

Rethinking Job Search

Final Report

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Prepared by

Public Policy Associates, Incorporated



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Rethinking Job Search: Final Report

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Executive Summary

This is the final evaluation report for the Rethinking Job Search (Rethinking) program, which was funded in 2014 through the Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and ran from January 2015 to September 2018. Rethinking operated in 11 counties in Oregon and was led by Willamette Workforce Partnership (WWP).¹ The program also required statewide collaboration between the Unemployment Insurance system, Employment Services, and the Local Workforce Boards.

The stated mission of the program was to operate collaboratively to bolster job seekers' confidence in their ability to be quickly re-employed. The intention was that a workshop series would teach job seekers who were earning Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits cognitive-behavioral techniques (CBT) to enhance motivation and self-efficacy in job-search activities. Increased efficacy means that participants would learn how to recognize and change their risky thinking, understand and manage their emotions, and learn how these relate to and impact their job search and job-search actions. As a result, the participants were expected to obtain employment, shorten the duration for receiving UI benefits, and retain jobs up to one year post-intervention.

Project Intervention

Program Theory

The consequences of unemployment are difficult for individuals, and can be particularly challenging for those who are long-term unemployed.² There is a need for interventions that can diminish the undesirable emotional consequences of unemployment to help individuals become reemployed.³ American workforce centers are ill prepared to address those needs.⁴

¹ Formerly Incite Inc., which was formerly Job Growers.

² "Long-Term Unemployed Survey," The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and NPR News, December 1, 2011, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://kff.org/other/poll-finding/long-term-unemployed-survey/>.

³ Judith Proudfoot et al., "Effect of cognitive-behavioural training on job-finding among the long-term unemployed people," *The Lancet* 350, no. 9071 (1997), 96-100.

⁴ Incite, Inc., *Rethinking Job Search Project*, (Washington, DC: Department of Labor, 2014), 2.

In the U.S., there is no substantive history of the public workforce system applying cognitive-behavioral interventions to help unemployed persons gain employment. Accordingly, the Rethinking program needed to rely on a series of research ideas that, taken as a logical chain, illuminated both the need and the rationale for the Rethinking approach. The literature evidence, briefly, refers to the emotional and health consequences of employment loss; the role of workforce centers in unemployment coping and job-search motivation; and stages of change.

The notable instance where the public employment field leveraged the skills of mental health specialists was the JOBS program in Detroit, Michigan. The program, which operated in the 1980s, used a cognitive-behavioral intervention to foster self-efficacy and coping skills of job seekers and yielded positive outcomes in employment, earning, job satisfaction, motivation, and job stability.⁵ More recent studies in the United States also suggest that CBT interventions can improve employment outcomes,⁶ although these works have methodological limitations (e.g., small sample size, lack of a comparison group). The 2013 cognitive-behavioral pilot study of Rethinking had very positive results on employment outcomes.⁷ Outside of the United States, there are indications that cognitive-behavioral interventions are effective in helping unemployed persons become employed.⁸ However, there is also a call for further research to establish the effectiveness of CBT in getting individuals back to work.⁹

Rethinking used a Stages of Change Model framework to understand work readiness. This transtheoretical model is a comprehensive theory of change that

⁵ Amiram D. Vinokur et al., "The Jobs I Preventive Intervention for Unemployed Individuals: Short- and Long-Term Effects on Re-employment and Mental Health," *Job Stress Interventions* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1995), 125-138.

⁶ Jay C. Fournier et al., "Gains in employment status following antidepressant medication or cognitive therapy for depression," *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 206, no. 4 (2015 Apr), 332-338; Benjamin J. Pfeifer and Daniel R. Strunk, "Getting Back to Work: Cognitive Behavioral Predictors of Depressive Symptoms and Job Search Success," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 72, no. 6 (2016), 591-605.

⁷ Incite, Inc., *Rethinking Job Search Project*, 5.

⁸ Proudfoot et al., "Effect of cognitive-behavioural training"; Jukka Vuori and Jussi Silvonon, "The Benefits of a Preventative Job Search Program on Re-employment and Mental Health at 2-Year Follow-Up," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 78 (2005), 43-52; Kylie Henderson, "Addressing Mental Health and Reemployment for Unemployed Australians Through Psychological Interventions: An Applied Study," *Australian Journal of Career Development* 23, no. 3 (2013), 112-120.

⁹ Matthew Wesson and Matthew Gould. (2010) "Can a 'return-to-work' agenda fit within the theory and practice of CBT for depression and anxiety disorders?" *The Cognitive Behaviour Therapist* 3, 27-42.

helps conceptualize intentional behavior change¹⁰ and has been used extensively in health and substance abuse treatments. The application of a Stages of Change Model as a framework for employment services is unique but promising.¹¹ There is evidence that one's work readiness can be influenced by intervention, as shown in a three-year randomized controlled study in Canada.¹² Job search interventions are effective when addressing both skill and motivation according to a meta-analysis.¹³

Service Delivery Model

The target population of Rethinking consisted of registered Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) participants age 18 and older who were receiving UI benefits and who lived in one of the 11 counties served. Recruitment was conducted via e-mail outreach to UI claimants, outreach to walk-in clients and individuals already registered in WIOA, and staff referrals.

The program was delivered by trained facilitators who directly interacted with the participants and led them through a proprietary Rethinking curriculum. This curriculum consisted of 12 two-hour workshops, conducted three days a week for four consecutive weeks. Numbers of participants per workshop ranged from 2 to 15 with an average of 8.

Rethinking class sessions included activities related to the management of thoughts and emotions, accountability for decisions and actions, building self-esteem and a sense of personal responsibility, and how to set and consistently pursue goals. The instructional approach consisted of participant-driven, facilitated discussions; homework assignments; a job-search log; and maintaining accountability for attendance and participation.

Once each workshop series ended, the facilitators followed up with each participant at 30, 90, and 120 days after exit to record their employment status. In addition, an online Refresher Survey was launched in March 2018 to gauge the extent and nature of interest in receiving additional Rethinking information, lessons, and connections upon completion of the workshop series.

¹⁰ James O Prochaska, Carlo C. DiClemente, and John C. Norcross, "In search of how people change: Applications to addictive behaviors," *American Psychologist* 47, no. 9 (1992), 1102-1114.

¹¹ Kevin Swibaker, *Final Report, The Stages of Change Research Study, An Employment Development Project, February 19, 2007-February 18, 2010* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Opportunities for Employment, 2010).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Songqi Liu et al., "Effectiveness of job search interventions: A meta-analytic review," *Psychological Bulletin* 140, no. 4 (2014), 1009-1041.

Evaluation Design Summary

The Rethinking evaluation design sought to contribute to an understanding of the application of cognitive-behavioral techniques to a non-mental health setting—i.e., the workforce system—in the United States. It was informed by an evidence base that documented the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral interventions in a variety of settings, including a Rethinking pilot study conducted by WWP.

The evaluation had three foci: formative, summative (outcomes), and cost studies. The formative study was descriptive, relying on quantitative and qualitative data collected from administrative and primary data collection. The summative study employed a quasi-experimental design (QED) to assess the impact of the program relative to a comparison group. The study utilized propensity score matching (PSM) and logistic regression to test confirmatory and exploratory hypotheses. The cost study included a cost-allocation and a cost-effectiveness analysis, using grant administration data.

Evaluation research activities included primary data collection through site visits, key-stakeholder interviews, and participant focus groups, as well as participant and comparison-group surveys. Key stakeholders included facilitators, participants, workforce board and staff, and WorkSource Oregon (WSO) and Oregon Employment Department (OED) staff. The research also relied upon a variety of program and administrative data, including data from the state workforce data system interface (I-Trac); OED Unemployment Insurance claim data and wage-record data, the state's WOMIS data system, grant management data, and administrative records pertaining to the curriculum.

Implementation Study Key Findings

- The Rethinking services were implemented smoothly and with strong fidelity to initial plans.
- The high overall quality of facilitation, which was sustained over time despite facilitator turnover, indicates that the facilitator selection criteria were appropriate.
- Thanks to regular fidelity checks and facilitator guidance, the delivery of workshops adhered well to initial plans with relatively little site-by-site variation.
- Because the WorkSource staff were not allowed to sit in on classes, they initially had some difficulty getting to know the program. However, this issue became less prominent over time as the staff became more familiar with the program and heard positive feedback from clients.

- The pre- and post-program knowledge assessments were found to be problematic and should be revisited in future versions of the program.
- The evaluation team's site visit reports, progress reports, and annual reports were used throughout the program period to assess progress against the program's stated goals, test fidelity to the Rethinking model, address problems as they arose, and inform sustainability efforts.
- Feedback from facilitators, workforce board members and staff, and Oregon Employment Department staff indicated that Rethinking was highly effective in its implementation. Support for the program was virtually universal as the program drew to a close, although minor concerns were noted.
- Cultural relevance was not a strong focus of the program. It appears to have been culturally relevant to most of its audience, but this is likely due to the relatively homogeneous group that self-selected into the program.
- Due to the high fidelity of implementation, the program had few unintended consequences, and most of these were beneficial for participants. For example, although the program was not designed to constitute therapy, it was found to benefit participants in a similar way.
- Although the program was popular among staff, it did not stimulate systems change and appears unlikely to do so without further infusions of funding. Sustainability efforts were showing modest gains as the program drew to a close.
- The program exceeded performance targets, including goals established for recruitment, completion, and self-reported gains in socioemotional skills, confidence, and motivation in job search. Specifically:
 - During the early stages of the program, there were difficulties recruiting participants in some rural communities, mostly due to travel constraints. Ultimately, this resulted in one rural site being closed, and enrollment targets per site were adjusted accordingly. Nonetheless, by program close, recruitment had exceeded both the original total and the adjusted goals, with 1,215 enrollees.
 - Over 70% of those who enrolled completed Rethinking (i.e., attending 10 or more of the 12 Rethinking classes), surpassing its goal of 51%. Nearly 40% of participants attended every class.
 - Most program completers at exit reported motivation to job search, exceeding the performance goal (94% and 71%, respectively). Similarly, 86% of participants who completed the workshop signaled confidence in their job-search skill, exceeding the goal of 69%.
- Participant satisfaction with Rethinking workshops was very high, and feedback from participants reflects the critical role of facilitators in satisfaction. At exit, satisfaction was very particularly related to aspects of the facilitator and

presentation style: participants felt respected, felt that the facilitator helped them understand the material, felt that the presentations were effective, and felt involved in the workshops. Their overall satisfaction and understanding were rated very highly as well. Nearly all survey respondents (97%) said that they would recommend the program to other people.

- Rethinking positively impacted the participants. Benefits included having a positive impact on participants' (1) job search, motivation, and confidence, (2) tools and skills, and (3) empowerment or perspective. Enhancing both the motivation and confidence of participants in their job search were key objectives in the program. In responding to open-ended questions—that did not prompt for reflections on motivation or confidence—nearly 70% of participants attested that Rethinking positively impacted their motivation or confidence in general or specific to their job search.
- In terms of learned skills, participants rated themselves very highly in response to questions about socioemotional skills, confidence, and motivation in the post-workshop survey. As expected, there was a slight drop, across the board, in average respondent scores when surveyed six months after workshop completion.

The evaluation was not explicitly designed to parse out every feature that contributed to the strength of the implementation. Nonetheless, the team's observations suggest that the strength of the implementation can be attributed to excellent program management skills; optimal use of the planning year, including pilot testing of readiness tools, tool administration, recruitment process, enrollment process, and website functionality; clear standards for, and training and monitoring of facilitators; a tightly choreographed curriculum; a pre-tested curriculum; and strong and consistent focus on communication and partner relationship-building. The quasi-experimental design of a WIF Tier A program was made possible by many of the same features, i.e., program management skills, a specifically defined and time-bound intervention, and access to a variety of administrative data, and to key stakeholders, including participant and comparison group members.

Outcome Study Key Findings

Rethinking aimed to help unemployed persons find jobs by providing tools to effectively cope with the emotional and social aspects of a job search and unemployment. A propensity score matching analysis was used to answer hypotheses about employment and UI benefit outcomes, which yielded the following results:

- In the matched analysis, participants in the Rethinking program had a statistically insignificant and weak odds ratio of 1.05, that is, only a 5% better chance of being employed in the first quarter after the exit quarter than the

comparison group. Unmatched, the uncontrolled mean difference between the two populations were virtually identical at 58% apiece.

- In addition to the DOL common measure, an analysis of employment for each quarter independently revealed statistically significant positive results over the long term. Specifically, participants had 12% greater odds of employment in the third quarter, and 8% greater chance in the fourth quarter. Although effect sizes were small (.02-.03), findings suggest that the program may have a differential impact over the longer term.
- The propensity score matching analysis showed that participants had a 5% greater likelihood of retaining employment (common measure) in any job than the comparison group, but the effect was not statistically significant.
- Participants in the Rethinking program tended to consume fewer weeks of UI benefits than the comparison group; in the PSM analysis, the estimated treatment effect was 1.4 fewer weeks than the comparison group (with an effect size of -0.08), which was statistically significant, and following Kraft (2018)¹⁴ can be considered a medium impact.¹⁵
- Exploratory hypotheses related to job stability and to performance for minority populations were not confirmed.
- The exploratory hypothesis related to dosage of intervention was not confirmed. Attending a higher volume of workshops sessions did not increase the likelihood of employment. In the first quarter after the training period there was a statistically significant *negative* relationship between dosage intensity and employment (small effect size of -.03). There was no association statistically in the second, third, and fourth quarters. This finding most likely reflects a phenomenon of participants who stopped attending sessions because they found employment.

Cost Study Key Findings

Rethinking aimed to deliver a program that reduced the per-participant cost as compared to current expenses of a job seeker on Unemployment Insurance. A cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) compared program costs to non-monetary

¹⁴ Matthew A. Kraft, "Interpreting Effect Sizes of Education Intervention," Brown University Working Paper, 2018.

¹⁵ An analysis using a simple count of the number of weeks that an individual was awarded UI benefits in the 52 weeks after the four-week-training period was conducted, rather than a direct measure of time to UI benefits exhaustion.

outcomes, i.e., employment success, retention, and reduction in length of UI benefit receipt. The cost study treated expenditures as a fixed add-on cost.

- The per-unit cost of the program was \$1,188.85 for the full cost and \$1,163.55 excluding startup.
- Assessment of cost effectiveness relative to gaining employment in the first quarter after exit quarter (common measure), using propensity score matching estimates, showed a statistically insignificant 5% improvement in first quarter employment, which would be a per-percentage-point improvement of 1% per \$237 per person (1% per \$232 excluding startup costs).
- For the common measure of retention in employment (second and third quarters after the exit quarter), using propensity score matching estimates resulted in a CEA ratio of a 1% increase in retention rates for every \$248 spent per person (\$242 excluding startup), which (like employment) was a statistically insignificant 5% difference.
- Participants tended to consume fewer unemployment benefits in the 52 weeks after the end of the training period. PSM analysis revealed an average of 1.4 fewer weeks for participants, for an estimated CEA ratio of a one-week reduction in UI benefits for every \$849.18 (including startup) expended.
- Modest quantitative outcomes, together with the conservative cost assumptions, resulted in fairly pessimistic estimates of cost effectiveness. However, findings on employment and retention should be treated with some caution, since missing data were treated as not employed, which can be inaccurate due to lag times and exclusions in state wage-record data. Using UI benefit consumption as an alternative measure of employment resulted in more positive findings. Considering that this was a one-time intervention, the modest long-term effects several quarters later indicates that follow-up support with participants might yield more robust outcomes.

Implications and Recommendations

The program enjoyed a consistently high level of acceptability, feasibility, and value. WSO concerns about the length of the intervention were not borne out because the workshop offered value to participants that outweighed the time commitment required. The Rethinking experience demonstrates that American Job Centers, working in concert with other stakeholder groups, can deliver cognitive-behavioral education that promotes job-search efficacy.

No substantive systems change was realized, yet this was not strictly necessary to maintain an effective partnership for such a program effort. WSO staff were very receptive to the idea of incorporating Rethinking in their suite of workforce services, but sustainability is closely tied to funds for the cost of hiring and retaining

specialized staff—i.e., trained facilitators. Future iterations that involve single facilitators or one-off workshops are at risk of yielding a very different and potentially isolating experience for facilitators. In this sense, program management and support to facilitators would be easier if future efforts were large scale.

- Local workforce boards are encouraged to consider ways to incorporate socioemotional tools and skill development to provide support to job seekers.
- Attempts at replication of the program should not be constrained solely to local workforce boards, but established in other education and training settings, and at a larger scale.
- Future iterations should plan for an initial investment in hiring and training facilitators, as well as dedication to ongoing technical assistance and meaningful contacts with facilitators.

Another concern for future implementation is the effect of Rethinking on different target populations. The program's unexpected appeal to older women means that further research is needed to test the model's applicability to other populations.

The findings from this evaluation also highlight the obstacles faced by older displaced workers. They can become discouraged by perceived and actual ageism in the labor market or have difficulty adjusting to current mechanisms (e.g., electronic, de-personalized) for applying for jobs. They may struggle to adapt to new careers and to identify transferable skills. Finally, they face the challenge of finding a wage comparable to the one they had earned in prior jobs. Such conditions should also translate into older workers being out of work longer than they would have expected despite an otherwise strong job market. These issues are likely to continue to be salient as increasing numbers of older workers find themselves unable or unwilling to retire.¹⁶

Although most participants appear not to have encountered problems related to cultural relevance, a few did. This relatively sound fit, however, may be attributed to the homogeneous group that self-selected into the program. The current, smaller versions of Rethinking recently launched might be considered more culturally relevant in that they have been tailored to suit specific target audiences.

- The Rethinking model should be adapted for application to multiple target populations. It would prove fruitful to develop a version tailored to audiences

¹⁶ The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, *Working Longer: The Disappearing Divide between Work Life and Retirement*, accessed July 17, 2019, <http://www.apnorc.org/projects/Pages/HTML%20Reports/working-longer-the-disappearing-divide-between-work-life-and-retirement-issue-brief.aspx>.

that are not neuro-typical, due to the inherent brain re-training features of the model.

- Future delivery or adaptations of Rethinking that specifically serve an older clientele would do well to incorporate content related to disabilities or ageism in hiring.
- Future applications of the Rethinking model need to be developed with a deliberate focus on cultural relevance. This can take into account, for example, race, class, gender, age, and neuro-typical status.

The evidence base for the model thus far is based on fragmented elements, i.e., there is support for various facets, settings, or audiences. However, this model is emergent and unique, and had no prior work sufficiently similar from which to generate baseline metrics of success.

The current study found that Rethinking offers a strong value proposition, including not just participant and stakeholder satisfaction but evidence of longer-term participant self-efficacy and employment outcomes. These outcomes put WWP in a good position to make the case for the model to funders.

- Energetic outreach should be conducted to connect with funders whose priorities and aims are aligned with the model purpose and delivery modes.
- Efforts to engage potential partners will similarly need to be consonant with their missions and sufficiently aligned with priorities to inspire a willingness to invest new or existing resources in the effort.
- The Rethinking findings should be vigorously disseminated, and further research encouraged.
- Further research is urgently needed to assess the effectiveness of the model relative to different populations, conditions, and permutations of the curriculum.
- Longer-term impacts and retention should be core metrics in future research.
- Clear and justified benchmarks for success should be established for each future program setting, using the most rigorous evidence available. Effort must be taken to create rubrics to define success in advance of program start up.

Introduction

This is the final report of the evaluation of the Rethinking Job Search (Rethinking) program funded through the Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) in 2014 by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Rethinking prepared adult and dislocated workers who were receiving Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits to better manage the job-search process using a short course in cognitive-behavioral education. The state-level project originated from a successful pilot of Rethinking in four WorkSource Oregon (WSO) regions in 2013-2014, and the curriculum was fully developed at that time. The WIF planning occurred in 2015, and program enrollment was from January 2016 to September 2018. Rethinking operated in 11 counties in Oregon and was led by Willamette Workforce Partnership (WWP).¹⁷

Overview of the Oregon Rethinking Job Search WIF Project

The stated mission of the program was to operate collaboratively to bolster job seekers' confidence in their ability to be quickly reemployed. The intention was that a workshop series would teach job seekers who were earning UI benefits cognitive-behavioral techniques to enhance motivation and self-efficacy in job-search activities. As a result, the participants were expected to obtain employment, shorten the duration for receiving UI benefits, and retain jobs for at least one year post-intervention.

The program was also intended to improve the coordination and collaboration between the Unemployment Insurance Division and the Business and Employment Services Division at Oregon Employment Department (OED) and local workforce boards (LWBs) and WSOs (i.e., American Job Centers, AJCs). In fact, during the program, the relationship with the grant team and OED remained strong; OED played a consistent role in outreach to UI recipients for program recruitment, and was responsive in gaining access to necessary data for outcomes analysis.

