impact estimates. If states are interested in evaluating something that might require a larger sample size than your state can generate on its own, the consortium would help.

The third factor is budget. RESEA legislation limits states to using 10 percent of their funds to conduct evaluations, and states should ask themselves how large is our evaluation budget relative to our needs for evaluation? Pooling resources may alleviate financial challenges that states may have in procuring an experienced evaluator to conduct the kind of evaluation that can meet the CLEAR standards. Participating in a consortium may also relieve some staff time requirements.

Fourth is reduce burden. Beginning in fiscal year 2020, states will be required to submit RESEA state plans that must include detailed information about planning evaluations and their ongoing and planned evaluations. By participating in a consortium, states may provide a single plan or working closely with DOL may be allowed to omit some of these discussions entirely.

Additionally, by partnering with other states and the DOL TA team, we may be able to identify other opportunities for greater efficiencies to support facilitating data matching, which can be a complex and resource-intensive process.

Fifth is flexibility. States should consider what is their willingness to share control over an evaluation with other states. Being part of a consortium will require some level of flexibility from each member, and more decisions will need to be made by consensus.

Finally, what state-specific constraints might exist in your state? Some states may have legal or other regulatory restrictions that make things like states sharing data, procuring an evaluator, or creating an MOU or other type of agreement with other states challenging. This is not insurmountable challenges, but it is helpful to be realistic about them if you join a consortia so you can allow adequate time to work through them.

With that I'm going to hand it over to Andrew Clarkwest with Abt Associates to address the next set of questions.

ANDREW CLARKWEST: All right. Thanks, Larry.

Our next question – I should advance the slide – asks, what kinds of tasks can DOL's evaluation TA provider help with?

As the evaluation TA provider, Abt and its partner, The Urban Institute, will be helping DOL to identify states that could be good fits to work together in evaluation as part of a consortium. That implicitly means helping states identify other states that share their research interests and would be candidates to collaborate with.

This initial stage of work may also involve helping to develop and refine ideas for what intervention the consortium would test, that is what its main research question or questions are.

After DOL selects consortia members, states will need to work together to create agreements that define roles and responsibilities. This is work that DOL can support, if needed, and later in this presentation we'll talk more about agreements that consortia members will arrange.

Although we're not directly involved in that process, the evaluation TA provider can support states in understanding things like the evaluation elements that MOUs will need to cover, including the data that members will need to share.

We can also help develop a set of casts and deliverables to include in an evaluator's scope of work to help ensure that states in a consortia get all of the products they need from an evaluation.

Later on our experienced evaluation TA team will be there to provide customized support to you and your evaluator as you develop your design and your evaluation gets started. Strong evaluation plans informed by past experience can help avoid many problems that an evaluation can run into. That helps lead to evaluations that are more likely to satisfy CLEAR standards for credibility when they're finished.

And of course, irrespective of how strong plans are when you put them into place, some anticipated issues are going to come up over the course of an evaluation. And again, in that case our experienced evaluation TA team will be there to support you every step of the way in resolving those issues.

And when it comes time for reporting, we can provide technical support to your evaluator when developing your study's analysis plan and final reports.

Now, we do want to provide – we want to avoid potential confusion between the evaluation TA that's offered to consortia and the evaluation TA that's currently available through the RESEA evaluation TA helpline.

You may be aware that the Abt Associates evaluation TA team is currently available to all states to answer some basic questions asked through the evaluation TA helpline at RESEA@abtassoc.com, which you can see on the slide. This assistance is largely to help states get their bearings and understand broad options as they start thinking about evaluation.

But contrast to the consortia opportunity, states and their independent evaluators have access to much more customized ongoing technical assistance from the RESEA eval TA team through all phases of planning and conducting the evaluation.

So another important question that you may be curious about is, how will consortia be formed? DOL and the Abt Associates team will both be involved in this. We'll work with states to identify which states are individually good candidates for consortia and which ones collectively are capable of working together to conduct a successful evaluation.

Now, here by successful evaluation, we mean that the consortium evaluation will examine an important research question about the effectiveness of RESEA programs or program components and will ultimately produce impact estimates that are highly credible. That is they can satisfy CLEAR standards for the quality of the study.

These evaluations would also have a large enough sample to be able to detect an effective intervention's impacts.

