

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach

**A Study of Best Practices Related to On-the-Job Training
Programs Under the National Emergency Grant**

Prepared for

**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Office of Workforce Development**

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
OJT NEG Evaluation Study Report	7
Purpose of the Evaluation Study	8
Design and Methodology	9
Summary of Findings	14
Recommendations	32
Appendix	34
A – Sample Email Invitations to Participate	35
B – Questions for Focus Group Discussion with WIB Directors	36
C – Sample Telephone Script	37
D – Questions for Telephone Interviews – High Performers	39
E – Questions for Telephone Interviews – Peer-to-Peer Coaching Participants	40
F – Questions for Telephone Interviews – Employers	41
G – Questions for Telephone Interviews – Job Seekers	42
H – Sample Telephone Interview Notes/Content Coding Form	43
I – Top 10 Best Practices	44
J – Summary of OJT NEG Outcomes	46

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation study was to obtain feedback concerning the structure, administration, processes, practices, and outcomes of the On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program funded under the National Emergency Grant (NEG) Program. The ultimate intent of the study was to derive a set of *best practices* for OJT NEG outreach that could be replicated across the state workforce development system. The study was conducted at the request of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), Office of Workforce Development (OWD).

Thirty-nine individuals (WIB Directors, workforce staff, and employers) were interviewed either in focus group or telephone interviews. An additional sixty-three workforce professionals completed an online survey. Two questions were at the root of the study during the interviews and in the survey:

1. Are there best practices that can be used throughout the state's workforce system?
2. What differences, if any, exist between the state's workforce development professionals regarded as *high performers* and the balance of Ohio's workforce staff?

Highlights of the study

The most salient learning point from the findings is that best practices were as much a product of attitudinal as they are procedural reasons. In both individual and organizational instances, high performance results are directly associated with workforce professionals who sincerely want to exceed the expectations of their employer customers and continually find ways to strengthen the relationships and streamline processes towards that end.

- Local workforce offices that have an employer-focused, business services model are better able to develop streamlined, effective OJT processes that are appreciated by employers. There is a strong top-level and strategic emphasis on building strong relationships with employers.
- Workforce specialists (which, in this study, refers also to veterans representatives) and local workforce staff who are high performers are singularly employer-focused and approach their job of serving employers with fervor. They eagerly and continuously seek out ways to streamline the OJT NEG process in order to exceed the employers' expectations.
- OJT workshops for job seekers produce powerful outreach results for a local office by spreading information about the program to other job seekers as well as to potential employers. Both supply and demand of OJT NEG are serviced by engaging the unemployed with this technique.
- Coordination plays an important role in the successful implementation of OJT NEG, particularly in the initial stages. Among the key points both the state and local workforce areas can address during the planning phase is the need to clarify the roles and processes of everyone involved. Most of those interviewed had much praise regarding their interaction with State WIA Staff. Going forward, both groups can strive to work even closer in project planning and coordination.
- Workforce professionals designated as High Performers all had a strong preference for maintaining frequent face-to-face interaction with employers and with other people in the business community. To be as successful with OJT NEG at their level, one must strive to be in front of the business community as much as possible. High Performers displayed an eager attitude towards wanting to be in face-to-face meetings and to finding ways to streamline the OJT NEG process so that they can devote more time to visiting more employers.

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- One common difficulty faced by people at all levels was the federal 158-day eligibility requirement for those unemployed. The impact of this requirement places unique demands on the workforce system in terms of identifying and tracking qualified candidates in the numbers needed by employers. Workforce staff felt they could benefit from a better flow of information about eligible job seekers and more efficient use of the OMJ interface.
- A tool used by six local workforce areas was the Peer-to-Peer Coaching program, which enabled less experienced staff from one workforce area to learn how to market OJT NEG by linking with experienced staff from another local office. The program was exceptionally beneficial to both those who served in the Learner role – particularly those with little or no OJT experience – as well as those in the Coach role.
- Employers who were interviewed regarding OJT NEG were largely favorable in their opinions about the program. Terms like *atypical*, *streamlined*, *employer-friendly*, *simple*, and *easy* were not unusual to hear when employers described their experience with the program. Many reported dealing with workforce staff who were very responsive and helpful. This level of service, however, did not seem to be consistently applied from county to county.
- While a variety of outreach techniques are used by the vast majority of workforce staff, there was little evidence of a systematic way to track the effectiveness of the techniques used as they relate to OJT NEG. That is, nobody could say whether a billboard, radio spot, Chamber newsletter announcement, etc. was instrumental in helping get someone employed through OJT NEG.
- High Performers rated their support from One-Stop partners higher (4.33 out of 5.0) than did the rest of the local staff respondents (3.73). On a similar note, High Performers generally rated the support received from State WIA Staff higher than did Other respondents on eight different items.