During the planning phase of Rethinking, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was passed in 2014 and then implemented across the country beginning in July 2015. Oregon responded with a reorganization of its workforce areas, which meant there were some merged regions and new workforce boards.

¹⁷ Formerly Incite Inc., which was formerly Job Growers.

As a result, Rethinking partnership configurations shifted, and there were additional efforts needed to work out policies and agreements related to the program. These efforts were concluded smoothly, without notable impact on the program's implementation.

During the four years in which Rethinking was planned and carried out, the statewide environment in Oregon had changed. Most notable was the dynamic shift in the unemployment rate. Between the time that Rethinking was originally conceived and grant-funded program services ended, the Oregon unemployment rate dropped from 9.5% (August 2011) to 3.8% (September 2018). The program target audience was adults receiving UI benefits, and accordingly, recruitment for the project was influenced by the state unemployment rate. During the planning year, the implementation team had to recalculate its outreach plans; the total number of UI benefit recipients available to enter Rethinking had grown smaller, and it continued to shrink during the program operational years. Despite the low unemployment rate, the statewide average UI claim duration for Oregon only dropped 2.4 weeks from 2014 to 2018 (17.5 to 15.1).¹⁸ However, the Oregon 2018 rate is similar to the national average UI claim duration.¹⁹

Another contextual factor is that the state of Oregon enjoys diversity in its geography and this influences its local economies. Employment opportunities and seasonality of employment vary between the Portland metro and rural areas. Coastal and mountain areas tend to have a more seasonal workforce because of tourism, fishing, logging, and the Christmas tree industry. There are concerns about the quality of jobs and wage rates; some rural areas of the state have a reputation for jobs with lower wages, particularly service and seasonal jobs. Notable economic stressors include the cost of living and the massive housing crisis caused by high housing prices and low rental vacancy.

While most AJCs around the country are dealing with how to serve those with multiple barriers to employment, this program tended to attract a different demographic: older women with fewer WIOA-recognized barriers on average. The program was almost exclusively and unexpectedly of interest to women over age 50. This unexpected turn has highlighted the issue of older displaced workers: they can become discouraged by perceived and actual ageism in the labor market; the drastic change in mechanisms (e.g., electronic, de-personalized) for applying for jobs; the struggle to adapt and to identify transferable skills; and the challenge of finding a wage comparable to the one they had earned in prior jobs. Such

¹⁸ Personal communication, David Gerstenfeld, January 10, 2019.

¹⁹ The 12-month average duration of UI benefits paid as of December 2018 in the United States was 15.35, according to <https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/claimssum.asp>.

conditions should also translate into older workers being out of work longer than they would have expected.

Despite seeming constraints, program recruitment was successful overall, with the total enrollment numbers exceeding the target by 22%. The exception to this was rural sites of one LWB which were closed to enrollment in mid-2017. Rural engagement proved difficult possibly due in part to the local culture, but certainly due in large measure to the time and travel required to take 12 units of training services over a one-month period—especially in winter months.

Another contextual influence in the state was a reduction in federal WIOA funding across the state for fiscal year 2019, driven by the employment rates. This change became known near the close of the grant program, and it significantly constrained the LWBs' interest and ability to sustain the program beyond the grant. The resources needed for the program are almost entirely for facilitator time to conduct workshops and manage related logistics. The facilitator role requires a very specific set of skills, which discouraged maintaining the program, in lieu of keeping existing staff with a skill set that was applicable to the wider menu of WSO offerings.

Program Theory and Components

The long-term outcome goals for Rethinking were:

- Partners will have built a system of communication and collaboration and want to work together more
- Program will be shared with the field at state and national levels
- Participants will have higher rates of employment, collect UI benefits for a shorter period, find employment more quickly, and have higher job retention
- Services are cost effective

As a theory of change, a logic model is traditionally portrayed as a flow diagram. In logic models, program inputs lead to program activities, which lead to direct outputs, which lead to intermediate- and long-term outcomes, which finally lead to the expected long-term impacts. There is decreasingly direct linkage across each of these features, so that the ability to attribute causality declines with each step. For instance, reducing the duration of unemployment is influenced by many factors, and it becomes more difficult to attribute these changes to one program.

The logic model for Rethinking Job Search is deconstructed into a series of three visuals in Appendix B. The logic model provides the inputs, assumptions, and potential challenges, which apply to all facets of the program, rather than being related to one specific set of activities and results. The inputs describe the assets and prior experience that were deemed foundational for the success of the program.

Appendix Table 4 reflects program components at the point of conception: partnership development; evaluation; planning and preparation; and program delivery. For each component, the accompanying activities, outputs, intermediate outcomes, and long-term outcomes are described.

The logic model further shows the expected impacts, which relate to reallocation of state funds, expenditures from the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, and self-sufficiency of individuals and families. The impacts were the expected result of all program components combined, i.e., that partnerships, evaluation, planning, and solid program delivery would all effect a demonstration of program efficacy and its natural consequences.

Implementation Timeline

The program implementation timeline began with preparations in the last quarter of 2014, including program planning, hiring, contracts, and solicitation for an evaluation partner. In the 2015 planning year, the grant management team tested readiness assessment tools; tested the recruitment process; developed and updated program policy; executed contracts with workforce boards; provided guidance to LWBs in hiring facilitators; trained facilitators; and established and modified a WIF module into the statewide management information system. Late in 2015, LWBs procured workshop facilitators (employee or contractual) and worked closely with them through the remainder of the grant to establish workshop schedules and support recruitment and training logistics. From January 2016 through September 2018, the grant management team's implementation efforts included monitoring and supporting facilitators; participant recruitment; service delivery; training new facilitators; communications with LWBs regarding delivery; progress reports to DOL; and updates to program policy. The grant manager conducted in-person fidelity monitoring of implementation in November 2017, October 2018, and November 2018.

Scope of Collaboration

Willamette Workforce Partnership was the grantee. They managed the federal grant; developed the programming and its standards; conducted training and support for facilitators; managed partner and evaluation contracts, relationships, and expectations; monitored program data and conducted in-person fidelity checks; and set up communication systems to support partners in reviewing the data for their area and tracking their progress toward performance goals.

Partnerships and Sites

One of the overarching goals of the program was to support statewide collaboration between the Unemployment Insurance system, Employment Services, and the local workforce boards that would inform ongoing workforce systems reforms.

The work required and achieved coordination across multiple offices. Those offices and the roles they played in the program are:

Oregon Employment Department, Unemployment Insurance Division (OED-UI): Recruitment and UI data pulls. Tasks were to provide data on the potential pool of job seekers, draw samples, manage e-mail lists, and disseminate recruitment letters. This office also cooperated with the evaluation team as interview subjects, participated in discussions on data access, and provided raw data on UI claims for outcomes analysis.

Oregon Employment Department, Business and Employment Services Division (OED-ES): Data coordination. This office contributed to the evaluation at several points with discussion on data access, and provided raw data on wage records for outcomes analysis.

Public Policy Associates, Inc. (PPA): Program evaluation. As evaluation partner, the tasks were to design and conduct formative, cost, and summative studies, and provide analyses and reports of the findings.

Worksystems, Inc. (WSI): Program documentation. This agency was an implementation site, but is also responsible for the development and administration of I-Trac, the statewide management information system for workforce service data reporting owned by Worksystems. For this grant project, WSI developed a module and its reporting functions within I-Trac to store relevant program data on a case-level basis.

Local workforce boards (LWBs): Establishment and administration of implementation sites. Key tasks were to educate WSO staff and establish a referral process; recruit, conduct workshops, conduct participant follow-up contacts, and participate in fidelity checks (each according to standards); maintain at least a 0.5 full-time equivalent facilitator position; monitor and report on implementation, progress, and financials; cooperate with the evaluation partner; and (facilitators were to) participate in Rethinking Job Search Connect activities, discussions, webinars, and annual meetings. The names of the eight participating boards are shown in Table 1.

WorkSource Oregon sites (WSOs): Program implementation sites. The centers—overseen by the LWBs—provided operational support and facilities where workshops were conducted, housed facilitators, and provided WIOA services to participants.

The sites for implementation were WSOs in 11 counties that are administered by the 8 LWBs. The WSOs occupy both large and small metropolitan areas, and rural areas of the state. The sites are named in Table 1.

Table 1: Implementation Sites

WorkSource Location	City	County	Local Workforce Investment Board
WorkSource Clackamas	Oregon City	Clackamas	Clackamas Workforce Partnership
WorkSource Lane – Oakmont Center	Eugene	Lane	Lane Workforce Partnership
WorkSource Oregon Coos Bay	North Bend	Coos	Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board
WorkSource Oregon Newport	Newport	Lincoln	Oregon Northwest Workforce Investment Board
WorkSource Oregon Redmond, Bend	Redmond, Bend	Deschutes	East Cascades Workforce Investment Board
WorkSource Oregon Klamath	Klamath Falls	Klamath	East Cascades Workforce Investment Board
WorkSource Oregon Salem Center	Salem	Marion	Willamette Workforce Partnership
WorkSource Oregon Yamhill Center	McMinnville	Yamhill	Willamette Workforce Partnership
WorkSource Rogue Valley (formerly The Job Council)	Medford	Jackson	Rogue Workforce Partnership
WorkSource Portland Metro Beaverton/Hillsboro	Beaverton	Washington	Worksystems, Inc.
WorkSource Portland Metro SE	Portland	Multnomah	Worksystems, Inc.

Facilitator Hiring, Initial Training, Ongoing Supports

A key component of the program was the availability and skill of the providers (facilitators) who directly interacted with the participants and led them through the Rethinking curriculum. LWBs were responsible for identifying candidates and hiring facilitators from the ranks of current staff, new hires, or contractors. To support adequate selection, the cognitive-behavioral specialist at WWP provided LWBs with a set of recommendations and considerations for the hiring process. This included tools to help identify those who were a good fit for conducting lessons that require a deep understanding of educational techniques and emotional intelligence.

The facilitator training was designed to prepare facilitators to deliver the Rethinking program independently. The training was delivered by WWP's cognitive-behavioral specialist during one week in December 2015 and included an additional hired expert consultant. The training curriculum was originally developed by WWP using unrestricted and private funds.

The facilitator training provided direction on the Rethinking curriculum, instructional approaches, assessment, and data tracking and reporting. It oriented facilitators to working on a research grant and the critical need for maintaining accurate individual-level documentation. The potential conflict of interest inherent in managing participant data was acknowledged, along with the goal of employing intentional restraint and objectivity in that task.

The facilitator role also required the following:

- Participation in discussions with WWP and PPA to support the evaluation of the Rethinking program (such as participating in stakeholder interviews and reminding participants of upcoming surveys)
- Completion of reports at the close of each series of Rethinking workshops and entry of individual-level data
- Participation in the required facilitator webinars and annual in-person refresher trainings
- Conduct of follow-up calls with each participant up to a year after workshop completion

Facilitators were provided with opportunities to help build rapport among themselves and reinforce knowledge. This included an annual meeting and mandatory quarterly webinars. Given the geographical range of sites, additional in-person events were not deemed feasible. Over time, the Rethinking leadership began to look for opportunities to enhance the engagement among facilitators. A question-of-the-month feature was adopted in which a facilitator posted a question in the Rethinking website forum and the other facilitators had an opportunity to respond. In 2018, the Rethinking leadership expanded the role of facilitators to

lead the webinars on a rotating basis. The program published a program-specific e-newsletter, and it included spotlights on facilitators.

Monitoring. WWP's project manager conducted monitoring visits annually, which included observing the facilitator and reviewing fiscal and administrative records. Monitoring visits were completed in November 2017, October 2018, and November 2018. The visits allowed WWP to formally assess and document the fidelity of implementation to the standards, with a focus on the materials, supplies, training venue, and facilitation. In 2018, the monitoring process was expanded to include review of the accuracy of recordkeeping and data entry of participant pre- and post-workshop knowledge assessments, due to multiple indications that pre/post-workshop assessments were not consistently or accurately recorded. The evaluation team provided guidance on the use of sampling or census approaches per site, and a thorough examination and editing of the data was conducted.

Over the course of the program, WWP closely monitored the fiscal reporting, recruitment numbers, and data quality by site. This was supported by I-Trac reporting and reports from sites on the administration of the program at the site level.

Scope of Intervention

Target Population

The target population of Rethinking consisted of registered Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act participants age 18 and older who were receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits and who lived in one of the counties served. Prior iterations of the program were targeted toward long-term unemployed customers in general.

Eligibility Criteria

The minimum eligibility requirements were:

- Be registered for WIOA
- Be collecting UI benefits
- Be at least 18 years old
- Have a high school diploma or GED
- Have not participated in any part of the workshops before
- Have completed the required work-readiness assessment
- Give consent for data to be used for evaluation and program improvements

Program Activities and Interventions

Participant Flow. From the participant perspective, the program would have been experienced as the following process:

1. Became aware of the program through one of the recruitment methods:
 - a. Recommendation by a WSO staff member.
 - b. Letter from UI that requests they take the online assessment.
2. Review of marketing material provided by WSO or UI, which outlines the workshop purpose, time and schedule commitment of workshop series, and the eligibility criteria for participation.
3. Complete a 4-5 minute online assessment, which included an eligibility check and asked for informed consent to participate in research.
4. View a video promoting the Rethinking program that outlined the workshop purpose, time and schedule commitment of workshop series, and the eligibility criteria for participation and concludes with a link to register for the workshops.
5. Complete the online registration for the workshop series, including selection of a particular workshop series from a list of locations and times available.
6. Attend the first day of the workshop series that included half an hour of logistics in addition to two hours of facilitated discussion.²⁰ The logistics obliged participants to provide required documentation and eligibility verification.
7. Full participation would be 12 workshop days (inclusive of first day), which were two hours long, and held three days a week for four consecutive weeks.
8. Complete all homework and job-search log requirements.
9. Complete any surveys or assessments for the program evaluation while in the workshops.
10. Provide information on their employment status when they were contacted for follow-up by the facilitator up to a year after completion of the program.

Recruitment. The recruitment process was implemented as planned except for minor adaptations to make the process more efficient and able to reach more potential participants. The final process is described here, along with adaptations. Both WWP's partner, OED, and the local partners of the workforce centers were involved in recruiting people to the program. A marketing firm was engaged to develop hardcopy and video promotional material. This material provided an orientation to the workshop purpose, time, and schedule commitment of workshop

²⁰ There were exceptions to this process, which are described later.

series, as well as the eligibility criteria for participation. Materials were available at all participating WSOs. Content was also provided via videos and the program-specific website (described further below). WWP provided WSO management with talking points and materials in order to train staff to promote the program to those collecting unemployment benefits.

OED-UI conducted targeted recruitment of UI claimants for the program via letters. The first change in the recruitment protocol was to abandon the idea of paper letters in order to reduce the administrative burden and cost; these were never sent. The OED-UI team instead generated e-mails to UI recipients in the participating LWB areas, using their special workshop e-mail address as the sender. They sent e-mails to each batch of eligible recipients in the designated regions about one to three weeks prior to each workshop date. The lists were pulled from their data system and processed by an OED staffer. Lists only included individuals who were: collecting UI benefits; at least 18 years old; and residing within zip codes associated with the county where the participating WSO was located.

One recruitment protocol that was subject to change was the length of time an individual was a UI benefit recipient in order to receive an e-mail invitation. For most regions, e-mails were targeted to those who were between weeks one and five of their UI benefits. In a few instances, due to the low numbers of qualifying UI benefit recipients, OED and WWP elected to issue invitations to all the claimants in the designated area. This was done for areas where recruitment had been most challenging.

The e-mail letters offered an activity that would count as a job-seeking activity—participation in a short online survey, which was part of a research project to improve services and help job seekers. It was noted that the activity was not required, answers were confidential, and answers would not be shared with the Unemployment Insurance Division or WorkSource center staff, nor would answers impact benefits payments.

The letter instructed the claimant on how to get credit for completing the job-seeking activity, and that they ought to take the survey only once. The letter then advised that after the survey, they would be directed back to a page that provided information about Rethinking Job Search, a free program specifically designed for those collecting UI benefits in Oregon. The letter encouraged interested individuals to visit the Rethinking website for further information and online registration. OED received very little feedback, and all of it positive, from customers regarding the letters.

Recruitment also happened at WSO sites in real time, with outreach to walk-in clients or to clients already registered in WIOA. Facilitators promoted the program within the office to both WSO staff and directly to customers. Facilitators communicated with WorkSource center staff about the program and upcoming

workshops at standing meetings and other opportunities. Facilitators promoted awareness of Rethinking through posters in the centers' main areas and by giving staff flyers for their work spaces. One adaptation was that some centers began to offer informational sessions for customers, which allowed facilitators to provide in-depth information to multiple customers at once, with an opportunity to register customers immediately at the close of the session.

Staff at the WorkSource centers, who were employed by various organizations, also referred individuals to Rethinking. The level of engagement in making referrals varied by staff and by office, and was negotiated at the WSO level. It became apparent over time that staff were important connectors to the program. When staff referred, they directed customers to either the Rethinking website to sign up or to the Rethinking facilitator.

Registration. When potential participants visited the Rethinking website, they interacted with multiple URLs. Prospective participants, upon accessing the link provided in the UI letter or from the WSO staff, were directed to a survey that combined eligibility assessment and work-readiness assessment (Readiness Survey).

If the individual did not meet the minimum requirements, the website screen told them that they were ineligible for the program. In all scenarios, the individuals were directed to a final screen that confirmed that they can receive credit for a job-search activity by completing the assessment.

If the individual met the minimum requirements, and gave consent for their readiness survey data to be used for research purposes, they were routed back to a page with more information about the Rethinking Job Search, including purpose, format, duration, and nature of content. The website provided a list of locations and dates of upcoming workshop series.

Individuals who registered but did not attend the first workshop were permitted to re-register for a later workshop series. However, any individual who participated in any portion of the workshop series and dropped out was not allowed to re-register. Participants were not restricted to registering for a workshop series only within the WSO in which they registered for WIOA. They could sign up for a workshop series in any of the locations where it was offered. If the individual was eligible, but did not register for the workshop, they were deemed a member of the preliminary comparison pool (from which matches were later made).

The Readiness Survey gauged potential participants' stage of motivation for job-seeking. The assessment was designed by and administered by a third-party on its own platform. The Readiness Survey items represented stages of readiness to engage in a job search: action, resistance, and pondering stages of job-seeking. The survey gathered work readiness data for later use, and three eligibility

questions for immediate use. Facilitators were not given access to the Readiness Survey results, to avert potential bias or influence on teaching styles or participant treatment.

Prior to the program launch, in summer 2015, the program team launched pilot tests of two work-readiness tools that were being considered for use in the program. PPA conducted factor analysis of both pilot datasets and reported back to the program team on the results to aid the decision-making on which readiness tool to use. Once the program began, PPA conducted factor analyses again with the actual data at a mid-point and after the program was concluded; the results of this are described in the methodological appendix.

Enrollment. The original protocol planned that the first day of the workshop series would be a half-hour longer to accommodate bureaucratic steps. Participants would be enrolled into WIOA if they were not already a client. They would provide documentation to verify eligibility, complete the I-Trac application with signature, and be confirmed in I-Trac with the help of the facilitator. The original plan to complete paperwork on the first day of the workshop was due to the need to confirm UI benefits, i.e., allowing maximum time to confirm when some may have submitted a claim recently. However, some sites along the way recognized that the first day would go smoother if the logistics were handled prior to that point and adapted the protocol accordingly. Some did all the registration in advance of the class. One facilitator prepared as much in advance as possible and took only about 15 minutes of the first class to complete this process. Another expanded the first class to get through it with all registrants. Some also found that a short call prior to the first day, to discuss the workshop, minimized the number of dropouts. The facilitators all used I-Trac to record attendance and other workshop-related information. For some, this meant learning a new system. Others were already quite familiar with I-Trac, having used it before in past positions. Those who were knowledgeable assisted others, and WWP staff were also available to address questions.

Definition of Participant. Rethinking participants were defined as UI claimants that had registered for the Rethinking program and whose eligibility was verified prior to the start of the workshop series. Participants who began but did not complete the workshop series were still considered participants for the purpose of performance reporting and for program evaluation. Participants, including those who dropped out, were excluded from the comparison group.

Service Delivery. Each workshop series took place over four weeks, three times per week, for two hours each workshop lesson, totaling 24.5 contact hours. The series were held at the WSO on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The intended protocol for service delivery was carried out exactly as planned, except that each workshop series was originally intended to include 5-12 participants, but in actuality ranged from 2 to 15 with an average of 8.

As noted, where needed, the first workshop was scheduled about a half-hour longer than the other lessons, to allow time to complete eligibility verification and other paperwork. The first day included completion of a pre-knowledge assessment, and the last day of the workshop included completion of a post-knowledge assessment. These knowledge assessments were focused specifically on the skill and information content of the workshop. The knowledge assessments were scored by facilitators and the results documented in the I-Trac.