Now, for a consortium to be successful it requires, first of all, a set of states that are all interested in evaluating a common intervention. By evaluation the same intervention, this allows states' data to be pooled in joint analyses. Having multiple states evaluate the same intervention increases the sample size and makes it more likely that the evaluation will be able to detect impacts.

So a first task for DOL and the Abt team is to learn which interventions states are interested in evaluating. That gives us the basic information required to play the matchmaker role, helping an interested state identify other states that are promising evaluation partners.

Now, you may not be quite sure of exactly what you want to study yet and – or you may have several ideas about what you may want to study. And that's completely fine. It's helpful to have some flexibility at this stage and be open to ideas. Our evaluation TA team can help you refine those questions.

Now, of course conducting a high-quality evaluation requires commitment and ability to follow through on all stages of an evaluation. So another step for DOL and Abt is to verify that interested candidate states are in a position to fulfill those responsibilities.

This slide here lists some of the responsibilities of states in a consortium. They include things such as providing required data. In most cases this will include data on the key outcomes of UI weeks and employment. It also requires information on the group that each claimant was assigned to, so whether they're in the intervention group or the comparison group. And it may include data on the services the claimants receive.

These data of course are the same ones that a state would need for an evaluation that it conducts on its own. So that is not particularly different as part of an evaluation and, in fact, as Larry noted, DOL will work with consortia states to facilitate access to some data.

Another point to note is that as OUI has discussed previously, states are also expected to commit the full 10 percent of their RESEA grant toward supporting the evaluation.

Now, participation will also require some staff time, including time from the state's RESEA administrator and others, such as the LMI director and those in the state's own research and evaluation shop. That said, consortia participation will also reduce needed staff time in some ways relative to what would be required to lead a state's own evaluation because you're sharing the burden with other states.

Of course the state will need to work collaboratively with other states in the consortium to secure and manage the services of an evaluator. Because a joint evaluation requires a single evaluator, the states will need a process to determine things like how they'll decide on selecting an evaluator and what each state's involvement will be in managing the work of that evaluator. In their joint agreement, states will work out the balance of roles and responsibilities among them.

And to receive support, the consortium will also need to engage an Institution Review Board or IRB. An IRB reviews evaluation designs to ensure the protection of research participants. An experienced evaluator will be familiar with the process of IRB review. That evaluator, not states, will likely handle the process of arranging the IRB review. So little input from each state will be required in that process, but states will need to comply with any steps that the IRB requires for implementing the evaluation.

The evaluation TA that's provided to consortia is designed to help ensure that the evaluation succeeds in producing high-quality findings that are of use to states in the consortium and to the UI community more broadly. Because of that, states and their evaluator will be expected to collaborate with the evaluation TA team, responding affirmatively to address concerns that the team raises about design or conduct of the evaluation.

So that was the end of my questions. My colleague Siobhan Mills De La Rosa will discuss the next questions.

SIOBHAN MILLS DE LA ROSA: Thanks, Andrew.

Another question we have heard is, how many states will each consortium contain?

Here is no definitive minimum or maximum number of potential states. Realistically, we expect that each consortium is likely to include roughly three to five states, but the exact number will depend on several factors, including the research questions of interest, the number of states that are interested in a given topic, and the size of the states.

Can this exist between larger and smaller consortia? Statistically, it may be easier to form and operate the consortium if fewer states are involved. However, the more states that are involved, the larger the sample size they can jointly generate. Research questions that require larger sample sizes will require participation from a larger number of states and/or participation from states whose programs are larger.

Testing and intervention in more states also allows us to be more assured that the impacts are not dependent on the intervention having been implemented in one particular context. That in turn can give another state greater confidence that the intervention will be effective if the state implements it.

The next question is, how will a consortium's study topic be determined? As we indicated in the response to a previous question, the key factor in – or a key factor in forming a consortium is common interest in evaluating a given intervention. A given state may have more than one intervention that it would be interested in evaluating. That state might be more strongly interested in some of those interventions than they are in others.

DOL and the evaluation technical assistance team will learn from states which interventions they would be interested in evaluating and which of those interventions are of greatest interest. With that information, we will identify the topics in which, one, the greatest collective interest exists, and, two, which seem most feasible to evaluate.

With that information, DOL will identify accepted states to invite to participate in one of multiple consortia, each of which will evaluate a different intervention. For a given consortium, further refining the topic will be required.