Best Practices found in the study

Based on the findings from this evaluation study, a list of *Top 10 Best Practices* was developed for workforce professionals and another list for WIB's and One-Stops. Presented below are three of the most exemplary practices from each list. The complete *Top 10 Best Practices* lists are provided in Appendix I of the report (pages 44 and 45).

Individuals who are Top OJT Performers –

1. Seek out opportunities to have frequent and meaningful face-to-face interaction with employers and others in the business community. They don't rely on mail, e-mail, or phone to do what should be done in person.
2. Are singularly employer-focused and display a sincere, constant effort to respond quickly and exceed employer expectations.
3. Have developed excellent interpersonal relations skills and a mental agility that consists of competencies such as the ability to think like an employer, flexibility in a variety of situations, and ability to solve unique problems.

WIB's and One-Stops that are High Performers with OJT's –

1. Place top-level, executive emphasis on OJT's and a business services approach. OJT is viewed as having strategic importance towards building strong relationships with employers.

2. Maintain close links with the business community by building on-going, collaborative relationships with local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development offices, and business organizations such as SHRM.
3. Display a high capacity to adapt to the needs of the local business community and remain flexible enough to change the way things are done in order to meet employer needs and expectations.

Recommendations

While best practices are evident in the OJT NEG program, they are not necessarily found system-wide. In some instance, the state can bring about change through improvement in the policies and procedures affecting the program. In other cases, the state can facilitate the adoption of best practices by enhancing the support it offers to One-Stops and workforce staff.

1. *Develop a competency model for workforce staff that can be made available to workforce professionals throughout the state.* A competency model depicts the best practices and key competencies (skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, values, and other characteristics) found in those who perform at an exceptional level. The model could aid WIB Directors in assigning people to positions critical to building employer relations.
2. *Develop a model OJT Workshop for Job Seekers.* Local workforce areas using this technique were vocal in their enthusiasm for it. By creating a model of best practices for an OJT Workshop for Job Seekers, local offices can more quickly and competently adopt the technique. A model would be helpful when spreading information about the program across the workforce system.
3. *Extend the Peer-to-Peer Coaching Program to other WIBs and into other key programs.* Having connections with local workforce areas who have best practices has the potential to strengthen the overall system, efficiently and effectively. The Peer-to-Peer Coaching Program can be developed further and applied to OJT NEG and other critical areas.
4. *Improve coordination and clarify roles between workforce specialists and the local workforce offices.* Whereas workforce specialists were, indeed, effective in the OJT NEG program, some WIB Directors and local workforce staff pointed out issues that can be improved through better coordination, especially in the beginning stages of a program.
5. *Bring more consistency across counties in terms of paperwork and other requirements of OJT NEG.* Some workforce staff pointed out that the difference in processing some kinds of paperwork varied by weeks in neighboring counties. Employers facing a hiring delay of weeks by virtue of being in a slower county jeopardizes both the chance of using OJT NEG and the future relationship with that employer. Along these lines, encourage county offices and One-Stops to adopt continuous process improvement methods to streamline paperwork and make OJT NEG more employer-focused.
6. *Improve the flow of job seeker information to workforce staff.* Comments were made about the accessibility and usefulness of job seeker information. Some individuals were not aware of the Weekly Employer Outreach List; some respondents were troubled by technical issues on the OJT NEG tab; and some workforce staff were frustrated at wasted time due to the job seeker list. Part of this improvement process may consist of an exploration into whether the information structure should be aimed at a *push* strategy (with emphasis on how workforce staff need and use the information), a *pull* strategy (with emphasis on how the information structure can best benefit the needs of the employer, as happens in “reverse referral” instances), or both.