The program was delivered by trained facilitators who directly interacted with the participants and led them through a proprietary Rethinking curriculum. The key features of the instructional approach included the following:

- Participant-driven, facilitated discussion
- Homework to encourage self-reflection
- Keeping a job-search log and evaluation of those searches (three job-search activities per week were required)
- Personal accountability for attendance and participation

The curriculum had been developed and tested prior to the grant. The class sessions included the following topics:

- How thoughts influence feelings and behavior
- “Risky” thinking and how to manage it
- Awareness of emotions and how to manage them
- Being accountable for action (or inaction) decisions
- Self-esteem awareness and building
- Personal responsibility and credibility
- Goal-setting and prioritizing
- Maintaining momentum

Program Exit Follow Up. Once a workshop series concluded, the facilitator “hard exited” all participants in I-Trac. At 30, 90, and 120 days after this exit, the facilitator was to follow up with each participant to determine their employment status and enter the results in I-Trac. The follow-up data were used in some interim evaluation reporting, but wage-record data from the State of Oregon was used in the final analysis.

Unplanned at the program outset, an additional online Refresher Survey was developed and launched March 2018. The survey was developed to follow up on findings from the six-month participant survey that indicated a high level of interest in a “short refresher course.” A total of 1,034 surveys were sent via e-mail to

former Rethinking participants who had been engaged between the beginning of the program through February 2018. This number excluded people who opted out or had invalid e-mail addresses. The survey was intended to gauge the extent and nature of interest in receiving additional Rethinking information, lessons, and connections upon completion of the workshop series.

Literature Evidence Base

Emotional and Health Consequences of Employment Loss

The consequences of unemployment are difficult for individuals, and can be particularly challenging for those who are long-term unemployed. This was illustrated in a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation, which found that 33% of long-term unemployed persons reported their lack of employment had had a negative effect on their mental health, and 19% reported that mental or physical health impairments made a job search problematic.²¹ Stress of unemployment prompted about 20% to seek help from medical professionals for physical complaints or stress relief, and nearly one in ten reported an increase in their use of alcohol or other drugs.²²

*There is a need for interventions that can diminish the undesirable emotional consequences of unemployment to help individuals become reemployed.*²³ In the current labor market, and encompassing the last three major recessions, job cuts have tended to be permanent, so that temporary layoffs are a smaller part of joblessness,²⁴ which has implications for serving dislocated workers with extensive work histories. WSOs have significant knowledge to impart regarding good practices in job-search strategies, but for customers, awareness is vastly different than putting these principles into action.

American workforce centers are ill prepared to help customers deal with the emotional and social consequence of unemployment, which is significant for those at risk of long-term unemployment. According to Incite, "The current services offered by the public workforce system simply do not go far enough into the

²¹ "Long-Term Unemployed Survey," The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and NPR News.

²² Ibid.

²³ Proudfoot et al., "Effect of cognitive-behavioural training."

²⁴ "Temporary Layoffs during the Great Recession," Erica Groshen, Liberty Street Economics, April 6, 2011, accessed on April 28, 2015, <http://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2011/04/temporary-layoffs-during-the-great-recession.html#.VT-pupNUUuI>.

emotional and social consequences of unemployment to truly address these issues in a significant manner.”²⁵

The Role of Workforce Centers in Unemployment Coping and Job-Search Motivation

In the United States, there is minimal experience in the public-employment sphere of leveraging the skills of mental health specialists, to better prepare job seekers. An exception to this was the JOBS program in Detroit, Michigan funded by the National Institute of Health in the 1980s that was intended to foster self-efficacy and coping skills of job seekers.²⁶ The intervention used a cognitive-behavioral intervention to teach customers how to manage the stresses of unemployment and to inform job-seeking behaviors or coping strategies. The JOBS program resulted in “higher quality reemployment in terms of income and job satisfaction and higher motivation among those who remained unemployed. Furthermore, the long-term follow-up, 2.5 years later, demonstrated continued beneficial effects of the intervention on wage rates, monthly earnings, and fewer episodes of job changes.”²⁷

*There are indications that cognitive-behavioral interventions are effective in helping unemployed persons become employed.*²⁸ A 1996 study in the United Kingdom appeared to be the first formal study of a psychological intervention in employment services that was based on validated psychotherapy principles.²⁹ The study targeted long-term unemployed professional individuals, and created a control group that was assigned to a social-support program that used the same format of services but different content. The study found improved employment rates for individuals who experienced brief job-search training along with cognitive-behavioral therapy, relative to the control group. At three months follow-up, 34% of the intervention group but only 13% of the control group had obtained full-time

²⁵ Incite, Inc., *Rethinking Job Search Project*, 2.

²⁶ Amiram D. Vinokur et al., “The Jobs I Preventive Intervention for Unemployed Individuals.”

²⁷ Vinokur et al., “The Jobs I Preventive Intervention for Unemployed Individuals,” 137.

²⁸ Building on previous work by the evaluation team, the literature review was expanded via searches in Google Scholar, with an emphasis on works since 2009, those that cited Proudfoot et al. (1997), and those identified with the search terms “cognitive behavior therapy,” “CBT,” “unemployment,” “long-term unemployed,” “jobs,” and “transtheoretic model” in various combinations.

²⁹ Proudfoot et al., “Effect of cognitive-behavioural training.”

employment.³⁰ The study author concluded that the fundamental features of cognitive-behavioral therapy have relevance to disciplines other than psychology.

A Finnish version of the JOBS program, offering both job-search skills and cognitive-behavioral coaching, was created and subjected to a randomized controlled trial (RCT) with long-term unemployed individuals. The study showed positive outcomes for participants at both six-month and two-year follow-ups, for labor-market engagement (i.e., employed, subsidized employment, or vocational training) and improved mental health (i.e., depression, self-esteem, job satisfaction) indicators.³¹

Similarly, results from a study in Australia showed effectiveness of psychological services for unemployed persons, specifically the improvement of depression, anxiety, and stress. They found that all formats, i.e., group or individual, of the interventions based on cognitive-behavioral therapy were effective at improving mental health, and that improvements in mental health indicators were associated with reemployment. Of job seekers who attended an intervention, 41.7% became reemployed.³²

More recent studies in the United States also suggested that CBT interventions can improve employment outcomes. An RCT compared the effects of CBT to antidepressants on employment in a small-N study in the United States.³³ Although there were no short-term differences, over the long term (28 months) CBT participants had higher rates of full-time employment. A separate longitudinal survey of self-reported mental health and employment prospects suggested the potential benefits of CBT exposure (for example in the likelihood of receiving a job offer).³⁴ Researchers in the United Kingdom have argued that employment goals can be incorporated into the CBT process without undermining the therapeutic relationship.³⁵ Nonetheless, they also noted that further research is needed to establish the effectiveness of CBT in getting individuals back to work.

There is some evidence that CBT interventions may have a more muted effect on those who are long-term unemployed, however. An Australian RCT showed weak effects on employment from cognitive-behavior therapy, although it did have several methodological challenges (with weak baseline equivalence and differential

³⁰ Proudfoot et al., "Effect of cognitive-behavioural training."

³¹ Vuori and Silvonen, "The Benefits of a Preventative Job Search Program."

³² Henderson, "Addressing Mental Health and Reemployment."

³³ Fournier et al., "Gains in employment status following antidepressant medication."

³⁴ Pfeifer and Strunk. (2016). "Getting Back to Work."

³⁵ Wesson and Gould. (2010) "Can a 'return-to-work' agenda fit?"

attrition rates).³⁶ A longitudinal RCT similarly found that duration of unemployment was an important mediator of psychologically oriented employment interventions.³⁷

Employment-focused CBT may mitigate mental health problems that act as barriers to employment. A 2014 RCT comparing CBT to vocational training for unemployed persons with social anxiety disorder found evidence that CBT improved participants' mental health while equaling employment outcomes,³⁸ and a 2012 study of employees on sick leave suggested that CBT reduced stress and burnout.³⁹ A British-based RCT also showed greater improvements in psychological well-being for unemployed persons after CBT and job-skills training.⁴⁰

Cognitive-behavioral therapy has been used to good effect in other related settings. A study of worker's compensation, for example, in 2012 reported that employees with "common mental health disorders" who participated in a work-focused cognitive-behavioral intervention were on leave 65 fewer days.⁴¹ A small-scale RCT in the Netherlands assessed the relative impact of CBT, CBT blended with workplace stress-reduction supports, and a control group (no intervention).⁴² The target population was self-employed persons experiencing stress who had applied for sick leave benefits. The study found that workplace-specific supports in conjunction with CBT led to quicker returns to work.

Willingness to Change: The Stages of Change Model

Using the Stages of Change (SOC) Model can help grow an understanding of work readiness. The Transtheoretical Model (TTM) is a comprehensive theory of change

³⁶ E. Harris et al. (2002) "Are CBT interventions effective with disadvantaged job-seekers who are long-term unemployed?" *Psychology, Health, and Medicine* 7, no. 4 (2002): 401-410.

³⁷ S. Hodzic et al., "The Effects of Emotional Competences Training among Unemployed Adults: A Longitudinal Study," *Applied Psychology: Health and Wellbeing*, 7, no. 3 (2015): 275-292.

³⁸ Joseph A. Himle et al., "Work-related CB versus vocational services as usual for unemployed persons with social anxiety disorder: A randomized controlled pilot trial," *Behavior Research and Therapy* 63 (2014): 169-176.

³⁹ Suzanne E. Lagerveld et al., "Work-Focused Treatment of Common Mental Disorders and Return to Work: A Comparative Outcome Study," *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 17, no. 2 (2012): 220-234.

⁴⁰ Nick Maguirea et al., "An evaluation of the choices for well-being project," *Psychology, Health & Medicine* 19, no. 3 (2014): 303-315.

⁴¹ Lagerveld et al., "Work-Focused Treatment of Common Mental Disorders."

⁴² Roland W. B. Blonk et al., "Return to work: A comparison of two cognitive behavioural interventions in cases of work related psychological complaints among the self-employed," *Work & Stress*, 20, no. 2 (2006): 129-144.

providing a conceptual framework of intentional behavior change.⁴³ This model identifies the readiness of an individual to engage in a new healthier behavior and to guide movement through stages to action and maintenance behavior.⁴⁴ In this model, change is not an event or a series of events. It is a process that occurs over time, in a nonlinear manner. It is common for people to recycle through the stages of change.⁴⁵

Swibaker illustrated how the stages of change relate to employment readiness,⁴⁶ which is shown in the table below.

Table 2: Stages of Changes

Stage of Change	Behavior Modification	Work Readiness
Pre-contemplation	Not ready	No interest in working
Contemplation	Getting ready	Thinking about finding employment
Preparation	Ready	Preparing to find employment with intent to act
Action	Observable behavior modification	Employment
Maintenance	Prevent relapse	Maintaining changes made
Termination	Self-efficacy	No need for maintenance task

The SOC Model has been used extensively in health and substance abuse treatments (although a meta-analysis suggests modest effect sizes⁴⁷). In these fields, emotion, cognition, and behavior are critical targets for intervention, but the application of SOC to elicit behavior change in employment development is unique. It also holds great promise for employment services, aiding providers who have long experienced frustration dealing with apparent lack of motivation and dropouts in programs.⁴⁸

Interventions can increase work readiness. In Canada, a three-year randomized controlled study was conducted by the Opportunities for Employment, Inc. (OFE) using interventions designed to increase work readiness of unemployed or

⁴³ Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross, "In search of how people change."

⁴⁴ "The Transtheoretical Model," Pro-Change Behavior Systems, Inc., accessed on April 30, 2015, <http://www.prochange.com/transtheoretical-model-of-behavior-change>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Swibaker, *Final Report, The Stages of Change Research Study*.

⁴⁷ Seth M. Noar, Christina N. Benac, and Melissa S. Harris, "Does Tailoring Matter? Meta-Analytic Review of Tailored Print Health Behavior Change Interventions," *Psychological Bulletin* 133, no. 4 (2007): 673–693.

⁴⁸ Swibaker, *Final Report, The Stages of Change Research Study*.

underemployed individuals. They applied SOC and motivational interviewing to employment development. They cited this as an innovative and previously untested approach to employment development in its address of motivational issues that job seekers face. The phase I study found that participants experienced increased program retention, employment, and employment retention rates, compared to the control group. The phase II part of the study eliminated a monetary incentive, required attendance as a prerequisite to other services, and expanded entry to all SOC levels. The results indicated that the intervention was effective at all SOC levels, and helped bring participants to a preparation stage that decreased dropouts in other workforce development programming.⁴⁹

Job-search interventions are effective when addressing both skill and motivation. In the United States, a meta-evaluation of job search interventions was conducted that examined data from 47 interventions derived from experimental or quasi-experimental designs. The authors reported that job-search interventions were 2.67 times more effective in generating employment for participants, compared to job seekers who were not part of an intervention.⁵⁰ Interventions were more effective when they focused on specific elements: job-search skills, self-presentation, self-efficacy, proactivity, goal-setting, and generating social support. Most relevant to the WIF-funded Rethinking program in Oregon, the job-search interventions required both skill development and motivation enhancement to produce the desired employment outcomes. Job search interventions appeared to be more effective for some populations than others; they were less effective for middle-aged persons, long-term unemployed, and job seekers with no special needs.

Oregon's Preliminary Test of Rethinking

The 2013 pilot study conducted by WWP had positive results. They crafted a pilot study that was funded by Kaiser Permanente Community Fund in 2011. The team created a "job search curriculum that was based on cognitive-behavioral techniques, firmly grounded in educational learning objectives connected to job search."⁵¹ The curriculum development was aided by engaging an interdisciplinary team of partners that had experience using CBT in a variety of service settings. These community partners were an advisory group for the development and implementation of what was to become a pilot version of the Rethinking program. The curriculum was formatted as a workshop series to teach management of the emotional and social consequences of unemployment and to improve employment outcomes. The 2013 pilot program showed very positive results, with 84% of

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Liu et al, "Effectiveness of job search interventions."

⁵¹ Incite, Inc., *Rethinking Job Search Project*, 5.

participants becoming employed following their participation, which is 27 percentage points higher than the common measure for the area.⁵²

Evaluation Design Summary

To recap the evidence base cited above, cognitive-behavioral interventions appear to be effective in a variety of settings in the United States and in job-search settings in the United Kingdom and Australia. The results from WWP's pilot study in a workforce setting showed great promise. The evaluation was designed to build upon prior studies, such as the decades-old JOBS study in Detroit, Michigan and the SOC Model. The current study contributes to an understanding of the application of CBT to the workforce system in the United States. It should be noted that rather than testing out a mental health program to impact employment outcomes, the evaluation looked at the utility of embedding CBT into non-mental health settings—i.e., an educational job-search program in workforce centers.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation had three foci: formative, summative (outcomes) and cost studies. The studies were designed to provide substantive information and insights, be responsive to research questions, contribute to the evidence base on this topic, and inform immediate program management and improvement, as well as larger questions about scalability and replication. This final report offers insights from the 48 months of the grant, including 33 months of service delivery.

⁵² Ibid.

Methodology

The formative study was descriptive, relying on quantitative and qualitative data collected from administrative and primary data collection. The cost study included a cost-allocation and a cost-effectiveness analysis, using grant administration data. The summative study employed a quasi-experimental design (QED), to assess the impact of the program relative to a comparison group. The study utilized propensity score matching and logistic regression to test confirmatory and exploratory hypotheses. Despite the project being a Type A WIF project—one with new and untested ideas—the parameters of the project permitted this higher level of rigor.⁵³

Data Sources

The research activities included primary data collection through four site visits, which included key stakeholder interviews in each visit, a total of six participant focus groups across two time points, participant exit surveys, participant six-months post-workshop surveys, and work-readiness surveys from participants and comparison group members. Key stakeholders included facilitators, participants, workforce board and staff, and WSO and OED staff.

The research also relied upon program and administrative data, including data from the state workforce data system interface (I-Trac); OED UI claim data and wage-record data; the state's WOMIS data system; grant management data; and administrative records pertaining to the curriculum.

Research Questions

Research questions for each study were developed to test the theory of change and gather the formative and summative lessons from this program. The questions collectively allowed the evaluation team to determine the extent to which Rethinking achieved its three goals. A list of all research questions is provided in Appendix A, and, at the beginning of each chapter in this report, relevant research questions are noted. The complete evaluation methodology is provided in Appendix C.

Evaluation Timeline

The evaluation timeline started in January 2015, with a two-day kickoff site visit to meet with WWP and partners in February 2015. In 2015, an initial Institutional

⁵³ The planned methodology combined event-history analysis and dose-response analysis, which are specialized forms of logistic regression. Ultimately, however, it was necessary to change the type of regression model due to the inability to access critical time variables.

Review Board review and determination was made, data-sharing agreements were established, tests of the assessment tools were conducted, and the evaluation design report was approved by DOL's national evaluation consultant. At-exit participant surveys were conducted from February 2016 through September 2018. Six-month post-workshop participant surveys were conducted from September 2016 through April 2019. The evaluation team completed four additional site visits and reports, four interim reports (the last delivered in January 2019), and other presentations.

Appendix C provides details of the timeline for each evaluation activity.

Comparison Population

Like participants, the minimum eligibility requirements for the comparison population were:

- Be registered for WIOA
- Be collecting UI benefits
- Be at least 18 years old
- Have a high school diploma or GED
- Have not participated in any part of the workshops
- Have completed the required work-readiness assessment
- Give consent for data to be used for evaluation and program improvements

Like the participants, the comparison pool was established from this process: people met the minimum eligibility, viewed the Rethinking informational video online, and completed the job-readiness self-assessment. The comparison pool then split off from the participants by their decision to not register for the training. These individuals formed a pool of potential persons to match to the participant group for statistical analysis. The development of the matched comparison group from the pool is described in the outcomes chapter.

Navigation of Findings in the Report

The remaining chapters in this report highlight observations, findings, and lessons that the studies revealed about the Rethinking Job Search program.

Each chapter is organized such that key findings are definitively stated in headings, with supporting evidence summarized immediately thereafter.

The chapters are:

- **Implementation Findings:** This chapter highlights key findings of implementation such as service delivery, collaboration, program administration, recruitment process, and participant experience. Topics reflect the research questions related to implementation.
- **Outcomes:** This chapter begins with a recap of the program objectives and evaluation approach related to outcomes. The chapter presents data on program participants and the comparison group, program completion and efficacy, as well as outcomes revealed for each hypothesis using quasi-experimental techniques. Findings are contextualized and threats to validity are discussed.
- **Cost Findings:** This chapter begins with a recap of research questions for the cost study, presents the cost-allocation findings, cost-effectiveness findings, implications for sustainability, and interpretation considerations.
- **Conclusions:** This chapter provides key takeaways about progress, implications, and recommendations.

In Appendix A, the research questions are provided, along with a cross-reference indicating where in the report each is addressed.

Implementation Findings

The findings in this chapter address research questions related to the formative study of the Rethinking Job Search (Rethinking) program—i.e., the issues of acceptability and opportunities for strengthening the program. The chapter begins with a discussion of implementation-related aspects of the program design, evaluation approach, and research questions, followed by findings related to service delivery, the fidelity of program implementation to the Rethinking model, the use of evaluation data to make program improvements, and the collaborative and administrative aspects of Rethinking. The chapter concludes with data on program recruitment, program completion, and participant experiences.

Program Design and Objectives

The implementation of Rethinking required close collaboration among WorkSource Oregon (WSO) regions, with referring partners, and, to a lesser degree, across local workforce boards (LWBs). To facilitate comparability across sites and a high level of rigor in the evaluation, the program called for a high level of fidelity to the Rethinking curriculum. Fidelity was checked through regular monitoring visits and checks of facilitator activity on I-Trac and Rethinking Connect,⁵⁴ and more informally in quarterly facilitator support webinars. Corrective feedback was given to facilitators as needed. Facilitators were required to fit a very particular set of position-description criteria to ensure their ability to facilitate and manage the cohorts effectively. Participant enrollment was constrained so that only individuals who were Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients and met other criteria were served.

⁵⁴ Rethinking Connect was an online forum designed to help Rethinking facilitators and program manager interact remotely, exchange ideas, and solve problems.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation activities in this section were guided by the research questions listed below. The data sources that informed the findings in this section consisted primarily of participant surveys, participant focus groups, program staff interviews, a facilitator focus group, and, for some questions, administrative and program data.

Formative Research Questions Addressed in This Chapter

1. To what extent was fidelity to the model maintained at each of the sites and across the sites?
 - a. What site-specific adaptations were made and why?
 - b. Were facilitators hired according to a consistent screening process?
 - c. Did facilitators across all sites meet established guidelines and qualification requirements?
 - d. Were facilitators trained consistently over time and location?
2. Did the program unfold as planned and on the intended timeline? Specifically:
 - a. What were the challenges to meeting project milestones?
 - b. How well did the partnership respond to challenges?
3. How did the WSO centers apply lessons learned from the evaluation to decision-making about Rethinking as it happened?
4. What systemic changes occurred:
 - a. Across WSOs?
 - b. Between the WSOs and the Oregon Employment Department (OED)?
 - c. Within the OED?
 - d. How were any such changes achieved?
6. How satisfied were the participants and other stakeholders with the project? Were the program materials and delivery perceived to be culturally relevant by participants?
7. What were the unintended consequences of Rethinking? How were these addressed during the grant period?
8. How did the project build in sustainable strategies for continuing the collaboration and the programming after the grant?

