

RETHINKING JOB SEARCH

Taking a Cognitive-Behavioral Approach to Increase Job Seeker Confidence

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This brief provides the lessons learned from an evaluation of the Rethinking Job Search (Rethinking) Program as it was redeployed in 2021 under a new organization, with new facilitation teams, revised training format and supports for program facilitators, and an online delivery mode.

The Rethinking program was implemented by the Oregon Employment Department (OED) staff in early 2021. Willamette Workforce Partnership (WWP) provided the curriculum and training materials and conducted facilitator coaching and program monitoring. Public Policy Associates carried out the evaluation.

ABOUT RETHINKING

Rethinking is a workforce program designed to bolster job seekers' motivation and confidence in their ability to be quickly reemployed, by teaching cognitive-behavioral techniques. The Rethinking workshops aim to help participants think differently about themselves and, in return, act more positively as they search for work.

Specifically, the workshops help participants to:

- Explore methods and tools for dealing with the emotional ups and downs of job-searching.
- Engage in practical hands-on activities connected to subject matter.
- Challenge themselves to rethink their approach to job search.
- Strengthen motivation to move forward in finding and keeping a job.

The content is delivered in 12 facilitated, online sessions with a focus on management of thoughts and emotions, accountability, self-esteem and personal responsibility, and managing goals.

FINDINGS

Outcomes

The following are short-term outcomes of the Rethinking program that pertain to **emotional intelligence (EI) knowledge and attitudes** of participants.

Rethinking participants...

- *Improved their knowledge of emotional intelligence (EI) concepts.* Rethinking participants experienced greater gains in EI knowledge than non-participants.
- *Gained confidence and motivation for job-searching.* Nearly all respondents (20 of 24) reported improved confidence. All respondents

To learn more about the Rethinking Program or PPA's work on workforce development issues, contact Nancy McCrohan at nmccrohan@publicpolicy.com.



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Improved their knowledge of EI concepts



Gained confidence and motivation for job-searching

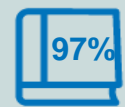


Found work within 30 days of program completion

Respondents that strongly agreed or agreed...



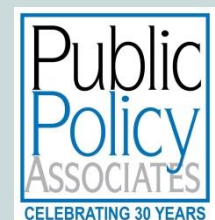
The facilitator's presentation style was effective.



The facilitator helped me understand the material.



I learned important things from the workshop.



reported either increased or stable motivation. These changes were sustained after program completion.

- *Became re-employed.* 42% of Rethinking participants reported finding work within 30 days of completing the Rethinking training.

While it is clear that participants' EI **knowledge** increased, it remains unclear whether participants' EI **skill** increased. Similarly, it is not clear whether and how changes in knowledge and skill influenced participants' likelihood of becoming employed. The re-employment rate achieved appears to be moderately favorable, but how it compares to what participants may have achieved without the program is unknown, and benchmarks for performance are difficult to establish given the COVID-19 pandemic.

Implementation

The following findings highlight the effectiveness of the Rethinking program.

- *Facilitator training and supports were effective in developing capable facilitators.*
- *Participants were satisfied with their experience.*
- *The program was delivered effectively.*
- *The program was feasible and viable in the redeployed configuration.*

The following are **key pieces of evidence** to support the findings, collectively:

- Facilitators were overwhelmingly positive about their initial training, per the feedback from survey and interviews.
- All facilitators found the master trainer's monitoring and coaching helpful, useful, and sufficient to help them successfully implement the program.
- Virtually all participants agreed that the facilitators were effective in presenting the workshops and helped them understand the material, and that they learned important things from the workshop.
- Most participants were satisfied with the program's facilitation, the topics, implementation, the Zoom platform, and learning.
- Nearly all participants would recommend this program to other people (27 of 29 responding).

IMPLICATIONS

The following are **key lessons and recommendations** to consider when implementing future iterations of Rethinking or a similar program.

- The initial training, monitoring, coaching, and supports, as provided, should be a model for future iterations.

- The curriculum should be preserved, including emphasis on the homework and job-search logs, which are deemed important parts of the learning experience.
- Rethinking can successfully be delivered online, and improves access to the service.
- The two-facilitator approach worked well, but because this was only four cohorts, additional research may be needed to test this in both online and in-person delivery.
- The facilitator hiring criteria were appropriate and should continue to be adhered to in order to identify solid candidates as needed in the future.
- At face value, there was a notable shift in a key objective to increase participant awareness of what they are feeling and why (proportion who agreed moved 14 percentage points from pre- to post-training assessment). However, this attitude change was not statistically meaningful. A larger-scale study would be required to demonstrate this more conclusively.

For a full account of the findings, evidence, and methods, see the full evaluation report: Rethinking Job Search: Evaluation Report