OJT NEG Evaluation Study Report

Purpose of the Evaluation Study

This evaluation study of the On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program under the National Emergency Grant (NEG) was conducted at the request of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), Office of Workforce Development (OWD), under the supervision of Mr. Ron Weber, Section Chief.

In brief, OJT is a workforce strategy that provides funding for an individual's training while engaged in productive work for an employer. The funding reimburses the employer for the costs associated with training, while the individual builds new skills or learns the skills needed to get reestablished in a new field. By helping defray the cost of training new employees, OJT serves as an incentive for employers to hire an individual. In response to the 2008 economic crisis, the National Emergency Grant provided funding for OJT's targeted to individuals categorized as long-term unemployed (over 158 days). Funding was available for OJT NEG training for the period between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2012. This evaluation study concentrates on the period between December 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012.

The purpose of the study was to obtain feedback concerning the structure, administration, processes, practices, and outcomes of the OJT Program, with the ultimate intent of deriving a set of *best practices* that could be applied across the state workforce development system.

A **best practice** is a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is subsequently used as a benchmark. In addition, a "best" practice can evolve to become better as improvements are discovered.

Two evaluation study questions served as the guiding mechanism for the study:

- Question 1 – Are there best practices – those actions, competencies, practices, procedures, systems, and characteristics that lead to, or contribute to, successful application of the OJT NEG grant – that can be used throughout the state's workforce development system?
- Question 2 – What differences, if any, exist between the state's workforce development professionals regarded as *high performers* – those who produce superior OJT NEG results – and the balance of Ohio's workforce staff ?

This study can have immediate operational value to OWD, both (a) pointing out best practices and (b) uncovering areas of performance – systems, processes, procedures, practices, etc. – in need of improvement. But the study can be viewed with a strategic lens as well; OWD recognizes the legislative trends that promote a workforce strategy of shorter-term and employer-focused training. The recent OJT NEG program fits well into this transformation. Feedback gained from this study can, thus, be useful in shaping the programs, processes, and staff competence that are critical to achieving this new strategic direction.

Design and Methodology of the Study

The evaluation design team consisted of Ron Weber and Angelita Rice of the Office of Workforce Development and Russ Brock and Carol Wargo, of Wargo-Brock Workforce Dimensions, LLC, who are technical assistance subcontractors for the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

1. An initial meeting was held April 24, 2012 to discuss the overall purpose and scope of the study and to identify potential topics for evaluation.
 - a. The overall purpose of the evaluation was to determine what works best in key OJT NEG outreach and contracting processes. Though the funding period for the OJT NEG grant was July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2012, the scope of the study focused on OJT NEG activity between December 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012. The evaluation team preferred to narrow the scope in order to aid respondents in the recall of specific information about their experience. Only workforce development staff, WIB Directors, employers, and job seekers who were directly involved in the OJT NEG outreach or contracting processes were considered for inclusion in the study.
 - b. A list consisting of 51 topics was generated for further exploration.
 - c. The list of potential topics was analyzed by the subcontractor and reviewed with the OWD staff to determine the most appropriate target group and data gathering methods for each of the 51 topics.
2. Subsequent team meetings resulted in a prioritized list of topics for each targeted group; low priority issues were eliminated from the study.
 - a. Preliminary data gathering questions were generated by the subcontractor for each topic. Questions were then reviewed with the OWD staff, edited, and evaluated based on their clarity, simplicity, and relevance to the intended target group.
 - b. Two additional meetings resulted in a final list of questions for each target group.
 - c. In all instances, respondents were asked to recall their OJT NEG experiences “during the past six months.”
3. To keep focus on best practices, the team identified workforce staff (both workforce specialists – which, in this study, refers also to veterans representatives – employed by the state and workforce staff employed by local/county agencies and One-Stops) considered to be “High Performers” based on their superior performance in working with the OJT NEG program. Feedback results from this group could be used for possible comparison against other respondents.
4. The first group targeted for evaluation feedback was WIB Directors.
 - a. Taking advantage of the monthly meeting of WIB Directors, the focus group format was deemed best for gathering feedback, both because of its time-saving advantage and because of the ability of participants to interact with each other and expand on ideas.
 - b. The sample included those representing both large and small counties, urban and rural areas, High Performers and others.
 - c. An email invitation was sent by the OWD Section Chief to seven directors, with six agreeing to participate [see Appendix A].
 - d. To ensure consistency, a set of structured questions was drawn by the subcontractor team from the final set of questions established in item 2b above [see Appendix B]. Participants were given an agenda and a sheet listing the structured questions at the beginning of the meeting. The meeting was limited to fifty minutes.