For example, during the consortia formation process, DOL and the evaluation technical assistance team may identify a set of states that are all interested in evaluating the impact of more intensive case management. In this case consortia members will need to refine their definition of what intensive case management is and what that intervention will look like so that all the states involved can test the same thing.

For instance, they will have to define what frequency and mode of contact the claimant are expected and what the intended content of those contacts are. In this example, states in a consortia may wish to test an existing intensive case management service that one state already uses and the others could choose to adopt, or the states could choose to pilot or add on a new, more intensive case management service to the RESEA intervention package that states are already using.

When pooled together, your evaluation has a greater ability to learn more about how effective that specific intervention is in any single state trying to study the component on their own. States in the consortia will work out these details collectively, and DOL and the evaluation technical assistance team are here to help.

The table on this slide provides some other examples of interventions that may be suited for consortia evaluations. These interventions are considered to be larger program components for which we expect that it will be possible to detect impacts.

They include testing the impact of more or fewer required RESEA meetings, requiring higher intensity case management by counselors and American Job Centers, requiring RESEA claimants to participate in a wider range of reemployment services or in more intensive reemployment services, and suspending benefits until compliance occurs rather than just suspending for a single week.

Many smaller program components may also be of interest, but evaluating them may prove to be more challenging because they require larger sample sizes, perhaps sample sizes beyond even the sample size that consortiums may be able to produce.

If you're interested in testing smaller components or if you're not sure whether a component is considered small, we can help you start to think about that. And remember once you have your independent evaluator on board, they can also give you technical advice about the feasibility of evaluating various components.

A consortium would also potentially evaluate a whole program if all states in that consortium implemented a similar program model. If a whole program were evaluated, the elements of the program model must be well-defined, and the program likely should have some noble aspects to it to make it an interesting package.

I'm now going to turn it back to Larry to take the remaining questions.

LAWRENCE BURNS: Thanks, Siobhan.

States that are interested in participating in consortia evaluations now may be thinking, what formal agreements might need to be in place for the consortia to operate? So we want to get into that question now.

There are some formal agreements that a consortia partners will need to have in place before evaluating their collective RESEA interventions. Importantly, the states participating in the consortia will need to establish a memorandum of understanding among the group.

An important area to think about during this process is each state's roles and responsibilities in implementing and conducting the evaluation, the consortium's governance structure, including its decision-making process, and a nomination on the administrative entity, if appropriate, and the funding arrangements between the states, including the percentage of program funds to be committed by each state, the timeline on which funds will be committed, and how and to whom funds will be paid, especially if the consortia is planning to procure an independent evaluator.

Another important agreement is the contract that a consortia will have with your independent evaluator. As we described in our evaluator procurement webinar, this contract should stipulate the scope of work you want your evaluator to complete and over what timeline, any deliverables you expect from the completion of work, and how evaluators will be paid and on what timeline.

The MOU between states will specify the state's roles in selection and management of the evaluator. Finally, all states are expected to have current RESEA grants from DOL.

The next question, if we are one of the states selected to participate in DOL's evaluation consortia opportunity, are we expected to pool our full 10 percent of funds allocated for evaluation activities with other states?

It's expected states would make their full 10 percent of funds available for the purposes of a single high-quality evaluation for all states in the consortia. A consortium produces economies of scale that allow a member state's 10 percent allocation to go further in procuring high-quality evaluation services.

For example, if five states each perform their own evaluation, five separate evaluation designs reports need to be written, whereas in a consortium only one is required. As noted earlier, procuring a strong, experienced evaluator is one key way to improve an evaluation's chances of producing evidence that can be used to demonstrate an intervention's effectiveness.

By lowering the financial barriers to procuring an experienced evaluator, joining an evaluation consortium lowers the barriers that states face in conducting the types of evaluation that can produce high-quality statistically significant evidence of intervention effectiveness.

Pooling the funds might be done through a few means, such as an MOU, contract, or with sub-granting to lead states. The pooled evaluation funding will then support the procurement and contract of your consortia's independent evaluator.

I think one thing we want to make a note of here is that, although we expect the full 10 percent of funds to be needed from each state realistically to do this, we do recognize that consortias may reach other agreements. And if that's the case, DOL is going to be flexible in those scenarios where a consortia reaches another agreement with the states within the consortia.