Cost Study Research Questions Addressed in This Chapter

12. Can the program be sustained?
 - a. What are the resource and policy implications to sustaining the program?
 - b. What policy or practices need adjusting to make this a standard for WSO?

Summative Research Questions Addressed in This Chapter

14. How many individuals participated in and completed Rethinking services?
18. Do participants show an increase in motivation and readiness to obtain a job?
19. In what other ways did job seekers benefit from Rethinking?

Units of Analysis

The effectiveness of the systems change was assessed using both qualitative and quantitative data. Interview, survey, and focus group data provided rich insights into the perspectives, experiences, and results of the program according to participants, program leaders and staff, and other stakeholders regarding the systems change. This line of inquiry looked at systems change as indicated by enhancing the services offered to more fully address the barriers encountered by participants. In addition, an analysis of UI and WSO administrative records sought to provide quantitative insight into cost-efficiencies and the leveraging of funds. The unit of analysis was the collaboration and the changes related to service delivery to their common client base, strategies, resources, policy, and practices. In addition, for data sourced directly from participants regarding their own lived experience—regarding satisfaction and impacts—the unit of analysis was the individual. For some qualitative analyses in this vein, the unit was responses instead of respondents.

Service Delivery and Model Fidelity

Finding: Workshop Facilitator Selection Criteria Were Appropriate

The project team established an appropriate set of criteria for high-quality facilitators. The implementation experience corroborated the importance of this very particular skill set for guiding groups of job seekers through a series of difficult (and often emotionally charged) discussions and helping them gain a new outlook on their approach to job-hunting.

Evidence

In recognition of the complex and challenging nature of the facilitator role, the Rethinking program model identified a rigorous set of qualifications for the selection of facilitators:⁵⁵

- Emotional intelligence
- Knowledge of adult learning and motivational theories
- The ability to follow procedures and cooperate with WorkSource center staff
- One year of experience with data entry
- Three to five years of work experience in education, training, or coaching

The facilitators needed to work closely with WSO and OED staff to coordinate recruitment, deliver the full curriculum as prescribed, navigate individual issues as they emerged, and fulfill documentation and administration requirements. They also were expected to have contact with participants at 30-, 90-, and 120-day intervals following exit regarding the status of their job search. These were intended to be brief status calls, but participants typically attempted to leverage the time to gain additional support from the facilitator.

Overall, program staff felt the hiring of Rethinking facilitators was conducted with fidelity to the above criteria and that the facilitator selection criteria were correct. The facilitators tended to be adept in handling the logistics of recruitment and cohort management, experienced in group dynamics, and well suited for balancing the varying personalities and communication styles of job seekers to ensure productive discussions in a group setting.

A key facilitation challenge was to prevent forceful or assertive voices from dominating the group, while fully engaging participants who were timid or taciturn. Most facilitators were adept at maintaining this difficult balance, but focus group participants felt that some facilitators struggled to maintain order at times. A still greater challenge was the very small number of participants who became belligerent in class. Unless they were reined in or removed from the class, these individuals could be extremely disruptive to the group dynamic. According to focus group participants at two sites, in rare instances, individuals were not managed adequately or removed soon enough, and the Rethinking experience for other participants suffered as a result.

⁵⁵ Rethinking Job Search Facilitator Position Requirements, August 2015.

“[It is challenging] for me . . . sometimes to be able to continue facilitating and still absorbing the intense issues that some customers are going through.”

– Rethinking Facilitator

Finding: Facilitator Turnover and Retraining Were Not a Significant Impediment

Facilitator turnover was a challenge during most of the program implementation, and logistics did not allow for new facilitators to be given the same cohort-based training experience that the earliest facilitators had received. However, disruptions to implementation and fidelity as a result of turnover and retraining were minimal.

Evidence

Almost all Rethinking sites experienced facilitator turnover at some point during the program. Of the original 11 sites, 6 experienced facilitator turnover, some multiple times (i.e., 2 of the 6 each had a total of 3 different facilitators over the duration). Five sites retained their facilitator for the duration (including one that added a second facilitator). Although Willamette Workforce Partnership (WWP) had plans in place for addressing it, the amount of turnover was unexpected. Turnover in facilitator positions continued until the end of the program.

Based on staff comments, no single factor seems to have accounted for facilitator turnover. Factors cited included a variety of personal reasons, as well as a layoff related to a shift in funding and union seniority requirements. Given the highly specialized skill set required of facilitators, low facilitator compensation was also suggested as a possible factor. The significant emotional investment required for engaging groups of stressed job seekers in a cognitive restructuring process was also a possible factor.

Where turnover occurred, the Rethinking workshops were delayed somewhat as new facilitators were brought on and trained. In one case where a facilitator left the program suddenly for personal reasons, a few focus group participants noted that the facilitator’s teaching quality had deteriorated shortly prior to departure.

The introduction of new facilitators into the program was conducted with fidelity to the training plan. New facilitators were hired by LWBs using the screening guidance developed by WWP. New facilitators received personalized onboarding from the curriculum developer and cognitive-behavioral specialist as planned. In addition, each new facilitator observed three different facilitators delivering segments of the curriculum. Nonetheless, it was not possible for the new facilitator training to be identical to the initial group training of facilitators in that there was no group structure for orientation. In addition, the training of new facilitators took place in

2-3 days, rather than the week-long session provided to the original facilitators. However, on the whole, facilitator turnover did not significantly impact the quality of the Rethinking experience for participants, the overall trajectory toward recruitment and completion targets, or the fidelity of implementation.

In interviews and a focus group near the end of the program, newer facilitators indicated that the onboarding process had gone smoothly.⁵⁶ Although their training was shorter than the original Rethinking facilitator training in 2015 and did not provide a cohort experience, the new facilitators benefited from job shadowing and consultation with other facilitators, and they felt well supported throughout the process. As a result, the new facilitators felt very comfortable delivering the curriculum, although they acknowledged that a cohort experience would have been helpful.

“[This is] important work. I would have liked to feel like [the facilitators] had closer ties to each other.”

– Rethinking Facilitator

Finding: Overall, Workshop Delivery Adhered to Initial Plans

With a few relatively minor local exceptions, fidelity to the program standards and curriculum was maintained throughout the program.

Evidence

According to staff interviews, the facilitators genuinely believed in the efficacy of the program, and overall fidelity to the program standards and curriculum delivery was strong throughout the program. A few local divergences occurred, some of which could be supported and some of which were contrary to the program standards. For example, two facilitators arranged their seating in a classroom formation rather than the U-shaped formation designated for the Rethinking curriculum. This issue was quickly identified and corrected. In another case, a facilitator was interested in organizing a cohort meeting after the conclusion of a workshop, at the request of its participants. The Rethinking program manager advised against this as it went beyond the scope of the facilitator’s duties and

⁵⁶ Interviews with LWB staff also suggested that the hiring and onboarding process went smoothly.

would be best organized by the members of the cohort themselves.⁵⁷ In a third example, a facilitator used a color wheel as a visual aid for helping participants identify and remember different emotions; this was deemed a useful added tool.

“[At a recent class], a lady had trouble because an aunt died . . . we need to make space to talk about that, but we still need to move the lesson along.”

– Rethinking Facilitator

The facilitators also varied across sites in the amount of staff support that they received to manage logistics, although support to the facilitator, per se, is not strictly a fidelity issue. In at least two sites, other WorkSource agency staff assisted with tasks such as recruitment or data entry, whereas in others, the facilitator did this work alone. In one such case, this lack of support contributed to a delay in data entry when the facilitator fell ill for an extended period of time.

Apart from these small differences, the facilitators adhered carefully to the model. This could be challenging when the issues faced by participants went outside the scope of Rethinking; in these cases, the facilitators referred participants to outside resources and services rather than attempting to take on this function themselves.

Some site supervisors felt that the level of local control had been constrained with Rethinking. For example, one felt that the program did not allow any “latitude to deviate” and that new ideas and innovations were not welcomed, which went against their area’s own approach to program development and improvement. In addition, site supervisors expressed a desire to make non-UI recipients eligible for Rethinking. These remarks reflected some discontentment with the firm fidelity parameters of Rethinking. However, the site supervisors continued to be very content with Rethinking overall. So while the strong focus on fidelity may have remained a bit of a thorn for some, it did not deter them from being supportive of the program.

⁵⁷ The Rethinking leadership did not discourage participants from organizing their own post-workshop networking efforts such as social media groups or reunions. These efforts took place sporadically, and several focus group participants expressed interest in continued contact after their cohorts.

Finding: Pre- and Post-Assessments of Knowledge May Be Inaccurate

The vocabulary used in the pre- and post-assessments of participants may have biased participant responses and led to inaccurate scores.

Evidence

To test the uptake of information in the workshops, all participants were required to take a short pre- and post-workshop assessment of knowledge related to the coursework. The pre- and post-assessment tools were created by the curriculum developer and cognitive-behavioral specialist at the Willamette Workforce Partnership.

Several facilitators expressed serious concerns about the accuracy of the pre- and post-assessments of participants. They believed that factors unrelated to participant achievement were biasing the assessment results and rendering them unreliable. For example, various facilitators observed that ESL (English as a second language) participants saw no improvement or even a lower score on their post-assessment; they firmly believed this was because of the vocabulary of the assessment rather than lack of progress by participants. A lack of faith in the tool is evident in that WWP itself did not plan to use the assessment tools in a later round of Rethinking Job Search offered in Salem in fall 2018 (although it will be used in an adapted version of the curriculum, called Rethinking Careers).

Finding: WorkSource Staff Need Thorough Education on Rethinking

In some locations, WorkSource staff buy-in to the program was reported as a challenge due to lack of familiarity with Rethinking. This issue became less prominent over time as the staff became more familiar with the program and heard client accolades.

Evidence

Staff located at the WorkSource centers played a key role in connecting and referring individuals to Rethinking. According to LWB staff and facilitators, some staff were more engaged than others in referring.

Although many staff at the centers were actively referring customers to Rethinking, they shared some initial uneasiness that they did not understand Rethinking better. The complete proprietary Rethinking curriculum was not shared with the WorkSource and partner staff, nor were they allowed to observe any of the workshop classes as they normally would with a new program. As one person noted, "It felt like top secret to begin with." Staff were told that having the curriculum would not be meaningful (without the accompanying discussions) and

that, unlike other programs, the nature of the discussions in Rethinking would make observations inappropriate and awkward. Staff accepted these reasons but still would have liked more information about what happened inside the classroom to assure them that the program would be a good fit for a customer.

This issue became less of a concern over time as WorkSource staff became more familiar with the program. This familiarity developed through regular interaction with facilitators, as well as positive word of mouth from satisfied former participants. As the program drew to a close, three facilitators noted that WorkSource staff strongly supported the program, and one facilitator reported that they were still referring potential participants with the hope that the program would be reinstated. As another facilitator noted, “[Rethinking is] very, very powerful, and when people see the power and see changed lives, it makes folks want to see it continue and have more people have that opportunity.”

“One of the frustrations about trying to tell the center staff about the program was that they couldn’t sit in on it. Usually center staff can just go to a workshop and see it. It makes it easier for them to refer customers to it because they understand what it is. With Rethinking Job Search you can just really only show them the video.”

– Workforce board staff member

Use of Evaluation Data

Finding: Rethinking Leadership Made Regular Use of Evaluation Data

Throughout the implementation period, the Rethinking program manager used evaluation data regularly to test progress and make program improvements.

Evidence

The evaluation team’s site visit, progress, and annual reports were used throughout the program period to assess progress against the program’s stated goals, test fidelity to the Rethinking model, address problems as they arose, and inform sustainability efforts. Several examples are described below.

- The quarterly facilitator webinars were enhanced in response to evaluator recommendations to provide facilitators with additional opportunities to share best practices and learn from one another. This included expanding the role of facilitators to lead parts of the webinar on a rotating basis.

- Pursuant to evaluation data, Rethinking enrollment in the East Cascades LWB was expanded to adjacent WorkSource centers due to persistent low enrollment. After this expansion failed to solve the problem, Rethinking was discontinued in this area.
- On occasions where the program manager noted any issues of concern in the participant satisfaction results, they contacted the relevant facilitators to troubleshoot the issue.
- Evaluation data were used to inform presentations about Rethinking at the national level.
- Success stories were shared with WorkSource staff via a newsletter, and verbally via facilitators (check-in meetings, and individually), in order to increase and reinforce their comfort level with referrals and recruitment.

Collaboration and Program Administration

Finding: Stakeholders Other Than Participants Were Extremely Satisfied with Rethinking

Support for Rethinking was virtually universal among non-participant stakeholders involved with the program, although a few relatively minor concerns were noted.

Evidence

As Rethinking drew to a close, program staff were asked to consider their overall level of satisfaction with the program. Given the opportunity to look back on their entire experience with Rethinking, as well as the feedback they had heard from participants, virtually all staff members offered enthusiastic praise. Their comments touched on various dimensions of the program. They found the facilitators to be highly valuable for connecting with participants and delivering the curriculum. They considered the curriculum effective despite having serious concerns about the time commitment that Rethinking had required of its participants. They felt the target population was correct (although they wished that eligibility could have been expanded to include non-UI recipients). They noted that many participants had discussed the program with them in glowing terms, saying they liked the facilitators, had referred friends and family, made significant efforts to attend, and were pleased with the curriculum.

When they were asked about how different parties might benefit from Rethinking over the long term, staff members discussed a variety of benefits to participants. They noted that the program had significantly changed how participants viewed not just their careers but their lives as a whole, and that likewise, the program

appeared likely to yield benefits far beyond the job search. For workforce centers, they believed the program would be a highly valued addition to their traditional suite of employment services if sustainability mechanisms could be found. Finally, they believed that businesses would benefit from the program by gaining access to happier, more resilient, more job-ready employees.

A few staff members brought up concerns when asked this question. For example, some mentioned cultural relevance issues (discussed in greater detail below). Some facilitators noted that some participants were not fully engaged in the sessions or did not always take homework assignments seriously; they suggested that these particular participants tended to be young, overwhelmed by the perceived complexity of the material, or focused on simply getting a job. One facilitator felt it was awkward to start each class session by first launching into new material and then going back to review the homework from the previous class.

When prompted to name an unintended consequence, several interviewees lamented that the program was limited to UI recipients. Although this is not an unintended consequence per se (given that only UI recipients were eligible for this iteration of Rethinking), it clearly indicates staff perceptions of the program's value and of the desire to expand its audience.

Finding: Rethinking Was Culturally Relevant for Most—But Not All—Participants

Cultural relevance was not a specific focus in the development of the Rethinking program. Although most participants appear not to have encountered problems related to cultural relevance, a few did. This relative fit, however, may be attributed to the homogeneous group that self-selected into the program. It is possible that rural minority populations were deterred from participating due to lack of cultural relevance, but this cannot be verified given the available data.

Evidence

During the final year of the program, interviewees were asked to reflect on the cultural relevance of the Rethinking curriculum for participants. This was not a particularly salient topic to most stakeholders. When queried, most stakeholders either said they did not know if Rethinking was relevant, that it was appropriate, or that it related to the largest demographic in the area. However, others commented that some participants found Rethinking difficult due to language barriers, cognitive challenges, or other issues. They suggested that more could be done to tailor the curriculum to specific populations, as has been done for a new adaptation of Rethinking Job Search, called Rethinking Careers. Various dimensions of cultural relevance, as discussed by the interviewees, are described below.

- Some participants were confused by the jargon of Rethinking, such that facilitators had to spend additional time explaining the concepts using

alternative explanations. Terms like “risky thinking” were perplexing for speakers of English as a second language (ESL), who struggled to grasp the abstract concepts behind the words or associated the words with different concepts.

- Over the course of the evaluation, ageism in hiring emerged as a common concern based on participant and facilitator focus group feedback. One facilitator noted that some older participants persisted in risky thinking—e.g., relating to disabilities or perceived ageism in hiring—despite having completed the program.
- Three facilitators encountered challenges in delivering the curriculum to former military service personnel. For example, some of these participants challenged the curriculum’s contents or the facilitator’s delivery of the curriculum. A fourth facilitator who worked with war veterans saw value in the curriculum but found that it was not long enough or intensive enough to overcome their cynicism or their belief that they were unable to make positive changes in their lives.
- One facilitator supervisor indicated that the program was culturally appropriate to the (mostly white) population it was serving, but that it might not be reaching certain populations—in this case, individuals of color or other minorities in a majority white county. The interviewee suggested that the principal recruitment method (UI letters/e-mails) would be less effective for immigrant or ethnic-minority populations and that in-person contact might be more successful.

Finding: Unintended Consequences Were Few and Positive

Given the high fidelity of its implementation, the Rethinking program saw relatively few unintended consequences. Fortunately, most surprises were positive.

Evidence

In the final year of implementation of Rethinking, program staff were asked to reflect on unintended consequences. Most interviewees indicated that the program functioned as expected. However, a few described possible unintended consequences, nearly all of which were beneficial for participants.

- Although the program was designed as an educational rather than a therapeutic experience, and facilitators did not consider themselves to be therapists in a strict sense, facilitators observed that the program was genuinely therapeutic for participants as it employed many of the same concepts used in cognitive-behavioral therapy. Facilitators saw participants change their whole outlook on life, with impacts that extended well beyond their job search to encompass their career trajectory, their family interactions, and their relationships.
- Facilitators noted that the cohort model and intensive nature of Rethinking resulted in the development of informal peer-support networks among

participants. Examples included weekly participant-initiated meetings after the end of the program, LinkedIn and e-mail contacts, a Facebook group, and bowling or breakfast outings.

- The collaboration between Wagner-Peyser and WIOA staff went more smoothly than program staff initially expected. In particular, the program moved forward smoothly when the partners began to see the positive results emerging from the program.
- One facilitator felt that some OED staff had a more positive or constructive mindset toward older workers as a result of their experience with the program. A workforce board staff member indicated that their staff was paying more attention to soft skills as a result of the program.

Finding: Rethinking Caused Little Systems Change

Although Rethinking was much loved among program staff and participants alike, it appears unlikely to bring on significant systems change in WorkSource unless further commitments of funding are made.

Evidence

Interviewees were asked whether Rethinking had sparked any system changes that were likely to continue past the grant. Because Rethinking was a relatively self-contained program that mostly interacted with other programs and agencies via participant referrals, no obvious lasting system changes were noted.

The Rethinking program required close collaboration within WorkSource, with referring partners, and, to a lesser extent, across LWBs (i.e., facilitators). This collaboration ran smoothly, and staff members supported and believed in the program. However, when asked whether any aspects of the program might continue after the grant ran out, most program staff expressed doubt. No long-term policy changes took place as a result of the program. Furthermore, the staff noted that most of the collaboration was taking place under the particular auspices of Rethinking and that once the pilot was finished, the collaboration was unlikely to last. Many staff expressed great interest in the continuation of Rethinking. However, they indicated that infusions of funding and long-term collaboration agreements would be needed to make this happen. Staff claimed to not be deterred by the fact that final outcome data were still forthcoming, but they simply saw the fiscal issue.

Oregon Employment Department, Unemployment Insurance Division staff who had worked on the program recruitment found that their role was consonant with their departmental stewardship interests, and the effort was not excessively laborious. They indicated that if participant outcomes were positive—which would impact Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims—then they would again be a willing partner in future efforts to extend the program.

Finding: Sustainability Efforts Are Making Modest Progress

As the implementation of Rethinking drew to a close, program organizers worked intensively to find ways to sustain the program. These efforts have borne some fruit, but—in the short term at least—Rethinking has been discontinued at most participating agencies. However, program leaders continue to work diligently to find ways to implement the program, both inside and outside Oregon.

Evidence

The final year of Rethinking unfortunately coincided with significant cuts in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) formula funding across the participating WorkSource agencies. According to interviews with program staff, these federal-funding decisions are largely driven by regional levels of unemployment and financial distress, which have been low overall in the past several years. Agencies also had some non-WIOA funding at their disposition, but most of these funds are restricted to very specific uses. At least one LWB had to lay off about half of its very small WIOA staff. The WIOA funding cuts (which ranged from 12% to 18%, according to program staff) forced agencies to retreat to the core programs that they considered most likely to generate immediate employment gains or that did not require specialized staff, i.e., trained facilitators. Agencies that had previously expressed interest in using their own funds to back the program felt they had no choice but to reduce or eliminate their support.

A few workforce boards found or are seeking ways to continue versions of the program at a reduced scale. These are described below.