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- e. The focus group discussion was facilitated by the subcontractor team and was recorded using a digital recorder. Participants were informed that references to their names and areas would be changed to provide anonymity. The consensus of participants was that they felt free to discuss their thoughts openly.
5. A group of fifteen workforce professionals was designated by the OWD staff as High Performers and targeted for telephone interviews.
 - a. An invitation to participate in the interview was sent to each individual by the OWD Section Chief.
 - b. To ensure consistency, a set of structured questions was drawn by the subcontractor team from the final set of questions established in item 2b above [see Appendix D].
 - c. A written script was prepared to begin the phone conversation, introducing the subcontractor, the purpose of the call, the invitation to participate, and assuring anonymity, indicating the respondents would not be identified in the report in any way. [see Appendix C]
 - d. Six of the targeted individuals were unable to be contacted after multiple dialings on different days and times. One person contacted was reluctant to participate and referred the subcontractor to other workforce staff not on the High Performer list. Of the remaining individuals, eight participated in an interview.
 - e. The average length of time on the phone for this group was 15 minutes, with one call lasting 26 minutes.
 6. Peer-to-Peer Coaching Participants
 - a. All WIB's in Ohio had been invited in September, 2011, to participate in a Peer-to-Peer Coaching project geared towards improving OJT NEG results. Six WIB's volunteered and were paired into three peer-to-peer groupings, with one group's partner serving as the Coaching Team, the other partner serving as the Learning Team. Coaching sessions were scheduled between October and November, 2011.
 - b. The evaluation study selected a sample of the Peer-to-Peer volunteers for a telephone interview. To ensure consistency, a set of structured questions was drawn by the subcontractor team from the final set of questions established in item 2b above [Appendix E].
 - c. An email invitation to participate in the evaluation interview was sent to each individual by the OWD Section Chief.
 - d. Of the seven individuals who served in the coaching role, one individual was part of the WIB Directors focus group, and one individual was part of the High Performers group. Both were consequently eliminated from the Peer-to-Peer target group. Another individual had since retired from his position and was not contacted for an interview. Two of the remaining four coaches were interviewed. Of the ten individuals who played an active role as Learner through all three phases of the program, six were interviewed. Four individuals were not able to be contacted after multiple dialings. A total of eight individuals were interviewed. Nobody refused to be interviewed.
 7. Employers hiring OJT NEG-qualified employees
 - a. A list of thirty Ohio employers who had hired an employee through the OJT NEG process during the past year was randomly compiled by the OWD staff for a telephone interview.
 - b. An email invitation to participate in the evaluation interview was sent to each employer by the OWD Section Chief.
 - c. To ensure consistency, a set of structured questions was drawn by the subcontractor team from the final set of questions established in item 2b above [see Appendix F].