MS. GILBERT: All right. This is Gay, and one caveat I might add to that is, again, what we're looking for, though, is a quality evaluation that's going to produce – that's going to give evidence that meets those high or moderate causal evidence standards. So the cost of that is not cheap, and so, as Larry said, I think we expect that it's going to take the 10 percent.

But if we – you find that you not only can reach agreement among your states but as you play out your work together and you do an RFP and you determine that the cost is something different, I think we want to look at that with you and be sure that you're still headed in the right direction. But I think we want to consider there might be some areas where you might need less than the 10 percent.

MR. BURNS: Thank you, Gay.

Our next question is, to what extent does the Department of Labor expect consortia members and their evaluator to follow the technical evaluation advice from the RESEA evaluation TA contractor?

DOL expects the states entering into a consortia will be fully open to the input provided by the eval TA team and work to implement it to the best of your ability. The eval TA team work closely with consortia states and their evaluator to help ensure that the evaluations are successful and of the highest possible quality.

All evaluation plans and reports must be reviewed by the eval TA team before they are finalized. Remember the eval TA team is there to bring their experience and expertise to bear in – I'm sorry – helping you conduct the most successful high-quality evaluation you can.

High-quality evaluations are the first step towards being able to have your interventions receive high or moderate causal evidence ratings and eventually to give you a larger base to choose from when designing your RESEA programs in the future.

Our next question is, to what extent does the Department of Labor expect consortia members – what are the next steps in being considered for an evaluation consortium?

The first step is to provide us with the information that will help us learn about your interest, understand key challenges, and begin to identify potential state partners. By next Friday, February 7th, we invite you to e-mail the RESEA helpline Abt e-mail describing any interventions that you would potentially be interested in evaluating. You can share ideas your state has been discussing or draw from the list of components that was earlier or in the guidance.

Or if you would be interested in evaluating a program model as a whole, please describe any notable aspects of the program. And remember, if you're not sure what you might want to study and you're open to hearing ideas or you have several ideas, we're interested to hear that too. So again, you don't have to have anything final in place, but if you're open to ideas or have a lot of ideas, please share where you are currently with this e-mail.

Finally, please describe any particular challenges you think your state might face in participating in a consortium evaluation. This may include challenges in providing data. For instance, your state may be undergoing IT modernization efforts at the moment, or maybe your state has particular statutory or regulatory requirements that could make forming agreements with other states challenging. Any such information is worth noting in this e-mail.

E-mailing us to share more information doesn't commit you to doing a consortia evaluation or guarantee that DOL will select you to participate, but it's important first step to seeing if evaluation consortia opportunity is a good fit for you.

Also, during the next month or so, DOL and our RESEA evaluation team will follow up with states to better understand their current circumstances, interests, and challenges, talk through operations, options for evaluation topics, and answer further guidance and questions that states might have.

DOL will then question – I'm sorry. DOL will then consider all candidate states, your interests in various contacts from among the group. DOL will identify states that are promising partners and likely to conduct successful evaluations together and invite you to participate. We'll also put those states in contact and can help advise on the agreements required for a consortia to operate.

Once the consortia has been identified, our evaluation TA team will also begin to work with consortia members to shape the broad scope of the evaluations and support procurement and selection plans.

I'm now going to turn things back over to our moderator, Megan.

MS. LIZIK: Great. Thanks so much, Larry.

We'd now like to open up the webinar to questions from the chat box and from the phone line. We have had several come in while we've been talking. So we'll go ahead and start with the chat box questions first and then open up the phone lines.

Grace, before we launch into the questions we've received, would you remind everybody how to do this?

MS. MCCALL: Sure thing. Right now, everybody is muted. To ask your questions over the phone line, first you must be called in. Again, the number is 1-866-733-5945, and the access code is 1947011#. And once you're called in, you can hit \*6 to unmute yourself, ask your question, and please hit \*6 again so you're muted afterwards so there isn't any background sound when you're finished.

MS. LIZIK: Great. Thanks so much.

So the first question that we're going to address is, "We have been thinking about what we want to study, but we have a lot of ideas and aren't sure we're on the right track. How do we narrow down our idea or know we have the right one?"

And like we've talked about a little bit throughout our presentation today, it's fine to have a lot of ideas at this point or even perhaps no real concrete ideas. Flexibility at this stage can even be good. Our RESEA evaluation TA team is here to help you think a bit more through them in our upcoming follow-up calls with you, and these ideas that you have will continue to be refined over the next few months as the consortia are formed and evaluation plans are solidified.