- As the second largest workforce board in the state, Willamette Workforce Partnership had enough flexibility in its funds to keep its Rethinking facilitator position open. To make this move financially viable, WWP added additional job obligations to the facilitator position. The program will be offered to anyone who is interested in it, not just to UI recipients.
- WWP is seeking opportunities to partner with agencies that serve older persons (Easterseals, for example) to procure grant funding to pilot Rethinking Job Search with the 55-and-older population. WWP hopes to use this pilot to demonstrate that Rethinking can help this population gain meaningful employment.
- The Clackamas Workforce Partnership (CWP) received a Step Up grant from the Oregon Department of Human Services to implement Rethinking Careers, a version of Rethinking Job Search that focuses on developing the soft skills of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients and setting them on a positive career trajectory, during the 2019 fiscal year. To accommodate the likely reading ability of the target audience, the curriculum was adjusted to

an 8th-9th-grade reading level. CWP's current facilitator will be retained to carry out the program. Because the grant calls for a 50/50 match, half of the dollars expended by CWP will be reimbursed, and CWP plans to use these funds to support a second year of programming.

- Worksystems Inc. (WSI) the workforce board serving Multnomah and Washington counties, received funding from the Oregon Department of Human Services in the 2019 fiscal year to implement Rethinking Careers (described above) with TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) clients. The program is being facilitated by WSI's contractor, Portland Community College (PCC). As with the CWP program, WSI/PCC has renewed Rethinking Careers for another year.
- WWP; Worksystems, Inc.; Lane Workforce Partnership; and Rogue Workforce Partnership submitted a joint application (separate from the one submitted by CWP) for SNAP 50/50 funding to implement Rethinking Careers in their service areas. The application did not result in an award.
- The Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board purchased the Rethinking Careers curriculum for implementation in its service area. They hired a facilitator to implement the program during the 2019 fiscal year.
- WWP has trained a professor at George Fox University to deliver the Rethinking Careers curriculum to young adults on the autism spectrum who are also being trained in technology skills by Fidgetech. Rethinking Careers will develop soft skills such as communication and organization. This supports the technical skills and internship placements that they receive.
- In late 2018, in partnership with Fidgetech, WWP applied for and received a \$5,000 grant from Intel to develop a specialized training for the coaches of Fidgetech clients placed at Intel and in other technology internships. The aim of this training is to prepare these coaches to work more effectively with interns on the autism spectrum through understanding the challenges they face, supporting the skills they learned in Rethinking Careers, and developing specialized coaching skills.
- In early 2019, WWP partnered with St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in McMinnville, Oregon to offer a Rethinking Careers pilot to guests of its Soup Kitchen who would benefit from soft skills and cognitive-behavioral training to get back to work. This program is showing promise and will continue, most likely with some graduates being trained to facilitate the program with other Soup Kitchen guests. Additional funding is being sought to continue this program.

Workforce board staff were asked if any changes in policy or practice would be needed to continue or bring back Rethinking. None indicated that this would be the case; modifications that had been needed were already put in place early on (e.g., supportive services tailored to the program, as well as logistical support and communications with the Oregon Employment Department). The issue of the

program's cost vis-à-vis its value is discussed further under "Cost" later in this section.

Recruitment Process

Finding: Despite Early Concerns, Recruitment Exceeded Expectations

During the early stages of the program, there were difficulties recruiting participants in some communities and the enrollment targets were adjusted accordingly. By program close, recruitment had exceeded the original total and these adjusted expectations.

Evidence

By the completion of the program in September 2018, Rethinking had offered 157 workshop series. Over 80% of workshop series had 5 to 15 participants in the cohort. The original standards called for each cohort to have 5 to 12 participants. The standards were updated in 2018 to strongly recommend that range, but permit 3 to 15 participants per cohort. The number of participants in a cohort ranged from 2 to 15 with an average of 8.⁵⁸

The target for total enrollment and enrollment per site had undergone adjustments at several time points during the program. This was in response to the difficulty in enticing people in very rural counties to enroll, and, in 2017, one rural site was compelled to drop out of the program. Nonetheless, for most sites, for the duration, recruitment occurred fairly smoothly. At program close, recruitment exceeded expectations. The total enrollment was 1,215—surpassing the final target by 218 participants or 22%. All WorkSource locations except one exceeded their updated recruitment goal.⁵⁹ Enrollments by site are presented in Table 3.

⁵⁸ The Rogue Valley course with a start date of September 4, 2018, was not included in this analysis because it was cancelled before the completion of the 12-workshop series.

⁵⁹ Three sites increased and one site decreased their recruitment targets in 2017.

Table 3: Recruitment by Site, January 2016–September 2018

WorkSource Location	Target Number of Participants	Actual Recruitment of Participants
WorkSource Clackamas	180	212
WorkSource Lane – Oakmont Center ⁶⁰	145	151
WorkSource Oregon Coos Bay	35	49
WorkSource Oregon Newport	20	59
WorkSource Oregon Redmond, Bend, Klamath Falls (<i>ended 7/31/17</i>) ⁶¹	10	11
WorkSource Oregon Salem Center	150	236
WorkSource Oregon Yamhill Center	60	40
WorkSource Rogue Valley	105	121
WorkSource Portland Metro Beaverton/Hillsboro	167	187
WorkSource Portland Metro Southeast ⁶²	125	149
TOTAL ⁶³	997	1,215

Finding: Program Completion Rates Surpassed Goal

The majority of Rethinking participants completed the program, defined as attending 10 or more of the 12 Rethinking classes in a workshop series. This surpassed the performance goal for program completion.

Evidence

Over 70% (862 participants) completed Rethinking, surpassing its goal of 51%. Over 35% of participants attended every class.⁶⁴ This was an important feature of

⁶⁰ Target was originally planned for 210.

⁶¹ This target was revised down to 10 enrollments (from 55) in July 2017. To gain participants, the workforce board added Bend and Klamath Falls in September 2016, but all three locations were dropped from the program due to lack of enrollments. See the 2017 annual report for details.

⁶² Target was originally planned for 75.

⁶³ WIF outcomes per quarter as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor indicate 1,225 participants. The filtering down to 1,215 is discussed in the appendix. Please see the Outcomes section of this report for more details on the minimum requirements to be included in this study.

program acceptability. Results suggest that participants valued the workshop sufficiently to attend programming requiring notably more time commitment than other WorkSource Oregon (WSO) offerings, and that WSO concerns about the length of the intervention were not borne out. Completion data are also used to assess the relationship between dosage and outcomes, as described later in this report.

Table 4: WIF Adult Performance Measures – Program Completion

Participants Who Completed Training (Defined as 10 or More Classes)	Number	Percentage
Goal	505 (of 1,000)	51%
Actual	862 (of 1,215)	71%

⁶⁴ The performance metric program completion was not defined in the evaluation design. For the purpose of this analysis, the evaluation team defined “complete” as having attended 10 or more classes. In order to be considered a participant, an individual needed to attend at least one class. This analysis does not include individuals who enrolled in a workshop but never attended a class. The actual completion rate shown in the table is likely an underestimate due to known issues of missing or duplicative data related to attendance. Where there were missing or inconsistent attendance data (e.g., where there were entries indicating both attendance and non-attendance at a class), participants were coded as not in attendance.

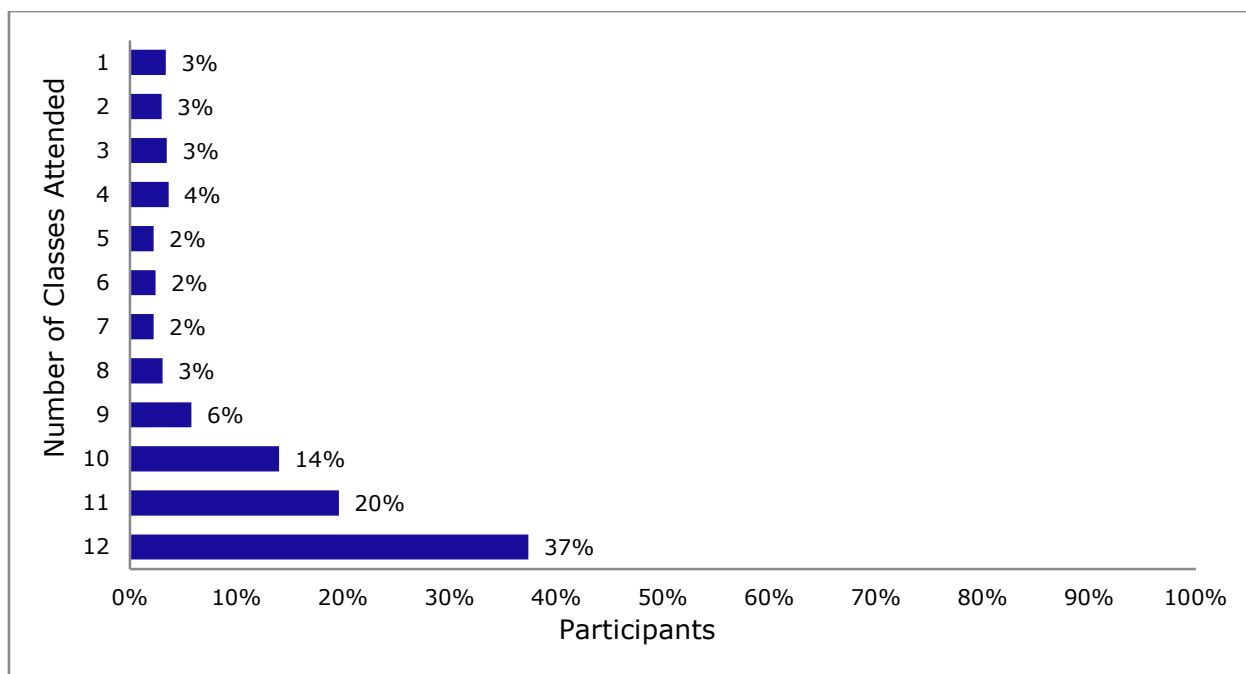


Figure 1. Percentage of Participants by Number of Classes Attended (n=1,215)

Participant Experiences

The findings in this section are based on Rethinking participants' descriptions of their experiences in surveys at program exit and again six-months-post (see Appendix C for methodology). The data reflect responses related to workshop series throughout the course of the Rethinking program, January 2016 through September 2018. The actual data collection took place from February 2016 through April 2019.

Finding: Participant Satisfaction Was Very High

At exit, participant satisfaction with the Rethinking workshops was very high particularly related to aspects of the facilitator and presentation style; participants felt respected, felt that the facilitator helped them understand the material, felt that the presentations were effective, and felt involved in the workshops. Their overall satisfaction and understanding were rated very highly as well.

Evidence

Nearly all survey respondents (97%) said that they would recommend the program to other people. On a five-point scale, participant ratings of various program facets ranged from 4.1 to 4.7. As shown in Table 5 below, the highest ranked items all included aspects of the facilitator and presentation style. The lesser rated items (although still highly rated) were related to workshop content relevance and

relatability, materials, and activities/homework. The item with the least satisfaction was the amount of time spent on each topic.

Table 5: Participant Satisfaction Survey Results, January 2016–September 2018 (Scale of 1-5, with 5 being “strongly agree,” n=889⁶⁵)

Survey Item	Average Satisfaction Rating
I felt respected in the workshop.	4.7
The facilitator helped me understand the material.	4.7
The facilitator’s presentation style was effective.	4.6
I felt involved in the workshops.	4.6
I understood the topics that were covered.	4.5
I am satisfied with my Rethinking Job Search experience.	4.5
The printed booklet supported my learning.	4.4
The workshop content related well to my life experiences.	4.3
The activities, homework, and logs supported my learning.	4.3
The topics were relevant to my situation.	4.3
Enough time was spent on each topic.	4.1

In the six-month follow-up survey, participants were asked once again to reflect on overall satisfaction with their Rethinking experience. The average rating for the six-month follow-up survey was 4.3, a slight decrease from the initial post-workshop survey rating of 4.5. This dip is not an unusual finding in program research.

Finding: Rethinking Impacted Participants’ Confidence and Motivation

Enhancing both the motivation and confidence of participants in their job search were key objectives in the program. Participants, without prompting, reported that Rethinking had a positive impact on their motivation and confidence in general and with regard to their job search.

⁶⁵ Responses to each individual item ranged from 885 to 889, and 870 cases provided data on all 11 items.

Evidence

In order to capture more information about how Rethinking impacted motivation and confidence in the job search, the evaluation team coded over 3,600 comments from 951 survey respondents who responded to at least one of the exit or six-month follow-up surveys. Most of these provided open-ended comments when provided the opportunity in the survey.

The thematic analysis was unbiased in that it relied upon items that did not directly prompt participants about these topics. The series of questions was from both the post-training and six-month follow-up surveys. The questions coded and the numbers of comments reviewed are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Open-Ended Questions Coded for Motivation and Confidence

Question	Number of Comments Reviewed
What impact has Rethinking Job Search had on your life?	775
What was the most important concept, skill, or technique you learned in the program?	774
Why or why not recommend Rethinking to others?	721
6-month-post: At this point in time, what was the most important concept, skill, or technique you learned in the program?	465
6-month-post: What if a short refresher course were available to review the lessons of Rethinking Job Search? What would it need to include to be of interest to you?	442
6-month-post: Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience with Rethinking Job Search?	432

As shown in Table 7 below, nearly 70% of survey respondents indicated that Rethinking positively impacted their motivation or confidence in general or specific to their job search.

Subthemes (motivated non-specific, motivated to job search, confidence in general, and confidence in job search) were coded as positive if one or more of respondents' answers to the six questions reviewed indicated an impact. Combined subtheme percentages add up to more than 100% because many of the respondents indicated an impact, and were therefore coded positively, on multiple subthemes.

Table 7: Distribution of Comments About Motivation and Confidence, n=951

Themes Coded	Number of Respondents Coded Positive	Percentage of Respondents Coded Positive
Motivation and Confidence Overall	657	69%
Motivated non-specific	308	32%
Motivated to job search	224	24%
Confidence in general	340	36%
Confidence in job search	229	24%

Selected Quotes from Participants on the Motivational and Confidence Impacts of Rethinking

- “Job search is very stressful and this workshop really trains you to work through it with a good attitude and feel confident.”
- “Being in the program with people dealing with similar events and emotions was affirming that I was not alone. The program was team building and confidence boosting while learning the Rethinking skills. I feel confident with my job search now, plus have a few interviews coming up.”
- “It has made me think more, and helped me to push through barriers presented by online application challenges. My self-confidence has been improved and I have interviews based on the above efforts.”
- “It has helped me to identify my risky thinking and to question those thoughts and turn them around to positive, empowering action thoughts.”
- “It made me realize that I was in a dark place in my life and provided direction on how to get out of it. Motivated me to work harder to find a new job.”

Finding: Participants Reported Many Benefits of Rethinking

Overwhelmingly, the findings show that Rethinking has positively impacted the participants. As reported by participants, the benefits of the Rethinking program included having a positive impact on participants’ (1) job search, motivation, and confidence; (2) tools and skills; and (3) empowerment or perspective.

Evidence

The exit survey and the six-month follow-up survey included open-ended questions to provide for a more thorough understanding of participant experiences with the program. Of the 891 exit survey respondents, 775 answered the question, “What impact has Rethinking Job Search had on your life?” From the responses, five themes and 16 subthemes emerged. From the 775 survey respondents, 1,219

ideas fell into and were categorized and coded into these themes and subthemes, as summarized in Table 8.

The main theme expressed by participants was that of job search, motivation, and/or confidence, with 31% of responses aligning with this theme. Other common themes included tools and skills (29% of responses), and empowerment or perspective (26%). Only 2% of respondents expressed that Rethinking had no or a negative impact on their life.

Table 8: What impact has Rethinking Job Search had on your life?

Themes Coded	Number	Percentage
Job search, motivation, confidence	379	31%
Got employed	25	2%
Prepared or supported in job search	116	10%
Active in job search	29	2%
Motivated to job search	61	5%
Confidence in job search	68	6%
Confidence general	61	5%
Motivated non-specific	19	2%
Tools and skills	357	29%
Tools	117	10%
Management of self/emotions/actions	155	13%
Better thinking and decision-making process	85	7%
Empowerment or perspective	323	26%
Personal improvement	51	4%
Empowering	90	7%
Not alone, positive cohort experience	68	6%
Perspective	114	9%
Positive, general	95	8%
Other	65	5%
Unclear attribution	39	3%
No impact	26	2%

*Percentages do not equal 100% because responses could have been categorized into more than one theme and subtheme depending on the content of the response.

Quotes are provided in Table 9 to illustrate the nature of the comments in relation to some common subthemes.

Table 9: Selected Quotes from Participants in Response to “What impact has Rethinking Job Search had on your life?”

Subtheme	Participant Quotes on the Impact of Rethinking on Their Life
Management of self/emotions/actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’m definitely a stronger person. And I now know how to control my mood swings, which makes me a better person.” • “Being better at managing my emotions has impacted my existing relationships and has helped in giving me the confidence to create new ones as well.” • “The program helped me to deal with the negative emotions that were causing me to flounder and feel hopeless.”
Prepared or supported in job search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I feel I can set and pursue goals that are longer range and, to me, that means finding a job that I really want.” • “Helped steel my resolve to keep looking for a job I want, and to realize there are good resources available to help me in that quest.” • “It has allowed me to feel a lot more support; it has validated my feelings, and has enabled me to think differently about my approach while searching for work.”
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It has helped me recognize my thinking was tending towards a negative path and that even though things don’t always work the way I’d like them too, I have tools to look at my thoughts on why I feel the way I do and can use them to move on in a positive way.” • “I have gained clarity and tools, which I expect to be useful in my life. Thank you for this program!” • “I am better suited for the future, even if I do not get employed anytime soon. Also, I continuously and will continue to apply the lessons and skills I have learned in the workshop for job searching, as well as personal situations.”
Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It has reaffirmed my core belief that I can control my outlook. Things may get hard, events may not be positive, but I’m not destined to wallow, I can remain positive.” • “I was living in fear before I started the class. I was isolated and scared to really deal with what was happening. Going to the class, the interaction with others, and the techniques taught were so important to me feeling like I can be successful again.” • “It has changed the way I think about thing[s] and to have a more positive outlook on the job search. Knowing that I’m not alone in this is comforting.”

Subtheme	Participant Quotes on the Impact of Rethinking on Their Life
Better thinking and decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm becoming even more introspective and evaluating my choices with more clarity." • "Has helped me strengthen my focus, better define my goals, and helped me plan for long-term success." • "Taught me how to stop and process my emotions and make choices from there."
Empowering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I feel that I have some of my confidence back that was quickly taken away after losing my job. It helped me remember that I am an exceptional employee and I will find the job I want. I don't need to settle for just anything as I am worthy of getting the job I want and deserve." • "I have more confidence and the ability to make the choices I want." • "I feel better about myself, I know I'm not alone and have tools to deal with disappointment better. Now let's hope that means I get a job!"

Outcomes

The findings in this chapter address research questions related to the summative study of Rethinking Job Search (Rethinking)—i.e., who the project served, how the intervention related to key outcomes—placement, retention, length of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits—and whether outcomes varied by dosage of intervention or group characteristics.

This chapter recaps the objectives, evaluation approach, and research questions related to outcomes. The chapter presents data on program efficacy (self-reported learning and performance metrics on motivation), participant and comparison group characteristics, and outcomes for each hypothesis using quasi-experimental techniques. Findings are contextualized and threats to validity are discussed.

Although originally posed as summative questions, the questions related to participant level of motivation and readiness to obtain a job, dosage relationship to motivation, and ways in which job seekers benefitted from Rethinking were discussed in the implementation chapter.

Outcome Objectives

The program intervention was intended to teach job seekers cognitive-behavioral techniques to enhance motivation, confidence, and self-efficacy in job-search activities. As a result, the participants were expected to obtain employment, shorten the duration for receiving UI benefits, and retain jobs for at least one year post-intervention.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation team employed a quasi-experimental design (QED) to assess the impact of the program. While this was a relatively aggressive evaluation design for a Type A Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) project—one with new and untested ideas—the parameters of the project permitted this higher level of rigor.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Parameters such as a short-duration intervention, a highly defined curriculum and learning objectives, sound project management, program data access, and fidelity monitoring.

The summative study was aimed at understanding the end results of the program for the participants, including program effectiveness, whether performance goals for efficacy and employment outcomes were met, and whether outcomes differed for participants and a comparison group. A comparison group was developed using a propensity score matching process, to test the confirmatory and exploratory hypotheses about outcomes for participants.

Analyses in this section were in response to the summative research questions established in 2015, as shown below. The data sources that informed the findings in this section consisted primarily of administrative and program data. Efficacy questions relied on self-report data from participants.