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- d. A written script was prepared to begin the phone conversation, introducing the subcontractor, the purpose of the call, the invitation to participate, and assuring anonymity, indicating the respondents would not be identified in the report in any way [Appendix C].
 - e. Of the thirty individuals targeted, fourteen participated in an interview.
 - f. Telephone numbers for each employer on the list were dialed multiple times. If the phone number did not work, a search on the company's website usually produced the correct contact number.
 - g. The average length of time on the phone for this group was 12 minutes, with two calls lasting 22 minutes.
8. OJT NEG-qualified job seekers
- a. A process similar to that of the employer target group (item 7 above) was used for job seekers.
 - b. Thirty targeted individuals were called multiple times, at times ranging from 8 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. In numerous cases, the phone number dialed was no longer operating, switched immediately to voice mail, left ringing unanswered, or were wrong numbers.
 - c. Three individuals were actually contacted and interviewed. In each instance, participants were unable to recall much about their experience with the OJT process. In some instances, enough time had elapsed that memory of details was weak. In other instances, it seemed apparent to the subcontractor that the interviewee had little or no awareness of the OJT process (not knowing, for instance, the existence of a training plan during the OJT period).
 - d. The call yield for this group was so low, it was deemed necessary to suspend calls. Since this group had not originally been a high priority group for the evaluation study, it is suggested that a separate study and methodology be developed at a later time.
9. Online survey
- a. The team used the online service SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) as its vehicle for constructing and distributing the survey. This method was selected because (a) OWD has an account with the vendor, and (b) workforce staff are accustomed to responding to OWD surveys via this method, thus increasing chances for an acceptable response rate.
 - b. Survey design and content was handled by the subcontractor, based on the final set of questions established in item 2b above. Angelita Rice of OWD handled the online construction and administration of the surveys. Analysis of the survey responses was handled by the subcontractor.
 - c. Because jobs differ in nature, two versions of the survey were created, one version for workforce specialists (including veterans representatives), and the other version for local workforce staff. Some questions were common to both versions [Figure 1 below], some questions unique to each target group [Figure 2 below].
 - d. A variety of data gathering items was used, including Likert-type scale, multiple response, checklist, priority ranking, yes/no, and open-end response, depending on the nature of the information sought.
 - e. Both target groups were sent an email from the OWD Section Chief through ODJFS' email delivery system, with an explanation of the survey purpose, an invitation to participate, and a website link to the online survey instrument. The subject heading identified the OJT NEG grant and was signed by the Section Chief. Respondents were initially given two weeks to participate in and complete the survey. Individuals were later sent an email reminder and the survey's closing date was later extended one week to allow more individuals to respond.

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- f. To facilitate later comparisons, a method was devised to collect responses from the High Performer respondents separately from the other respondents.
 - g. The OWD staff expressed a desire to obtain as much relevant feedback as possible; thus, liberal criteria were established for accepting responses from those participating in the survey. Completed surveys that contained items skipped or omitted by participants were deemed acceptable.
 - h. Sixty-four individuals completed the survey at the time it was closed.
10. Content gathered from the focus group discussion, telephone interviews, and open-end responses on the online survey was compiled and coded using a coding form [see Appendix H]. Responses were then clustered together with similar themes, and then labeled with a heading. The clustering procedure helps display the relative frequency with which a phrase or topic was mentioned by respondents, and allows for more direct comparison between groups.
11. To the extent possible and reasonable, the specific names of individuals, organizations, and locations were eliminated and comments were slightly rephrased to provide anonymity.
12. Complementing this evaluation study, a set of “Success Stories” was compiled by OWD, reflecting the OJT outcomes obtained in the field. These stories depicted instances in which individuals or employers experienced noteworthy outcomes from their involvement in OJT. The stories did not attempt to isolate specific behaviors, actions, or processes that lead to successful outreach. Thus, the stories, while a good supplement, are not included as part of this evaluation study.

Figure 1 – Questions common to both target groups

Question #		Question
State	Local	
2	3	How many years have you been involved with marketing On-the-Job Training (OJT) Programs?
3	4	During the past six months, which of the following outreach techniques did you use when marketing OJT’s to employers under the National emergency Grant (NEG)?
4	5	If you used outreach techniques in Question 3 (or 4), please rank the top three (3) techniques in terms of their effectiveness in marketing OJT’s to employers.
6	10	Rate the following resources provided by the State WIA Staff in terms of their value to you when marketing OJT’s during the past six months.
9	13	When it comes to marketing OJT’s to employers during the past six months, did you encounter difficulties that directly affected your outreach activities?
11	14	Rate the following elements of support offered by the State WIA Staff in terms of how useful each was when marketing OJT’s? [11] Overall, what kind of support from the State WIA State do you consider most valuable when marketing OJT’s? [14]
5	9	During the past six months, what action steps did you take to follow-up with any OJT outreach efforts to employers (such as send literature, interview employer, refer a job seeker, etc.)?
7	11	Please describe any follow-up action steps you took as a result of using the resources listed in Question 6 above: [7] Please provide an example of how you used any of the resource items in Question 10 above when marketing OJT’s: [11]
13	15	Overall, what kind of support from the State WIA Staff do you consider most valuable when marketing OJT’s?