That being said, if you have a strong idea, in the e-mail that you send to the helpline, please make sure to indicate that. Again, at this point, like Larry said, we are primarily interested in understanding where you're currently at in thinking about this.

MS. GILBERT: Hey, Megan. This is Gay. Can I jump in a second?

MS. LIZIK: Sure. Please.

MS. GILBERT: Just wanted to remind the states on the phone or on the webinar that the UI – the evaluation UIPL that we put out in October did have a chart that we sort of laid out sort of component pieces of RESEA and that that might help states start to think about how to narrow things down.

MS. LIZIK: Wonderful. Thank you.

The next question that we have had come in is, "We have what we think is a good program that works, and we're hesitant about removing services as it seems is required in a randomized controlled trial study of a specific component because the control group wouldn't get that service. In our program all the services seem to work together as a package. What should we do?"

This is a great question, and I think there's a number of ways to think about it. One way to think about it would be, instead of thinking about your treatment group getting all of your RESEA program services and a control group only getting some of them except for the one you're testing, we'd encourage you to think about the potential for piloting adding a service.

So, for example, what if you were to think about adding a component to your RESEA program like an extra RESEA meeting or the more intensive case management that Siobhan talked about earlier? These are the kinds of things that you can take and still be building evidence about, and our evaluation TA team is glad to help you start thinking through these kinds of questions.

And remember once you have your independent experienced evaluator on board, that person or that team will have a lot of experience addressing these kinds of questions, hearing what you're interested in and suggesting the best way to study it that you can get your questions answered.

Another question that we've had come in is, "We've recently invested some resources on an in-house research and evaluation unit at our state. Can we use them as our evaluator?"

Larry, would you like to kick that one off for us?

MR. BURNS: Sure, Megan. Thanks for this question.

And I think, generally, there's two big ways of looking at this. One, if you have an in-state evaluator, you can look at that evaluator and see if there's the expertise and the capacity to carry out one of these evaluations. That's definitely one option. But another thing to keep in mind is that these evaluations are going to be pretty intense because they have to be high quality.

So another option that you can use is to use your in-house team to help manage and design the evaluation and work with an independent evaluator. This leads to some greater efficiency because it leaves those evaluators to do other things but also gets you another layer of expertise in the process.

So there's really two big buckets of either using them, if they have the capacity to do so. And again, one of the things, if you're thinking about doing that, is to really take a close look at the evaluation guidance and the requirements that go along with these evaluations to make sure they meet the CLEAR standards. But also another and potentially more efficient way is really to think about using them in the management role of independent evaluator. So a couple different strategies there.

MS. LIZIK: Thanks, Larry. And I would also add that, regardless of whether you think your team has the experience and the capacity to do the evaluation yourself of whether you would like to procure an evaluator to bring their team and expertise to bear, the state staff, like your in-house research and evaluation unit, your LMI directors, these people will continue to play very important roles as the evaluation unfolds.

So there's trade off and potential benefits to consider when you're thinking about what evaluator you would like to select, and we'd encourage you to visit our webinar that Larry mentioned earlier on procuring and selecting your independent evaluator. That will help remind everybody what the necessary skills and experience are that you will want this role to have before making your final choice.

So the next question that we've had come in is, "What type of analysis will we be using? Will it be uniform across the nation or different in each state?"

This is a great question, and I think the best way to think about it is that, if you think about each evaluation consortia being several states that are conducting one evaluation, that evaluation will have an analysis plan and an analysis that will be carried out for that one evaluation that's right for that particular study and designs with the technical expertise that your evaluator brings and supported by our evaluation TA team.

So it will be unique to your one individual evaluation. Not uniform across the nation but also probably not different in each state; right? The analysis is going to be dependent on the evaluation design that you have.

Our next question that has come in is, "What is statistically viable study?"

This is a really grand – I will turn it over to Andrew to talk a little bit about the technical answer here. Andrew.

MR. CLARKWEST: Sure. Yeah. It's a great question. I also wish it was an easier question that I could just say 5,000 and then we're done. But it turns out that the number of claimants that a study needs in order to generate statistically significant impacts depends on a few things.

The most fundamental consideration is what's the question that you're trying to answer. That is what is the intervention that you're evaluating? If you're evaluating your RESEA program as a whole, that's different than if you're evaluating a component of it because a whole program will have a larger impact than any of its components.