Summative Research Questions

- Who did the project serve? What were the participants' characteristics?
- Does the project result in improved employment placement and retention? How did outcomes differ between participant and comparison groups?
- For both the participant and comparison groups, how did job placement and retention, length of UI benefits, motivation, job readiness, and satisfaction differ by characteristics such as:
 - Race, age, and gender?
 - Educational background?
 - Other relevant characteristics?
- Are UI benefits reduced by an average of two weeks? Are rates of long-term unemployment decreased for participants?
- Did participants who attended more workshops in the Rethinking series have increased employment placement and retention, receive fewer weeks of UI benefits, or display increased motivation and readiness to obtain a job than those who participated in fewer?

Efficacy

The findings in this section are based on participant responses to the Rethinking Job Search exit and six-month follow-up survey. Participants were asked to rate their ability to recognize and change their risky thinking, understand and manage their emotions, and how these relate to and impact their job search and job-search actions.

Finding: Rethinking Produced Desired Results Related to Participant Learning

The Rethinking program was designed to help participants learn how to recognize and change their risky thinking, understand and manage their emotions, and learn how these relate to and impact their job search and job-search actions. A sign of high efficacy of the program is that participants left Rethinking with these desired abilities.

Evidence

As shown in Table 10, participants rated themselves very highly in response to questions about socioemotional skills, confidence, and motivation in the post-workshop survey. The self-reported ratings on each item in the post-workshop survey ranged from 4.2 to 4.5. Regarding the six-month follow-up survey, ratings ranged from 3.5 to 4.3. As expected, there was a slight drop, across the board, in average respondent scores when surveyed six months after workshop completion.

The survey results indicated that motivation was very high upon completion of the program. Statements related to motivation (“I am following up on job leads” and “I am motivated to get the job I want”) were two of the three most highly rated statements in the post-workshop survey. However, motivation appears to have decreased more sharply than other facets in the six months following workshop completion; the largest reported decrease was in participant motivation. In the six month follow-up survey, the lowest ratings were related to the ability of the workshops to motivate and help participants find a job.

Table 10: Participant Survey Results—Average Learning, January 2016–September 2018 (Scale of 1-5, with 5 being “strongly agree”)

Survey Statements Regarding Efficacy*	After Workshop (N = 873)⁶⁷	6-Months Post (N = 560)⁶⁸
I can <i>identify</i> my risky thinking.	4.4	4.2
I can <i>change</i> my risky thinking.	4.3	4.1
I can manage my emotions better.	4.2	4.0
I understand why my emotions matter.	4.5	4.3
I am confident I can choose alternative actions.	4.3	4.2
I can improve my self-esteem.	4.3	4.1
I am confident I can set goals for myself.	4.4	4.2
I am following up on job leads.	4.5	n/a
I am in the process of setting up interviews with employers.	4.2	n/a
I am able to use the workshop lessons in my job search. ⁶⁹	4.4	4.0
I am motivated to get the job I want. ⁷⁰	4.5	3.9
The workshop lessons helped me get a job.	n/a	3.5

Finding: Learning Was High, But Decreased Over Time

As discussed in the prior section, participant confidence, motivation, and learning around socioemotional skills were high directly following the workshop. There was, however, a decrease in learned skills over time. While this decrease is relatively normal, because cognitive-behavior teaching is by nature a retraining of brain patterns, these findings lend support to the idea that refreshers may be needed to retain the positive outcomes.

⁶⁷ Responses to each individual item ranged from 868 to 873, and 859 cases provided data on all 11 items.

⁶⁸ Responses to each individual item ranged from 554 to 560, and 542 cases provided data on all 10 items.

⁶⁹ Worded in the past tense in the six-month follow-up survey.

⁷⁰ Worded as “I was able to maintain my motivation during my job search,” in the six-month follow-up survey.

Evidence

Individual survey respondents were matched between the exit and six-month follow-up survey to calculate a change in self-rating scores. Change in scores included self-ratings on the seven measures of the curriculum to indicate the efficacy strength of learned skills:

- I can identify my risky thinking.
- I can change my risky thinking.
- I can manage my emotions better.
- I understand why my emotions matter.
- I am confident I can choose alternative actions.
- I can improve my self-esteem.
- I am confident I can set goals for myself.

As shown in Table 11 below, of the respondents who answered both the post-workshop survey and the six-month follow-up survey, matched scores indicated that 22% of participants felt that their ability to manage aspects of the socioemotional skills of job-searching had improved and another 22% maintained the same level of socioemotional skills as they had at the end of the workshop. Around 56% of respondents reported a decrease in learned skills compared to when they initially completed the workshop. It is typical for participants to score survey items more favorably immediately following a presentation or workshop, so this decrease in self-rating is relatively normal.

Table 11: Participant Survey Matched Cases Change from Post-Workshop to Six-Month Follow-Up Survey in Learned Socioemotional Skills, January 2016–September 2018 (n = 482)

Change in Efficacy Score	Percentage
7 or more point increase	1.9%
4 to 6 point increase	4.8%
1 to 3 point increase	15.6%
No change	22.2%
1 to 3 point decrease	31.1%
4 to 6 point decrease	17.2%
7 or more point decrease	7.3%

Finding: Confidence and Motivation Goals Were Surpassed

For participants that completed the program, Rethinking exceeded performance goals to increase motivation and confidence.

Evidence

The vast majority (94%) of those that completed the workshop⁷¹ and responded to the survey reported motivation to job search. This far exceeded the goal that was set to increase motivation (71%).⁷² Similarly, 86% of participants who completed the workshop and responded to the survey felt confident in their job-search skill, exceeding the goal of 69%.

⁷¹ The analysis included only participants who completed 10 or more classes.

⁷² The original wording of the performance measures was to measure an increase in reported confidence and motivation for those who completed the program—presumably from before the start of Rethinking to the end of the workshop. However, no measures of confidence or motivation were taken prior to Rethinking. Instead, performance is treated as exceeding a bar at the time of the post-workshop survey.

Table 12: WIF Adult Performance Measures – Motivation and Confidence Change

Performance Measure⁷³	Goal	Number	Percentage
Indicator: Of participants who completed the program, the number who self-reported being motivated to job search. Measure: Average of “agree” or higher, for “I am motivated to get the job I want”	71%	652/694	94%
Indicator: Of participants who completed the program, the number who self-reported being confident in job search Measure: Average of “agree” or higher, across these items: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am confident I can choose alternative actions.• I am confident I can set goals for myself.• I am following up on job leads.• I am in the process of setting up interviews with employers.• I am able to use the workshop lessons in my job search.	69%	599/698	86%

Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Participant Outcomes

In this section, the final outcome analyses are shared, with presentation of descriptive characteristics of the participant and comparison groups, the quasi-experimental models, findings, and factors influencing the finding. The appendix provides a detailed description of the data sources, variable construction, and analytic models.

⁷³ The original performance measure language is as follows. Motivation: Number of participants who self-reported an increase in motivation to job search, of those who completed the program. Confidence: Number of participants who self-reported an increase in confidence in job search, of those who completed the program.

As presented in Table 13, there were a total of 1,215⁷⁴ participants served at 10 of the WorkSource centers. There was considerable variability in the number served, ranging from 11 to 236 per site. Of the total pool, 90% had sufficiently complete data to be included in the outcomes analysis. Most workforce centers had between 88% and 92% of their participants included, with two outliers in the 82%-83% range.

Table 13: Proportion of Program Participants Included in Outcomes Analysis

WorkSource Location	Number of Participants	Number Included in Outcomes Analysis	Proportion Included in Outcomes Analysis
WorkSource Clackamas	212	190	90%
WorkSource Lane – Oakmont Center	151	135	89%
WorkSource Oregon Coos Bay	49	44	90%
WorkSource Oregon Newport	59	49	83%
WorkSource Oregon Redmond, Bend, Klamath Falls	11	9	82%
WorkSource Oregon Salem Center	236	216	92%
WorkSource Oregon Yamhill Center	40	35	88%
WorkSource Oregon, Rogue Valley	121	106	88%
WorkSource Portland Metro Beaverton/Hillsboro	187	172	92%
WorkSource Portland Metro SE	149	133	89%
Total	1,215	1,089	90%

Characteristics of Participants and Comparison Group

Data collected on the participant and comparison groups included information on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act provider, race and ethnicity, low-income status, highest education received, veteran status, marital status, number of children, month of enrollment (using a counter from the beginning of the program to the end), days since last employed, receipt of public benefits, and age.

⁷⁴ A total of 1,225 cases were served at sites, but there were 1,215 usable cases for evaluation purposes, as described in the appendix.

UI and wage-record data from the Oregon Department of Labor were also made available for the study, allowing the calculation of number of weeks the subject received UI benefits or had reported wages. Both the participant and comparison groups also took the Esher survey asking questions about their attitudes towards job-seeking and reemployment.

In many respects the participant and comparison groups were quite similar. Both groups were primarily non-Hispanic White (83% for the participant group, 84% for the comparison group) and had more than a high school diploma (70% vs. 71%), and slightly less than half had children (48% for both groups). A small proportion in both groups received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (14% vs. 13%) or were veterans (9% vs. 8%).

Table 14: Study Demographics Unmatched Groups

Characteristic	Participant	Comparison
Non-Hispanic White	82.6%	83.8%
Female	64.6%*	58.7%
Low income	23.5%*	18.2%
More than H.S. diploma	69.5%	70.7%
Veteran	9.0%	7.8%
Married	46.9%*	52.0%
Children	47.7%	47.9%
Receive public assistance	14.2%	13.0%
Age	52.9*	43.4
Days since employed	115.8*	97.1
Prior weeks receiving UI benefits	11.6*	10.3
Work Readiness – Action, total score (factor score)	17.8* (-.15)	18.1 (.03)
Work Readiness – Resist, total score (factor score)	6.1 (-.04)	6.0 (.01)
Work Readiness – Ponder, total score (factor score)	16.7* (.40)	15.8 (-.08)
N	1,089	5,234

*p<.05.

There were ways in which enrollees were quite distinct from non-enrollees, however. First, a larger proportion of the participants were female (65% vs. 59%) and were more often older (mean of 53 years vs. 43 years) and less likely to be married (47% vs. 52%). The participant population was more economically disadvantaged, being unemployed for longer (116 days) than the comparison population (97 days), more commonly low income (24% vs. 18%), and also had an average of 1 more week receiving unemployment benefits (11.6 vs. 10.3). These differences provide part of the rationale for using a matching procedure to estimate

program effects, since comparing younger, male, and more economically advantaged subjects to the participant group could yield a misleading conclusion about the program's effectiveness.

The composition of the treatment and comparison changed over the course of the project (2016-2018) along several dimensions. For the participant group, there was a steep decline in the percentage of low-income subjects, falling from 31% in 2016 to 16% in 2018, with an accompanying fall in the proportion receiving SNAP, TANF, or SSI (19% to 11%). For both groups, there was increase in average number of weeks since last employed, (103 to 135 weeks for treatment, 90 to 103 for comparison) and fewer children. The mean education level moved in different directions, increasing over time for the participant group and declining for the comparison group. Although there are a number of potential explanations for the changes in the composition of the participant and comparison groups, likely reasons might be the improvement in the job market and recruiting "low-hanging fruit" in earlier months.

Readiness for Job-Searching

Potential participants were directed to an online survey by a letter from Oregon Employment Department (OED) or a staff member at a WorkSource center. The survey assessed job-search readiness data for individuals who would eventually become either participants or members of the comparison pool. The readiness survey items can be grouped into distinct stages of job-seeking: action, resistance, and pondering.⁷⁵ As shown in Figure 2 below, participants and comparison pool members were similar in stage of readiness or motivation at face value, but statistically, participants were more likely to be pondering and less likely to be in an action stage relative to the comparison pool.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ The calculation of assignment to a given stage of job-seeking is discussed in Appendix C.

⁷⁶ The differences between groups for action and for pondering were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.001$, respectively; z-test for proportions, two-tailed, $p < 0.0001$).

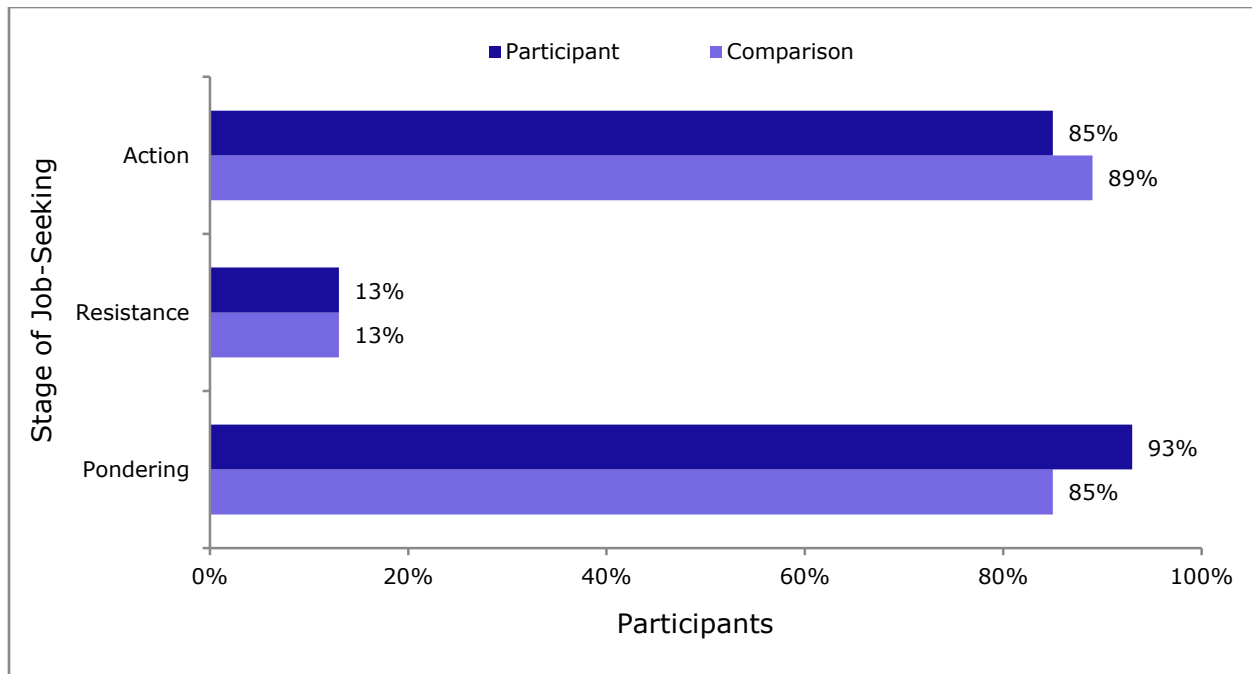


Figure 2. Participant and Comparison Pool Stages of Job Seeking, Participant n = 1,089, Comparison n = 5,234

The stages of readiness were not mutually exclusive:

- Of participants who scored high in the action stage, 10% were also high in the resistance stage, and 96% were also high in the pondering stage.
- Within the comparison pool, of those who scored high in the action stage, 11% were also high in resistance, and 87% were also high in the pondering stage.

The specific items suggested that participants were well motivated to seek training and find a job.⁷⁷ Reflecting the action stage, among participants:

- Most agreed or strongly agreed that they were actively looking for a job (98%) and/or were following up on job leads (93%).
- Most were working hard to find a job (91%).
- About 7 in 10 were setting up interviews with employers (70%).

The items in the “pondering” factor focus on orientations about the future. Among participants:

⁷⁷ Detailed results can be found in Appendix C.

- Most said they were considering career interests and goals, as well as employment options (93%).
- Most thought that the WorkSource center could help them (86%).
- About half were considering enrolling in a training or educational program (51%).

On the “resisting” complex of items, only 3% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that a job would disrupt their family, 9% had concerns about changing their work orientation, and 7% thought employment would cause greater rather than lesser economic hardship. Fewer than 2% did not understand why they needed to look for a job.

In general, the responses of participants and those in the comparison pool were quite similar. In most cases the differences were small, even where the differences were statistically significant (with a relatively large sample size, statistical significance may not suggest substantive significance). However, there were some exceptions:

- Participants were more likely to think the WorkSource center could help them (86% agreed or strongly agreed versus 64%) and were thinking of enrolling in training (51% vs. 36%).
- Non-participants were somewhat more likely to report setting up interviews with employers (70% versus 77%).

The greater interest in training and attitudes towards the WorkSource centers is not surprising, given that participants voluntarily enrolled in the Rethinking program. By contrast, the higher proportion of non-participants that were setting up interviews could help explain why they chose not to enroll: they may have had greater confidence about their immediate job prospects.

Summary Outcomes for Participant and Comparison Groups

UI and wage-record data were used to estimate the overall differences between the participant and comparison groups using a variety of metrics: number of weeks receiving UI benefits in the year after exit (or the imputed exit for the comparison group), whether any wages were reported for the subject in the first, second, third, or fourth quarters after participation in the program (for the comparison group, 30 days after they declined enrollment), and several measures of employment retention. Both retention measures were restricted to those that were hired in the quarter following program exit (“first quarter”) or imputed exit. The first retention measure, continued employment, assessed whether those who were employed the first quarter continue to be employed in the second and third quarters after exit as measured by receipt of wages. The second retention measure, job stability, indicates whether the subject reported the same employer in the second and third quarters. (For more details, see Appendix C).

As presented in Table 15, summary measures without any statistical controls suggest that a higher percentage of Rethinking participants were employed in the third (62% vs. 54%) and fourth (52% vs. 48%) quarters. There were no statistically significant differences in employment in the first and second outcome quarters or in whether the subject continued to receive wages once employed. There were comparative low rates of job stability reported in the state wage-record data, with approximately one half of the comparison group (51%) and a somewhat larger proportion of the participant group (58%) remaining with the same employer. An additional outcome not included in the table is that participants received fewer UI claim payments than the comparison group (11 weeks vs. 12 weeks).

A detailed discussion of each hypothesis and analytics applied are described below in the Propensity Score Matching section.

Table 15: Summary Outcome Measures of Employment and Retention (Unmatched Full Sample)

Employment Status	Percentage of Participant Group That Achieved Outcome	N of Participant Group	Percentage of Comparison Group That Achieved Outcome	N of Comparison Group
Employed 1st quarter after exit quarter	58.4%	1,089	58%	5,234
Employed 2nd quarter after exit quarter	62.7%	1,089	61.1%	5,234
Employed 3rd quarter after exit quarter	61.5%*	1,089	54.2%	5,234
Employed 4th quarter after exit quarter	51.8%*	1,089	48.1%	5,234
Continued employment (wages)	77.7%*	636	72.8%*	3,037
Job stability (employer)	57.6%*	636	51.5%	3,037

*p<.05

Performance Goals and Results

The key outcome measures of employment and retention are summarized in Table 16 below alongside the performance goals established by the program prior to launch.

Table 16: Performance Goals and Results – Employment and Retention

Employment Status	Performance Goal Number	Performance Goal Percentage	Outcome Number	Outcome Percentage
Entered Employment: <i>Of those who are not employed at the date of participation, the number of participants who are employed in the first quarter after the exit quarter</i>	250/1,000	25%	636	58.4%
Employment Retention: <i>Of those who are employed in first quarter after the exit quarter, the number of participants who are employed in both the second and third quarters after the exit quarter</i>	157/250	63%	494	77.7%

- The employment result of 58% exceeded the unrealistically low original program aim of 25%, and is similar to the negotiated performance levels for employment (59%) for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dislocated workers.
- The retention result of 78% exceeds the original program goal of 63% and is 7 percentage points lower than negotiated performance levels for retention (85%).

A further point of comparison for outcomes is the 2013 pilot of Rethinking Job Search. At that point, the program showed impressive results with 84% of participants becoming employed following their participation;⁷⁸ retention was not measured. The current program is not notably different from the pilot in its conception, curriculum, and delivery, and accordingly, it is unclear why the pilot performed 26 percentage points higher in employment outcomes.

Propensity Score Matching

This evaluation employed a propensity score matching (PSM) approach to estimate the effects of the Rethinking program. PSM is a quasi-experimental strategy for assessing treatment effects when a true randomized controlled trial (RCT) is impossible. Whereas true experimental designs are able to randomly assign subjects to either the treatment or control group, and thereby account for unobserved confounders, PSM uses observational data (i.e., where there is no control over assignment) to simulate a randomized study by matching members of the treatment and comparison groups along relevant characteristics, so that any differences in outcomes can be attributed to the treatment.

⁷⁸ Incite, Inc., *Rethinking Job Search Project*, 5.

Because participants chose to enroll into the Rethinking program (they were not assigned at random to the program), biases due to self-selection present a serious risk to validity of the estimates. However, PSM can help establish a less-biased estimate of the effects of the program by matching them with non-participants who resemble them in other respects (i.e., age, gender, provider, etc.).

Specific details of how PSM was conducted are discussed in Appendix C.