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

14	7	Describe what you consider to be a Best Practice (such as something you say, an action you take, job title of the person you talk to, etc.) when it comes to the way you market or promote OJT's to employers in your area.
16	17	What new competency (a new knowledge, skill or ability) do you feel you have gained as a result of your experience in marketing OJT NEG over the past six months?

Figure 2 – Questions unique to each version

Question #		Question
State	Local	
1		Indicate your position
8		If a presentation to a chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) was made in your area during the past year regarding OJT NEG, what OJT results came from the presentation?
10		When it comes to marketing OJT's to employers during the past six months, did state OJT procedures hinder your ability to market OJT's?
12		Overall, what two factors are most important to your ability to successfully market an OJT to an employer?
15		Describe a technique you used (such as something you said, an action you took, job title of the person you talked to, etc.) that did not work successfully for you when marketing or promoting OJT's to employers.
	1	What is your WIA area?
	2	What county is your WIA office located in?
	6	What outreach techniques did your local workforce use to market OJT's to potential job seekers? (Check all that apply)
	8	When it comes to your own efforts to market OJT's to employers during the past six months, how much support did you have from the business service team or One-Stop partners in your local workforce area?
	12	Rate the following in terms of their value to you in helping you market OJT's during the past six months.
	16	What suggestions can you offer to the State WIA Staff to improve the effectiveness in marketing OJT's in the future?

Due to the nature of the study, several assumptions were made regarding feedback obtained:

1. That the respondents interviewed presented opinions and observations that adequately and accurately reflect the nature of their experience with OJT NEG.
2. That respondents were able to sufficiently recall relevant examples of key points discussed in the interview.
3. That, during the data collection interview, adequate time was allotted for respondents to communicate their thoughts.
4. That the interviewer and respondents had sufficient agreement on basic definitions of terms during the interviews (e.g., "OJT", etc., would have the same meaning to both parties).
5. That adequate credibility and trust existed between the interviewer and the respondents to achieve an open and frank discussion of the OJT process and experience.
6. That opinions and information shared by the respondents that is considered confidential in nature should not be included in the feedback reported in the study.

Summary of Findings

On the whole, the OJT NEG program was well-received by three groups of stakeholders who provided feedback for this study – WIB Directors, workforce staff, and employers. Granted, programs of this kind generally have areas in need of improvement; and OJT NEG is no different. But the positives that are part of this program are evident when taking into account the feedback contained in this study. At minimum, the program seems to be regarded by some as atypical of government programs. This study is an attempt to identify some of the best practices that make the program effective.

Uncovering best practices is challenging at times, in part because people who are successful at something don't often reflect on what it is they do that makes them successful. In this study, most workforce professionals had some difficulty articulating their thoughts on best practices. As one High Performer stated, "When people ask, I don't know how I do it. I don't have a formula. I've been doing it so long." By collecting information from a variety of people and through different means, however, a pattern formed, producing some insights into what works best – and what doesn't.

Below are summary comments based on the feedback obtained from the groups targeted by the evaluation team for this study – WIB Directors, High Performers, participants of the Peer-to-Peer Coaching experience, employers, and workforce staff who completed an online survey.

For interested readers, the raw data compiled for this report are on file with the Office for Workforce Development.

Feedback obtained from WIB Directors focus group discussion

1. Beginning with the fact that the group of WIB Directors participating in the focus group had compiled a successful record with the OJT NEG program, the question arises: To what do they attribute their results? A consensus seemed to form among the WIB Directors around the importance of a business services model that consists, in part, of:
 - a. *The structuring of workforce staff jobs aimed specifically at facilitating the hiring needs and expectations of employers.* To this end, two roles seemed to be effective in achieving greater employer acceptance of OJT's:
 - a staff person designated to be the main contact person for OJT's (sometimes referred to as a Business Services Representative), who knows the entire outreach and contracting process, and who builds and maintains the relationship with the employer; and
 - a person designated to facilitate the completion of paperwork required in the OJT.Depending on the size of the local office, these two roles may be held by two or more individual staff members, or by a single individual. Nevertheless, the emphasis is on sharply focusing both roles on servicing the needs and expectations of the employer. Of critical importance is the personal contact that is maintained with the employer, as contrasted against WIA offices that merely mail out a packet of forms to be signed by the employer, or are so fragmented that no employer can be serviced without having to endure a slow and frustrating bureaucracy.
 - b. *A continuous effort to streamline the paperwork and contracting process.* Offices successful with the OJT NEG program have found a way to take the paperwork burden off the employer, either through creatively rethinking the process in ways that simplify the employer's task or by absorbing much of the work themselves. The adoption of a blanket