An evaluation of a component would likely need larger sample sizes than evaluation of a program as a whole. And if you're evaluating a larger component rather than a smaller component, then you don't need as large of a sample. But if you want to evaluate something smaller, you need more sample to evaluate that intervention.

And that said, there aren't any hard and fast thresholds for how large of a sample is required for an evaluation. The smaller the sample size, the greater the risk that the study could fail to find impacts. In that case, if you fail to find statistically significant impacts, then the findings won't count as evidence for effectiveness of RESEA.

And although there aren't any exact thresholds for sample size, what you want to make sure of is that the sample size in your state – that your state or consortia is able to generate is within the ballpark of what's likely to be required.

You may find it useful to look at the slides from the last Q&A session that we had which provided some ballpark estimates for the sample sizes that are likely to be required, depending on what the intervention is that you're evaluating and what the outcomes are that you're looking at. That can help you get in the right area, and of course your independent evaluator can give you a somewhat more precise estimate of how much sample you think makes sense to have in your study.

MS. LIZIK: Thanks, Andrew. And what we do have, some of those ballparks integrated in one of the previous webinars that we did. I think the thing that's important to note here is that it's likely to be a lot, and that is one of the reasons why DOL is thinking that there's value in this consortia approach and wanting to support you in working as a consortia to conduct evaluations.

MR. CLARKWEST: Yeah. And I can add – I should maybe add –

MS. LIZIK: Now – go ahead.

MR. CLARKWEST: Yeah. Just for rough numbers that are in there because I think that for consortia we're particularly interested in components. And I know that the components are really important to states because you want to know – it's one thing to know this whole program was effective, but for program design it is really useful to know, okay. Is this approach to doing things effective, and how effective is it?

And so it could be useful to look at small things, but some of the small things you want to look at, if you want to find impacts on employment, could take – (inaudible) – into the tens of thousands, even the hundreds of thousands, if you want to look at some small things. So that is certainly why we're interested in having states come together.

MS. LIZIK: Thanks so much, Andrew.

Now, we'd like to open the phone lines and see if there are any questions that folks would like to ask. Please remember, if you choose to ask a question over the phone, to identify your name and where you're calling from.

Grace, do they need to hit \*6 at all?

MS. MCCALL: Yes. Again, reminder that when you're called in over the phone line –

Q: Hi.

MS. MCCALL: Oh, we got somebody. I'll let you talk.

Q: Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

MS. MCCALL: Nothing. Just reminding people to please hit \*6 to unmute yourself, and once you're done asking your question, just hit \*6 again. Thank you.

Q: Thank you. My name is Mina – (inaudible) – from the state of Maryland. I had a quick question regarding the February 7 deadline. Is that a hard deadline, or is that more of a fluid moving target?

MR. BURNS: So I didn't really keep –

MS. LIZIK: I was going to point to you, Larry.

MR. BURNS: Okay. I think one of the key points about the February 7th deadline is that this is really just the next step in the process. By sending in some information in your initial thinking, you're not committing to the consortia, but it is going to help us do some logistics on our end to move forward with the next steps.

So we are still having a conversation, but ideally, if we could get feedback by that time, it will really help us move the initiative along a little bit. But again, this is not a commitment e-mail. It's really just another logistics planning e-mail to get some initial thinking.

And I think another key point to bring up there is I know a lot of states may not have moved far along in what they want to evaluate or what their plans are. And that's fine too. You can indicate that in the e-mail. You don't have to have everything fleshed out at this point, but we really do want to get that information so we can start doing some logistics and start moving things along.

And we do have a tight timeline in starting these evaluations to have everything in place over the next couple years, especially with that 2023 deadline looming over us about having a lot of good evaluations already ready to pull from. So again, it's – it is a deadline we want to try to stick to, but it's not a commitment on your state once you send that in. And feel free, if you're not fully fleshed out with your thinking, to just let us know that.

MS. LIZIK: Yeah.

Q: Sorry. And just a follow-up question. I know that there is a deadline to start the study by the end of this fiscal year. Is that a hard deadline? I mean, if we have to go through the state procurement process and everything, I just – it's going to be a little tight?

MS. GILBERT: This is Gay. Let me jump in on that one. So our guidance is that our expectation is that you would begin your evaluations. I think if you all are in a consortia and moving towards ramping up and getting an evaluator, that is beginning – starting to begin your evaluation. The sooner the better, to Larry's point, however.