Final Model

The formal statistical model for the full employment and retention outcomes is as follows:

$$\text{Outcome(Propensity_match)} = 1 / (1 + \exp[-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 * \text{Participant} + \beta_2 * \text{Age} + \beta_3 * \text{Minority} + \beta_4 * \text{Gender} + \beta_5 * \text{Low_Income} + \beta_6 * \text{Education at entry} + \beta_7 * \text{Receiving_Public_Assistance} + \beta_8 * \text{Veteran} + \beta_9 * \text{Married} + \beta_{10} * \text{Number_of_days_unemployed} + \beta_{11} * \text{Start_Month} + \beta_{12} * \text{Participation_in_government_benefits} + \beta_{13} * \text{Provider} + \beta_{14} * \text{WorkReadiness_Action} + \beta_{15} * \text{WorkReadiness_Resist} + \beta_{16} * \text{WorkReadiness_Ponder} + \epsilon)])$$

For the outcome analysis of number of weeks receiving unemployment insurance benefits during the 52 weeks after the Rethinking training period (or the equivalent period for the comparison group), an additional variable counting the number of weeks receiving UI benefits in the 52 weeks prior to the start date, UIPrior, was also included. A preliminary set of regression models using the complete data set were conducted on each of the outcome variables prior to the PSM analysis.

Findings

Two types of statistical tests were employed to explore each hypothesis: a regression analysis that included all participant and comparison group members with sufficient data (as defined and described previously), and a propensity-score-matching procedure that identifies individuals in the comparison group that are similar to individuals in the participant group. Although PSM is commonly considered to produce less biased estimates, as with many such studies a substantial number of participants did not have an adequate match, resulting in the exclusion of many participants.

Because propensity score matching attempts to control for selection bias, and produces more conservative estimates of program impacts, the PSM results are presented as the definitive estimate of the Rethinking program's relationship to participant outcomes.

A key variable in the research was the Study Entry Date. This was the date of the first workshop for Rethinking participants, and of completion of the Esher Work Readiness survey for the comparison group. The Exit Date was 30 days after Study Entry Date for both the participant and comparison groups. Virtually all outcomes variables relied on Exit Date as an anchor point. When considering employment outcomes, these dates were converted into quarters of the year. With the exception of UI benefits (which are calculated in weeks), all outcomes exclude the quarter in which the exit date occurred—which is not always the same quarter as the entry date. The outcomes analysis therefore focuses on employment and retention in the quarters *after* the quarter of the exit date, which will be referred to as the exit quarter.

Employment

The first set of analyses focuses on the impact of participating in Rethinking on employment. Three hypotheses are tested in this section. The first tests the effect of participation using the Common Measure of employment 90 days after the program exit (i.e., quarter after the exit quarter). The second is a post hoc assessment that extends beyond the constraints of the hypothesis to explore program impacts on employment in each of the second, third, and fourth quarters independently, after exit. The third is an exploratory hypothesis examining the differential impact of Rethinking on disadvantaged minorities. For each hypothesis, multiple sets of analyses are presented: propensity score matching (“matched”) and unmatched regression results (“unmatched”).

Confirmatory Hypothesis 1: Participants will have higher rates of employment at 90 days relative to the comparison group (i.e., Common Measure).

- *Result: Not Confirmed*

Rates of employment after the 90 days were measured using wage-record data for the first full quarter following the exit quarter from the Rethinking program for the participant group, and the equivalent period of time after completing the Work Readiness survey for the comparison group. All instances in which wages were reported were coded as 1 (was employed), and all missing data coded as 0 (not employed). Because the outcome variable is binary (either a person is employed or they are not), logistic regressions were utilized, with coefficients presented as odds ratios (ORs). Odds ratios are best understood as the ratio of ratios, with an OR of 1 indicating an equal probability. For example, a treatment group with a 3 in 5 chance of receiving employment might be compared with a comparison group that has a 2 in 5 chance of receiving employment, so that

$$OR = \frac{3/5}{2/5} = \frac{.6}{.4} = 1.5$$

In this example, the OR of 1.5 would be interpreted as a 50% greater likelihood of being employed than the comparison group, because the 3/5 (.6) were 50% larger than the 2/5 (.4) odds.

Common Measure – Unmatched. Preliminary analysis without using matching techniques suggested that participants in the Rethinking program were more likely to be employed in the first quarter after the exit quarter than the comparison group. Participants had a statistically significant 37% (OR 1.37) greater probability of being employed than the comparison group, controlling for other factors. The baseline regression model also indicates that older, low-income, and those that had been unemployed longer were less likely to be employed, as were those who rated more highly on the “Pondering” Work Readiness factor. Surprisingly, higher education was negatively associated with being employed. Women and those with higher “Action” Readiness scores were more likely to be employed. It should be noted that the explanatory power of the model was relatively modest, suggesting that important factors that influence short-term employment outcomes may have been missing.

Common Measure – Matched. The PSM analysis yielded much weaker results. After matching program participants with similarly situated members of the comparison group, the average treatment effect of participating in Rethinking was positive but statistically insignificant and weak, with an odds ratio of 1.05—that is, only a 5% better chance of being employed. This result is consistent with the uncontrolled mean difference between the two populations presented in Table 15, which were virtually identical at 58% apiece.

Post hoc Hypothesis: Participants will have higher rates of employment in later quarters relative to the comparison group

- *Result: Confirmed*

Employment Per Quarter – Unmatched. In addition to the Common Measure, analysis of employment was conducted for each of second, third, and fourth quarters independently. As with the first quarter, the (unmatched) logistic regression found a statistically significant relationship between program participation and likelihood of employment, with odds ratios of 1.43 (second quarter), 1.71 (third quarter), and 1.31 (fourth quarter). The relationship of other variables was similar, although not consistently significant for gender and education.

Employment Per Quarter – Matched. The PSM analysis for later quarters produced more positive results than was found for the first quarter. Although second quarter results were quite similar, with a statistically insignificant 4% greater probability of employment, the data indicates somewhat stronger effects over the long term. The third quarter analysis saw participants with 12% greater odds of employment, while the fourth quarter saw 8% greater chances—both of

which were statistically significant. Admittedly, these represent small effect sizes (.02-.03), but do suggest that the program may have a differential impact over the longer term.⁷⁹

Table 17: PSM Results, Employment Status by Quarter

Outcome	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	P-Value
Employed 1st quarter after exit quarter	1.051	0.029	0.089
Employed 2nd quarter after exit quarter	1.037	0.030	0.220
Employed 3rd quarter after exit quarter	1.123	0.028	0.000
Employed 4th quarter after exit quarter	1.083	0.028	0.004

In sum, the outcomes analysis suggests that although participation in the Rethinking program did not result in short-term gains in employment relative to the comparison group, there were real, incremental gains over the long term.

Exploratory hypothesis 1b: Underrepresented minorities in the program will have better employment outcomes than minorities in the comparison group.

- *Result: Not Confirmed*

The analyses conducted under Confirmatory Hypothesis 1 were replicated for the subset of participant and comparison subjects who were identified as minorities. Although there are critical differences in the experiences and employment prospects of Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians, for this analysis, all subjects that were other than non-Hispanic whites were grouped into a single “minority” category. The reason for this categorization is that—in both participant and comparison groups—the overwhelming proportion of subjects (over 80%) were identified as white. Conducting separate analyses for each racial and ethnic group would result in extremely small sample sizes that would raise serious questions about the validity of the model or the likelihood of uncovering statistically significant effects. This analysis should therefore be treated as strictly exploratory. More detailed subgroup analysis would require a focused effort on maximizing the number of underrepresented minorities in the sample. Therefore, the analysis grouped individuals into only three categories: white (0), minority (1), or unknown (9).

Unmatched. The logistic regression of employment outcome (without matching) for the subset of individuals resulted in a statistically significant association between participation in the Rethinking program and employment in the first

⁷⁹ Effect sizes are standardized measures of impact. Following Kraft (2018), an effect size of .02 indicates a small effect.

quarter after the exit quarter. In other words, the model provided evidence that, as with the overall sample, minority participants were more likely to be employed in the short term. The odds ratio was 1.62 for participants, which can be interpreted as a 62% greater probability of employment for minorities in the treatment group. Similarly, in the third quarter after the exit quarter, minority participants had a statistically significant 76% greater likelihood of employment, net of other characteristics. However, minorities who participated in Rethinking did not have a statistically significant greater probability of employment in the second or fourth quarters after exit. In summary, prior to matching participant and comparison groups along individual characteristics, the analysis presented mixed evidence of greater employment by minorities who enrolled in the Rethinking program.

Matched. The PSM analysis yielded quite different findings. After matching by individual characteristics, the estimated effect of participating in Rethinking was statistically indistinguishable from the comparison group. None of the four quarters yielded a statistically significant impact for minorities. Since the overall population did find that participants had positive employment outcomes in the third and fourth quarters, these weak results could indicate the need for targeted services to replicate the modest success found for others. It should be kept in mind, however, the sample size was small compared to the number of predictors (112 matched from the treatment group and 297 from the comparison group), so the results should be treated with some caution.

Dosage

All of the analysis discussed thus far has treated participation in the Rethinking program as a simple binary variable—an individual either participated in the program or they did not. This approach is appropriate when comparing program participants to the general population of those eligible, but this simplifying assumption could conceal important differences in the impact of the program based on the intensity of the treatment. It is logical to assume that enrollees who attended all 12 workshops might enjoy greater benefits than enrollees who only attended 1. This is the question of dosage—does a more intense treatment (in this case, attendance at more workshops) result in better employment outcomes?

Exploratory hypothesis 1a: Participants who attend a greater number of Rethinking Job Search workshops will have better employment outcomes than those who attend fewer.

- *Result: Not Confirmed*

To examine the question of dosage, the analysis of employment outcomes was replicated only for participants. All of the same control variables remained in the model, but for this analysis the main predictor was the number of workshops attended during participation in the Rethinking program. This analysis relies only on unmatched regression analysis.

Surprisingly, an analysis of dosage did not find higher employment likelihood for those that attended more workshops. And in fact in the first quarter after the training period there is a statistically significant *negative* relationship between dosage intensity and employment (although the effect size is very small at $-.03$). The association is statistically insignificant in the second, third, and fourth quarters. According to qualitative data, this seemingly curious result makes sense: participants stopped attending sessions because they had found employment. This could account for the negative relationship between attendance and short-term employment.

Retention

In addition to effects on employment, a main focus of the research was the relationship of participating in Rethinking to employment retention. The Common Measure of employment defines retention as (a) finding employment in the first quarter after program exit (the quarter after the exit quarter), and (b) continuing in employment in the next two quarters (the second and third quarters after the exit quarter). The effects of participating in Rethinking on this measure is assessed with confirmatory hypothesis 2, understood as wages earned from any employer. A stricter interpretation of retention is studied in exploratory hypothesis 2a, which examines retention with the same employer (job stability).

Confirmatory hypothesis 2: Of employed participants, a greater proportion will retain employment at 12 months relative to the comparison group (i.e., Common Measure).

- *Result: Not Confirmed*

This analysis focused on persistence in employment once a subject had acquired a job. The outcome measure was whether those who were employed in the first quarter after the exit quarter (measured by wages) continued to receive wages in the second and third quarters.

Unmatched. Prior to matching, a logistic regression with all of the standard control variables was conducted. This model found that participants had a statistically significant 35% greater likelihood of remaining employed than the comparison group.

Matched. The propensity score matching analysis yielded weaker results: after matching subjects along race, gender, and other individual characteristics, participants had a 5% greater likelihood of retaining employment in any job than the comparison group, but the effect was not statistically significant.

Exploratory hypothesis 2a: Of employed participants, a greater proportion will be employed at the same employer at 12 months relative to the comparison group.

- *Result: Not Confirmed*

Whereas the previous analysis focused on retention in employment with any employer, this section concentrated on whether subjects continued with the *same* employer. The wage-record data provided by the OED includes a specific code for each employer, making it possible to measure whether a specific individual had the same employer in different quarters. It should be noted that in some cases individuals had more than one employer in a given quarter or even across multiple quarters, either due to a change in job (in the former case) or maintaining multiple jobs at the same time (in both cases). As a consequence this analysis is more appropriately understood as an examination of job stability, rather than retention as such. The outcome variable measured whether a given subject had the same employer code across the first, second, and third quarters after the exit quarter, with the analysis restricted to those who had any employment in the first quarter after the quarter the training period ended.

Unmatched. The unmatched regression results identified a statistically significant greater probability of retention with the same employer during the first three quarters after the exit quarter (among those that found employment in the first quarter). Specifically, participants had a 25% greater probability of retention (OR 1.25).

Matched. Unlike the unadjusted and regression-adjusted results, propensity score matching did not uncover a statistically significant association between being in the participant group and retention with the same employer. Participants had a 1% greater likelihood of retention (OR 1.01).

UI Benefits

The analysis discussed thus far has relied on quarterly wage-record data to estimate employment outcomes, which exclude federal, military, state government, and self-employment, and relies on the accurate reporting of wages by covered employers. An alternative measure of employment also maintained by the state is the record of UI benefits payments issued (or if not, why they were not issued). Testing the impact of participation in the Rethinking program using number of weeks receiving unemployment thus allows a check for the robustness of the results based on quarterly wage-record data. It also represents a more sensitive measure of employment, since it is based on weeks rather than quarters. It is also an important indicator of program performance, with implications for whether the OED, Unemployment Insurance Division might retain its interest in partnering on future iterations of this or similar programs.

Confirmatory hypothesis 3: Participants will gain employment prior to exhausting UI benefits at a higher rate relative to the comparison group.

- *Result: Confirmed*

Rather than a direct measure of time to UI benefits exhaustion, this analysis used a simple count of the number of weeks that an individual was awarded UI benefits in the 52 weeks after the four-week-training period. In order to control for prior receipt of UI benefits, a count of the number weeks of UI benefits received in the 52 weeks prior to the training period was also included in the statistical model (which should provide an indirect test for exhaustion).

Both the unmatched regression model and the propensity score matching analysis yielded substantively similar results: participants in the Rethinking program tended to consume fewer weeks of UI benefits than the comparison group. In the unmatched regression model, participants received on average 1.7 fewer weeks of UI benefits than the comparison group. After matching, the estimated treatment effect was slightly smaller at 1.4 fewer weeks (with an effect size of -0.08). Both of these results were statistically significant.

Factors Influencing Participant Outcomes

The dosage analysis was also used to identify the role of individual characteristics in influencing outcomes. In general demographic characteristics had little differential impact on participant success. Whether considering employment or retention,⁸⁰ or consumption of UI benefits, there was no statistically significant differential impact by education, length of unemployment, or status as minority, veteran, low income, or married. Women had a statistically significant higher likelihood of employment in the first quarter after the exit quarter, while those receiving SNAP, TANF, or SSI had a higher likelihood of employment in the second quarter. Older participants had weaker employment prospects in all four post-exit quarter periods. Participants with a higher “pondering” score on the Work Readiness Survey tended to have lower first quarter employment rates and higher consumption of UI benefits. Finally, participants who enrolled later in the program had slightly lower employment and retention rates.

Findings in Context of Literature on Similar Studies

The results of this study are decidedly more modest than similar studies, which found more robust effects of cognitive-behavioral techniques interventions on employment. The JOBS study (Vinokur & Price 1995) and Proudfoot et al. (1997)

⁸⁰ Common Measures.

both registered statistically significant gains in employment in the short term. Vuori and Silvonen (2005) found positive but statistically insignificant employment gains. Rethinking is also distinguished from these other studies because it identified stronger impacts over the long term, but not in the short term. This finding resembles that of Fournier et al. (2015), although the time horizon is much shorter.

However, there were important differences in research design and data collection from the Rethinking evaluation. First, those other three projects were all randomized controlled trials, and hence were able to estimate program impacts with less bias than a quasi-experimental design. Second, the data collection on employment in other studies was all through self-reported surveys, as opposed to secondary data. The former may lead to biases (i.e., over-reporting of employment) but can also avoid the missing data that one finds in state UI and wage-record data.

Cost Findings

Cost-related research questions are concerned with whether the intervention is more cost-effective than traditional workforce services, the cost per-participant, the sustainability and scalability of the program, and resource and policy implications. This chapter presents information on cost allocation for each WorkSource region and the program as a whole, and includes start-up costs for the Rethinking program. Also addressed here is the cost-effectiveness study, which addresses success of outcomes above and beyond the status quo. The role of cost in sustaining and scaling the program is also recapped using the results of staff interviews.

Cost Allocation

Local workforce boards (LWBs) implementing the program in their regions were asked to document the costs associated with the Rethinking Job Search (Rethinking) program. These were the costs incurred from November 1, 2015, through September 30, 2018. The total cost of the program including all regions was \$1,444,455.44, with an average cost per site of \$180,556.93, ranging from \$23,238.49 to \$365,492.62. Two regions (Lane Workforce Partnership and Worksystems, Inc.) accounted for nearly half of the total costs (47.5%). The substantial variation in program costs likely reflects differences in the size of the population served. Per-person costs are shown later in the cost-effectiveness section. Total costs by region are shown in Figure 3.

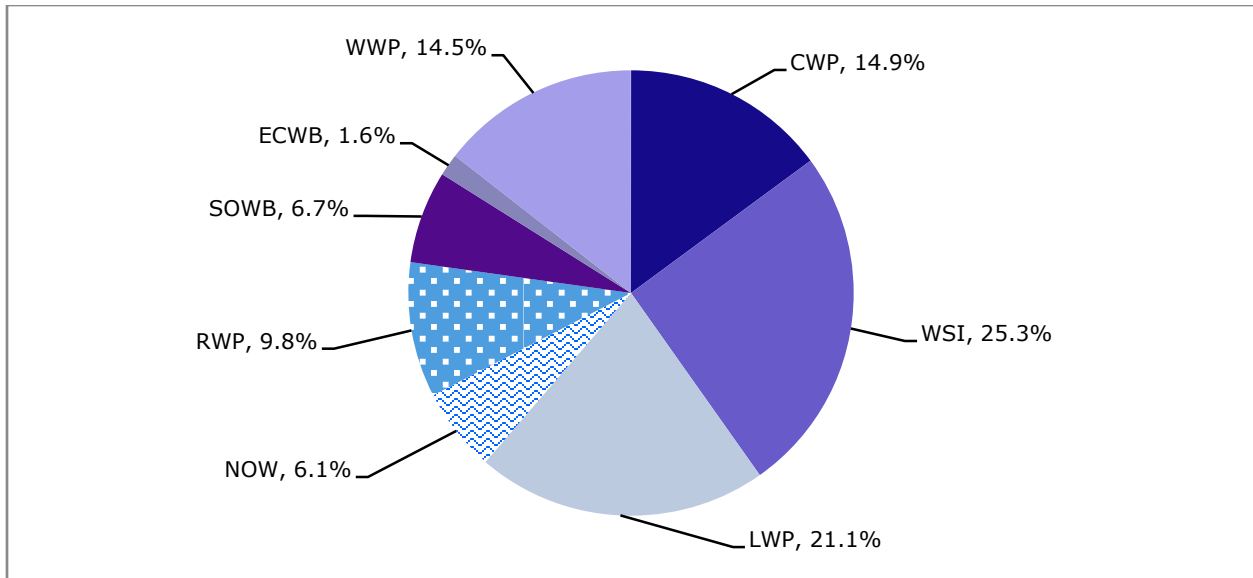


Figure 3. Percentage of Total Program Costs by LWB

The regions reported costs in 18 categories, which were grouped into 6 broader categories for the purposes of the evaluation: program support staff; customer service staff; materials, supplies, and services; participant expenditures; startup; and indirect costs. As presented in Figure 4, staffing accounted for over three-quarters of expenditures, with customer service staff representing 56% and program report staff representing 23% of program costs. The preponderance of staffing costs in running the Rethinking program closely resembles other service-based organizations that require in-person training, such as K-12 public schools.