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- contract is viewed by the WIB Directors as especially effective in reducing work for both the local staff and the employer.
- c. *Management emphasis on OJT's and the business services strategy.* Changing job structures alone will not be sufficient without strong backing from management. WIB Directors with High Performer-level results talk about OJT and employer-focus in every opportunity. Management support additionally included reinforcement of the practices, policies, and decisions that support the business services strategy, such as rewarding and recognizing the performance of individuals in front of their peers.
 - d. *The need for flexibility.* Local offices that are business-focused and adaptable are more successful, expressing the attitude of “We can make it happen.” Less successful offices are more rigid and bureaucratic.
2. Offices that arrange OJT workshops for job seekers were vocal in their endorsement of this tool. By attending a session, unemployed individuals extend the outreach capability of the WIA staff by learning how to approach prospective employers and suggesting how the OJT program can be used to benefit the employer. Where appropriate, job seekers can receive a letter indicating their pre-qualification for OJT NEG, simplifying the process for the employer.
 3. Establishing and maintaining strong relationships with the business community plays an important role in producing positive OJT NEG results. It is conceivable that every local office has some relationship with a local Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development office, business organization such as the Society for Human Resource Management, etc. However, the WIA offices that are more successful with OJT NEG appear to make a constant and strong effort to work collaboratively with such entities and foster on-going relationships. The feeling expressed by the WIB Directors is that, without a strong connection to these other agencies, one cannot achieve successful results with OJT NEG.

As a corollary to this, it was felt by some WIB Directors that the business service representative who possesses a business background, has solid business connections, and regards the employer as the customer is more effective with OJT NEG.
 4. WIB Directors felt there is both a desire and need for improved coordination with the state Office of Workforce Development.
 - a. Resources made available through the State WIA Staff (webinars, training programs, manuals, forms, etc.) were viewed favorably when used by the local offices. In the case of the weekly and monthly lists, however, not every WIB Director felt they had sufficient information or equal access to the list of names.
 - b. WIB Directors recognize that the planning and implementation timeline of OJT NEG is often predicated on the manner and timing by which the State WIA Staff receives its guidance from the federal government. Within that framework, the directors interviewed also expressed a desire to be more involved in the early stages, when both the state and the local offices can share critical information and work through coordination issues of policy, procedures, and forms, and thus improve the local offices' ability to implement the program successfully.
 - c. An issue of defining responsibilities between workforce specialists employed by the state and the local workforce staff was addressed by the WIB Directors. The question of who should contact employers and what relationships exist with employers has the potential for souring employer relationships that have been built-up over time.

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

5. One common difficulty faced by people at all levels was the federal 158-day eligibility requirement for those unemployed. Tied integrally to this constraint is the flow of information about eligible job seekers. Some WIB Directors – as well as some local workforce staff – indicated problems in either having access to or use of job seeker information, as with the Weekly Employer Outreach List, the OMJ Resume Board, or the OMJ website. It was felt that more OJT NEG contracts could be written if such information sources more accurately reflected the actual pool of eligible candidates. By not having accurate, real-time job seeker information, respondents felt the pool of eligible candidates fell short of the employers' demand to fill jobs.