MS. LIZIK: Thanks, Gay. That's perfect.

I think I would just add that this is why, in addition to – as you're starting to put a few thoughts down to share with us where you're at, we'd also like to reach out to try to set up a time to have a short chat with you. We know that there's a lot going on in the month of February and March, the state plans, like Gay mentioned earlier, and whatnot.

But if we can set up some time to have some follow-up calls too, that will I think help us progress a little bit too, both on our end as well as perhaps even on your end and with your thinking that you can bring to your internal conversations.

Do we have any other questions that folks would like to ask on the phone lines?

All right. Well, we'll take that as a no for now, although we're glad to get questions from you later, if you think of them. We'll now move into a few closing thoughts and next steps.

We'd like to thank everybody here today for joining us. Your participation has been great, and you've asked some really thoughtful questions. We know that you are dedicated to ensuring the best outcomes possible for your claimants that you serve in your states, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to design and conduct evaluations that will produce knowledge that helps you continue to strengthen your programs.

We also want to emphasize a point we've made a few times. States are all in this together and that the evaluation-based learning produced by you can be helpful not just for your own RESEA program but for other programs across the nation.

And don't forget there are resources available to help you along the way. The consortia opportunity that we've discussed today is one potentially valuable resource. Under are others.

Here are some direct links to more evaluation resources, including a link to the RESEA evidence and evaluation resources page on WorkforceGPS. That page RESEA evaluation guidance and the RESEA – that series includes webinars to help you understand what evaluations are, way different evaluation design options, plan an evaluation, assess you're ready, procure an evaluator, and other topics.

We have also included direct links to the joint UIPL and TEGL regarding expectations for states implementing the new RESEA evaluation and evidence requirements.

And here are some direct links to resources available through DOL's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research or CLEAR website, including the new RESEA tab that we have available, the causal evidence guidelines, our reemployment synthesis, and more.

Finally, we would like to remind you of two other evaluation-related activities that will take place in the coming months as part of DOL's RESEA implementation study. DOL is very interested in learning more about the approaches that states are taking or plan to take in the design of your RESEA program.

Recent changes give states much more freedom in aspects such as how you select claimants for RESEA, what reemployment services are provided, and in other aspects. Within the coming days, each state's RESEA program director will receive an e-mail asking them to complete a survey online. We would appreciate your prompt completion of the survey, and we expect that the state's RESEA program director will be able to answer all the questions, perhaps with input from other program staff, and take under an hour to complete.

The evaluation team will also be visiting ten states that are randomly selected from across the nation to get a more in-depth look at your RESEA program design and how you're implementing them. These visits will help us better understand program innovations and opportunities. That information will in turn help DOL and all states continue to strengthen your RESEA service delivery models.

Your participation in the survey and, if selected, the site visit is crucial to building evidence for RESEA programs. Thank you in advance for your help with this important data collection effort to support the RESEA implementation study.

If you have any questions about the evaluation consortia or the implementation study activities I just mentioned, please don't hesitate to contact us at DOL or the RESEA evaluation TA inbox at the e-mail address on this slide.

Thank you very much for attending, and that concludes today's webinar.

Gay, would you like to say anything in closing?

MS. GILBERT: I would. Thank you.

So let me add my thanks to the states that have joined us on this call today and who raised your hand to be interested in this opportunity. I would like to really strongly encourage all of you to take that next step in this process to engage with the team on individual calls to sort of explore how we – or to move us forward to help start marrying states up.

I think I would also like to remind you not only are there the benefits of being in a consortium like sample size and sort of that kind of thing, but this really is an opportunity to help you improve your programs.

I've been saying again and again RESEA is a new program. And with your new resources and the new flexibilities, you really do have some opportunities to think through a different service delivery design. And to do that in the context of a consortium I think really allows you to sort of take the best of the best from each state and to build on each other's promising practices.

So again, I really encourage you all to hang in with us for this next step because I think there are going to be some huge benefits for participating in the consortia project.

So again, thank you for joining us today. I don't know if any of you had anything else you wanted to add.

MS. LIZIK: No. I thought that was perfect. Thank you so much, Gay, and thanks to all the states. We're looking forward to talking more with you.

MS. MCCALL: All right. Excellent. I'd also like to thank all the participants and presenters for today's webinar.

(END)