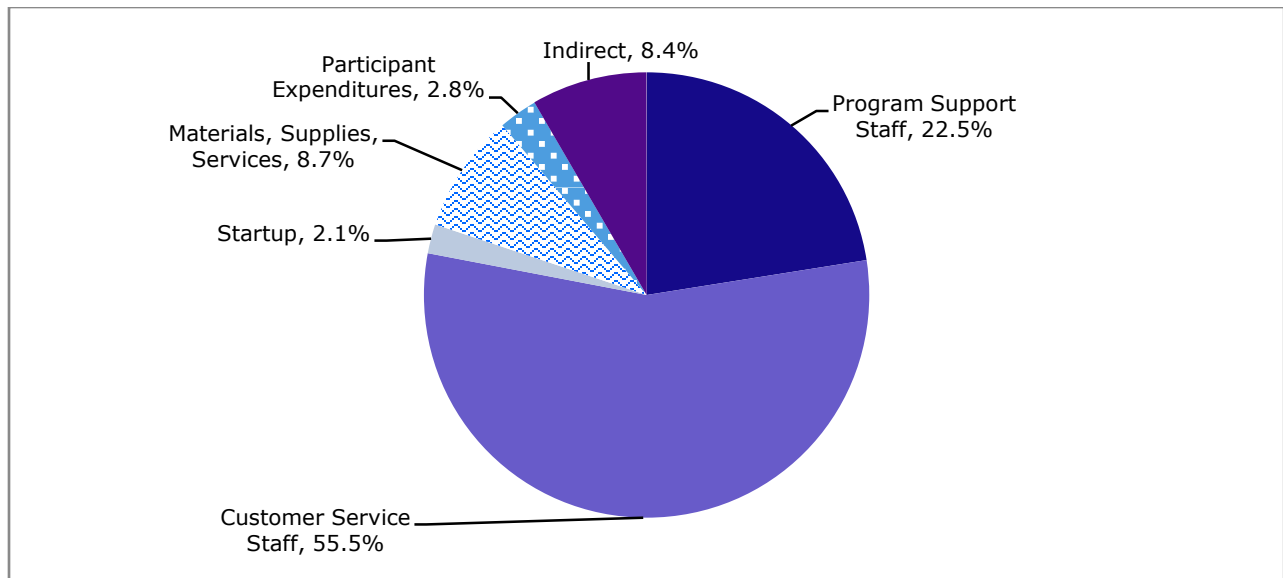


Figure 4. Proportion of Costs by Expenditure Type

However, not every region's program budget was as heavily concentrated on staffing. In six of the eight regions, combined staffing costs consumed a comparable 75% to 83% of outlays. Two regions (Rogue Workforce Partnership and East Cascades Workforce Investment Board) were outliers, with the proportion of staffing costs in the 67%–70% range. It is unclear whether this was due to greater efficiencies, alternatively structured budgets, or other program differences.

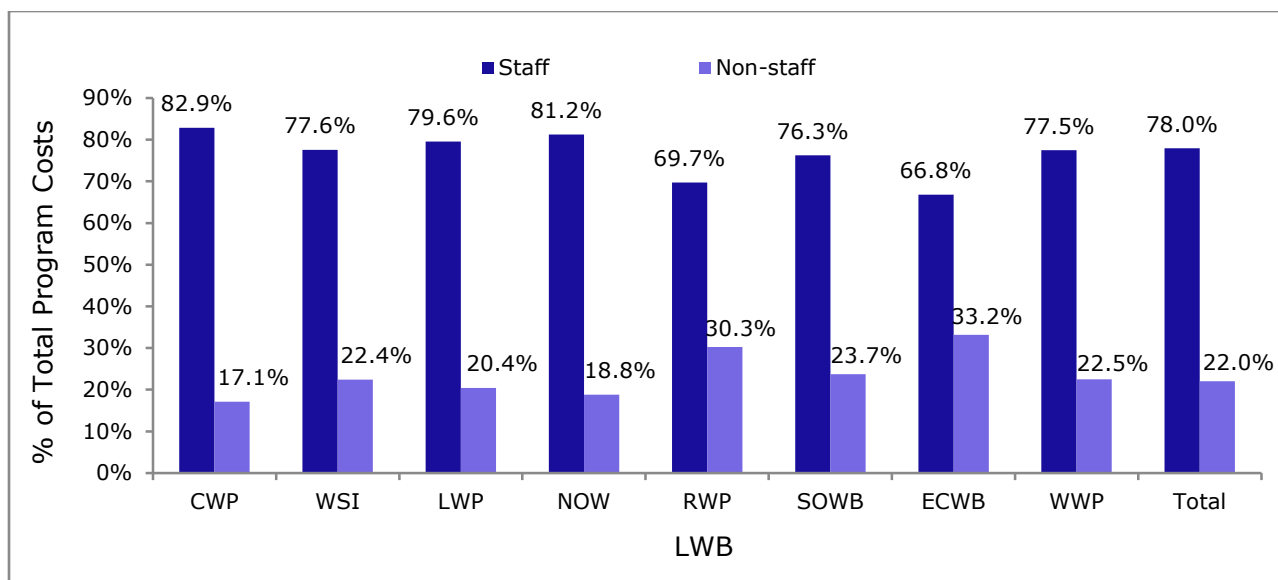


Figure 5. Staffing as a Percentage of Region Costs, by Region

Cost Effectiveness

Cost effectiveness assesses the substantive significance of program impacts given the resources committed to the program. This can be computed by comparing program outcomes against a baseline or comparison group. Analysis can be conducted either by assessing program impact for a given unit cost, or by monetizing the value of those impacts in a cost-benefit analysis. Both methods are used in this section. The program outcomes of employment, retention, and reduction in unemployment benefit usage are analyzed in light of the costs, as are raw unadjusted, regression-adjusted, and propensity score estimated treatment effects that take the comparison group into account.

Program costs were calculated both with and without start-up costs. Including start-up costs gives an estimate of the net impact of the entire program, while restricting costs to maintenance gives insights into sustainability. As discussed in the cost-allocation section (above), the total cost of the program was \$1,444,455.44, and the cost excluding start-up was \$1,413,717.68. The total number of participants served for the program was 1,225. There were 1,215 participants for whom sufficient data were available, and so the 1,215 was used to calculate a conservative per-recipient estimate of cost. The per-unit cost of the program was therefore \$1,188.85 for the full cost and \$1,163.55 excluding start-up.

Employment

Of the 1,089 participants for whom adequate data were available, 636 (58.4%) were employed in the first quarter after the quarter they exited from the Rethinking program. This is quite similar to the comparison group's total of 58.0%, for a 0.4% difference in outcomes. Understood in terms of odds ratios (ORs), this suggests that participants were 1% more likely to be employed in the first quarter, which converts to a statistically insignificant 1% increase in employment likelihood per unit cost of \$1,189 (\$1,164 excluding start-up). It should also be noted that this calculation ignores the lack of statistical significance—the association could in fact be due to a random distribution of data.

As has been mentioned previously, the participant group tended to be economically disadvantaged as well as older and more likely to be female. Adjusting for these characteristics using regression techniques yields a statistically significant odds ratio of 1.37, or a 37% improved likelihood of employment (controlling for other factors). This would translate into 1% improved likelihood in first quarter employment for every \$32 of per-person expenditures (\$31 excluding start-up). However, straightforward regression analysis is particularly vulnerable to selection and unobserved variable bias. Since the purpose of propensity score matching (PSM) is to reduce statistical bias and strengthen causal inference—that the observed effect is due to the treatment—PSM estimates are to be preferred in estimating program impact. Propensity score matching provides estimates that are closer to the unadjusted figures, with a statistically insignificant 5% improvement in first quarter employment. This would be a per-percentage-point improvement of 1% per \$237 per person (1% per \$232 excluding start-up costs).

Retention

Using the Common Measure of continuing employment in the first, second, and third quarters after the exit quarter, 494 of the 636 participants (78%) who obtained employment also earned wages in the two subsequent quarters, compared with the 73% of comparison group members who were retained (2,215 of 3,037)—a statistically significant 4.8% improvement. This estimate results in a cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) ratio of 1% increase in retention rates for every \$248 spent per person (\$242 excluding start-up).

Regression-adjusted effects of the Rethinking program also point to a statistically significant improvement in retention rates, with the participant group 35% more likely to continue working past the first quarter after the exit quarter. This translates into a 1% increase with every \$33.97 in per-person costs (\$33 excluding start-up). However, matching by individual characteristics using propensity score matching poses a statistically insignificant 5% difference (OR 1.05), or \$237 (\$232 excluding start-up) in per-person costs for every 1% in individually greater

likelihood (assuming the results represented a real relationship and not a random association).

Reduction in Unemployment Insurance Usage

As discussed earlier, there is a consistent finding in the study that participants tend to consume fewer unemployment benefits in the 52 weeks after the end of the training period (or imputed training period for the comparison group). The unadjusted mean difference is .76 weeks, with 11 weeks for the participants and 11.8 weeks for the comparison group. This translates into one week fewer Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits issued for every \$1,564.28 in per-person costs (\$1,531 excluding start-up). Regression analysis and PSM point to larger and still significant differences. After adjusting for individual characteristics using regression, participants on average consume 1.7 fewer weeks of UI benefits, or 1 less week for every \$699.32 in unit costs (\$684.44 excluding start-up). Similarly, matching techniques yield an average of 1.4 fewer weeks, for an estimated CEA ratio of 1 less week for every \$849.18 (\$831.11 excluding start-up).

Partial Cost-Benefit

Cost-benefit analysis evaluates program outcomes by monetizing the expected value of program effects and then comparing them with expenditures. This analysis was restricted to maintenance costs only (i.e., excluding start-up). Two different models are considered: the net benefit in wages due to employment in the first quarter after the exit quarter, and the savings associated with lower UI benefits expenditures. For both sets of analysis the financial implications unadjusted, regression, and PSM estimates of program outcomes were considered by estimating the financial value of those gains.

Median quarterly wages for those obtaining employment in the first quarter after the exit quarter were \$6,684.59 for the comparison group and \$5,122.93 for the participant group. Median income for each group were multiplied by the probability of employment in the first quarter between the two groups to establish a baseline value for each, effectively discounting median wages by the likelihood of receiving them (median income x odds ratio of employment = estimated monetized value). Because the comparison group had a 1% lower probability of employment than the treatment group, the adjusted values are \$5,174.16 for the participants and \$6,617.74 for the comparison group, for a loss of \$1,443.59. With a per-person cost of \$1,163.55 for the program, that amounts to a net cost of \$2,607.13. Because of the higher probability estimated under regression analysis, the estimated benefit of the program when controlling for individual characteristics represents a gain of \$2,807.12, for a net gain (over program costs) of \$1,643.57. However, as with the unadjusted model, the weak results of the PSM (OR=1.05) result in a total per-person net loss in earned income of \$2,134.83.

Similarly, the calculations for the effect of lower consumption of UI benefits suggest that the program's benefits do not outweigh their costs under a strict cost-benefit analysis. The legal maximum UI benefit in Oregon is \$538 per week and the legal minimum is \$126, resulting in a simpler calculation of net benefit. For purposes of this analysis the mean of these two extremes (\$332) is used as the average weekly UI benefit.

Using the unadjusted difference in UI benefit use (.76 weeks lower for participants) results in a savings of \$252.32 ($332 \times .76 = 252.32$). With a total unit cost of \$1,163.55, a cost-benefit analysis results in a net budgetary loss of \$911.23 (UI savings of \$252.32 minus per unit program costs of \$1163.55 = -\$911.23).

The regression estimate of 1.72 weeks lower UI benefits for participants results in a benefit of \$571.04 in UI savings per person and a total net loss (after program costs) of \$592.51.

The PSM estimate of 1.45 saved weeks of UI benefits yields a benefit of \$481.40 per person for a \$682.15 net cost of administering the program.

If primary emphasis is placed on the PSM-derived estimates of program impact, the cost analysis suggests that the Rethinking program may not generate outcomes powerful enough to justify the level of expenditure. The gains in employment and retention in particular are statistically insignificant and the effect sizes quite small, raising questions about additional resources devoted to the program. The reduction in UI benefits consumed is more consistent, although still fairly small from a statistical point of view. As might be expected, the cost-benefit analysis suggests that the program represented a net loss. However, as discussed in the Factors Influencing Cost Findings section, these pessimistic outcomes are largely due to treating the program as an add-on program rather than an integral part of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services.

Sustainability and Scalability

Qualitatively, many stakeholders who were interviewed considered Rethinking highly effective vis-à-vis its cost and expressed a strong desire to continue it. At the close of the program, two facilitators noted that they were still receiving referrals of potential participants from the Oregon Employment Department (OED) staff at the end of the program in the hope or expectation of its continuation.

Staff at workforce centers believed the program would be a highly valued addition to their traditional suite of employment services if sustainability mechanisms could be found. When asked if any changes in policy or practice would be needed to continue or bring back Rethinking, workforce board staff said not; modifications that had been needed were already put in place early on (e.g., supportive services

tailored to the program, as well as logistical support and communications with OED).

As discussed in the Implementation chapter, the program manager and partners worked intensively to find ways to sustain the program, and are continuing to do so, post-grant. A few workforce boards found ways to continue versions of the program at a reduced scale. But for the immediate future, Rethinking has been discontinued at most participating agencies. As noted, sustainability is closely tied to funds for the cost of hiring and retaining specialized staff—i.e., trained facilitators. The recent WIOA funding cuts forced agencies to focus on core programs that did not require specialized staff, that is, trained facilitators. Agencies that had previously expressed interest in using their own funds to back the program felt they had no choice but to reduce or eliminate their support. Agencies also had some non-WIOA funding at their disposition, but most of these funds are restricted to very specific uses.

Quantitative analysis points in a somewhat different direction. The conservative approach used to estimate the cost effectiveness of the Rethinking program suggested that the limited impacts on employment and retention (although generally positive) may not be adequate to justify *additional* outlays. However, if the Rethinking program were used as part of a menu of WIOA services rather than as an add-on, then the cost-benefit of the program would be more positive, particularly with the reduction in UI benefit outlays.

Factors Influencing the Cost Findings

The cost study used the most conservative possible approaches in evaluating cost effectiveness and cost benefits. Regression and PSM-adjusted estimates developed in the impact findings were used to estimate the differential effect of participation in the Rethinking program, rather than using only unadjusted estimates. In addition, the number of participants was placed at the lower 1,215 number (for whom full data was available), rather than the official program total of 1,225. Changing to the larger figure would cause a slight reduction in per-unit costs.

The most important factor influencing the cost findings was the assumption that Rethinking costs were a 100% addition to regular WIOA client expenditures—that they were supplementing existing WIOA services rather than supplanting them. This strategy makes the incremental comparison group estimated cost zero, creating a substantial bias against the Rethinking program's cost effectiveness. However, this very conservative approach may not be realistic. If Rethinking participants consumed fewer WIOA services, then program costs would replace WIOA costs rather than adding to them. This approach would have a major impact on the relative cost effectiveness of the program. For example, if there were a one-to-one cost of WIOA vs. Rethinking (i.e., the aggregate cost was equal for the

comparison and participant group), then any estimated positive impact of the program would be a net positive.

Conclusion

The Rethinking Job Search (Rethinking) program operated in 11 counties, and most of the sites enrolled individuals for 21 months. When the program wrapped in September 2018, Rethinking had offered 157 workshop series, and served 1,215 enrollees. The Rethinking program was designed to help participants learn how to recognize and change their risky thinking, understand and manage their emotions, and learn how these relate to and impact their job search and job-search actions. A sign of the high efficacy of the program is that participants left Rethinking with these desired abilities.

Key Findings

On the whole, the Rethinking program was carried out smoothly and consistently throughout the grant period, and satisfaction with the program was very high among participants and partners alike. It rolled out on the planned timeline and was carried out with a high level of fidelity to the original Rethinking model, despite some staff complaints about the rigidity of fidelity requirements. The curriculum was considered highly effective for cultivating a more positive mindset toward the job search.

Collaboration was strong for the duration of the program but appeared unlikely to result in lasting system changes unless additional funds were raised to cover the cost of hiring and retaining specialized staff—i.e., trained facilitators. Ongoing sustainability efforts have yielded some small successes in replicating elements of the Rethinking model, albeit on a smaller scale.

Eligibility requirements—aside from being an Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant—were fairly open. Despite this, the program was unexpectedly of interest almost exclusively to women over age 50, with fewer Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act-recognized barriers than the comparison group.

The program exceeded performance targets, including goals established for recruitment, completion, and self-reported gains in socioemotional skills, confidence, and motivation in job search.

The outcomes analysis suggests that although participation in the Rethinking program did not result in short-term gains in employment relative to the comparison group, there were real, incremental gains over the long term.

Specifically, the Rethinking program led to small but statistically significant reductions in consumption of UI benefits and higher rates of employment in the third and fourth quarters after the exit quarter, relative to the comparison group. There was no discernible impact on retention in the labor force, nor in the rate of job instability among Rethinking participants.

These modest findings, together with the conservative cost assumptions, resulted in fairly pessimistic estimates of cost effectiveness. However, the limited findings on employment and retention should be treated with some caution, since it was assumed that any missing data (i.e., no wages reported in a given quarter) were treated as “not employed”—which given the vagaries of data collection and exclusions in state wage-record data comes with a substantial risk of error. Using UI benefit consumption as an alternative measure of employment resulted in more positive findings. In addition, it should be noted that the Rethinking intervention was a one-time intervention. The fact that there were modest long-term effects several quarters later indicates that follow-up support with participants could yield more robust outcomes.

Implications and Recommendations

The Rethinking intervention proved remarkably robust in its manifestation. The program successfully engaged state and local agencies in a well-coordinated process and earned a reputation for value. Given its effective implementation and the high level of fidelity to initial plans, the program appears well suited for replication in other locations and at a larger scale. Willamette Workforce Partnership (WWP) is already moving forward to identify other settings and populations for the future implementation of Rethinking. The evaluation findings strongly suggest that the Rethinking model is ready for this next step.

However, the sustainability of the Rethinking model is contingent on the use of funds with which to hire and train specialized staff—i.e., trained facilitators. Facilitators were engaged as a peer-learning community in Rethinking, but funding and distance constrained in-person networking. Future iterations that involve single facilitators or one-off workshops could potentially find facilitators isolated from sufficient support. Accordingly, program management, support, and technical assistance would be easier to provide in larger-scale efforts.

- Recommendations
 - Local workforce boards (LWBs) are encouraged to use cognitive-behavioral education and other means to incorporate socioemotional tools and skill development to support job seekers.
 - Attempts at replication of the program should begin in other LWBs as well as other education and training settings, and at a large scale.

- To encourage stronger staff knowledge and buy-in, future iterations of Rethinking in LWB settings should provide a more robust training of LWB staff regarding the workings of the program—e.g., a condensed orientation session that provides an overview of key program elements.
- Future iterations will need to plan for an initial investment in hiring and training facilitators, as well as dedication to ongoing technical assistance, and meaningful contacts with facilitators. Creative means will be needed by which facilitators can regularly experience contact, support, and sharing of best practices.

Another concern for future implementation is the effect of Rethinking on different target populations. The program's unexpected appeal to older women means that further research is needed to test the model's applicability to other populations. As WWP adapts the Rethinking model to other programs, it should consider how to tailor the program to appeal to various target populations, and evaluate the results to further contribute to the evidence base for the Rethinking model.

The findings from this evaluation also highlight the obstacles faced by older displaced workers. They can become discouraged by perceived and actual ageism in the labor market or have difficulty adjusting to current mechanisms (e.g., electronic, de-personalized) for applying for jobs. They may struggle to adapt to new careers and to identify transferable skills. Finally, they face the challenge of finding a wage comparable to the one they had earned in prior jobs. Such conditions should also translate into older workers being out of work longer than they would have expected despite an otherwise strong job market. These issues are likely to continue to be salient as increasing numbers of older workers find themselves unable or unwilling to retire.⁸¹

Although most participants appear not to have encountered problems related to cultural relevance, a few did. This relatively sound fit, however, may be attributed to the homogeneous group that self-selected into the program. Given that some older participants persisted in risky thinking—e.g., relating to disabilities or ageism in hiring—despite having completed the program, future versions of Rethinking that serve an older clientele might incorporate additional training related to these specific issues. More generally, in order to better serve a wider range of clients, cultural relevance should be an explicit, intentional focus in future applications of the Rethinking model; the current, smaller versions of Rethinking underway might be considered more culturally relevant in that they have been tailored to suit specific target audiences.

⁸¹ The Associated Press-NORC Center, *Working Longer*.

- Recommendations
 - The Rethinking model should be adapted for application to multiple target populations. It would prove fruitful to develop a version tailored to audiences that are not neuro-typical, due to the inherent brain re-training features of the model.
 - Future delivery or adaptations of Rethinking that specifically serve an older clientele are encouraged to include content related to disabilities or ageism in hiring.
 - Future applications of the Rethinking model need to be developed with a deliberate and unambiguous focus on cultural relevance. This can take into account, for example, race, class, gender, ageism, and neuro-typical status.

The evidence base for the model thus far is based on fragmented elements, that is, there is support for various facets, settings, or audiences. However, this model is emergent and unique, and had no prior work sufficiently similar from which to generate baseline metrics of success.

The current study adds to the knowledge base with evidence that Rethinking offers a strong value proposition, including not just participant and stakeholder satisfaction but evidence of longer-term participant self-efficacy and employment outcomes. These outcomes put WWP in a good position to make the case for the model to funders.

- Recommendations
 - Energetic outreach should be conducted to connect with funders whose priorities and aims are aligned with the model purpose and delivery modes.
 - Efforts to engage potential partners will similarly need to be consonant with their missions and sufficiently aligned with priorities to inspire a willingness to invest new or existing resources in the effort.
 - The Rethinking findings should be vigorously disseminated and further research encouraged.
 - Further research is urgently needed to assess the effectiveness of the model relative to different populations, conditions, and permutations of the curriculum.
 - Longer-term impacts and retention should be core metrics in future research.
 - Clear and justified benchmarks for success should be established for each future program setting, using the most rigorous evidence available. Effort must be taken to create rubrics to define success in advance of program launch.