Feedback obtained from telephone interviews – High Performers group

1. Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic found among High Performers is the attitude they express towards the work they do and in responding to the needs of their customer, the employer.
 - a. There is a singular focus on taking care of the employer's needs, responding quickly to customer service issues, and finding ways to solve problems throughout the hiring process.
 - Those interviewed emphasized their ability to build solid relationships and trust with employers.
 - A large part of establishing strong customer relations comes from frequent and meaningful face-to-face meetings with employers, whether at the employer's location or through other business networking events, such as Chamber gatherings. High Performers seem to eagerly seek out these opportunities. Moreover, they see a direct relationship between time in front of a customer and OJT results.
 - High Performers appear to have a level of persistence that enables them to hang-in with an employer until the employer agrees to try an OJT or until a solution to a problem is found that exceeds the employer's expectations.
 - b. High Performers, on the whole, were quick to point out that their success with OJT NEG was a result of working with an effective team. Some literally had trouble using the pronoun "I" even when pressed during the interview to recall specific instances of their own work. They invariably resorted to "we." The concept of team extends to working with other One-Stop partners, as well as related agencies such as Economic Development.
2. An important factor in the High Performers' ability to write OJT's is the fervor with which they find ways to simplify the process for the employer. In recognizing the stress faced by the employer, High Performers strive to make the hiring process through OJT NEG as easy as possible. This pattern of behavior extends to the way they interact with the employer, providing quick response to requests, and with information that is brief and succinct.
3. Various outreach methods were mentioned, including advertising, newsletters, mailings, and others. High Performers do not seem to rely on any one method. On the other hand, those interviewed did not express what results are obtained from each method; rather, there seems to be a feeling that all of the methods work in consort to create positive results. No mention was made by any High Performer of using or having a formal, systematic way to track the results of various OJT outreach techniques; on the contrary, some commented that they had no knowledge of results obtained from specific outreach techniques.
 - a. High Performers regard every point of contact with an employer as an opportunity to provide information about OJT NEG, such as, employer call-ins to post a job, partnering with Economic Development visits, offering to present at a Chamber meeting, etc.

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- b. The value of engaging job seekers is regarded as important to High Performers. Specifically, OJT workshops for job seekers received strong endorsement by this group in the way they help spread word-of-mouth interest in the program. OJT workshops help build the pipeline of eligible candidates and prepare job seekers to approach employers with information about OJT NEG. Eligible candidates can be given a letter indicating their pre-qualification, offering a competitive advantage in hiring.
4. There was no consensus among this group concerning the type of employer best-suited for OJT NEG. Small businesses were cited in some examples, in part because of the ability to get to the decision maker more easily. But additional factors include:
 - a. Developing a pipeline of candidates in order to find the right fit between job seeker and employer
 - b. Informing employers, who already have candidates in mind, about OJT NEG, and then encouraging the employer to call so the candidate can quickly be screened for NEG eligibility.
5. Among the competencies regarded as most critical to working successfully with OJT NEG, High Performers cited interpersonal relations and communication skills, knowledge about the OJT policy and contracting process, the ability to build and work collaboratively with a team. Another competency addressed during the interviews can be labeled mental agility, consisting of the ability to think like the employer, to be flexible in a variety of situations, and to be able to solve unique problems.
6. Like the WIB Directors, High Performers cited the difficulty in finding NEG-eligible candidates for employers.
7. Perhaps a reflection of the overall positive attitude expressed by the High Performers, only minor mention was made concerning employer resistance to working with government programs. Instead, this group works through the issue by building the confidence of employers through small, simple, and easy steps in working with OJT NEG.
8. Also similar to the WIB Directors, this group indicated a desire to have a longer timeline and more advance notice of the program prior to implementation.

Feedback obtained from telephone interviews – Peer-to-Peer Coaching participants

1. The most valued aspect of the Peer-to-Peer program was the ability of participants to interact with each other and share ideas, regardless of a person's role or prior OJT experience. The dialogue and relationships that began through this program seem to have persisted and still continue, according to those interviewed.
2. Though the program had design and content variations from one group to another, the overall concept and implementation of the program received exceptional praise from the large majority of those interviewed.

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- a. When asked what was least effective, most participants indicated the entire program was effective and recommended no changes.
- b. Individuals who expressed some dissatisfaction with their experience, nevertheless were very positive about the program overall. The dissatisfaction seemed to revolve around the relevance of the content and program design in relation to their many years of experience in using OJT's.
3. Participants with little or no OJT NEG experience especially liked the opportunity to discuss key issues with experienced individuals, and they greatly appreciated the opportunity to shadow the Coaching Team on an employer visit. Other features mentioned favorably include:
 - a. The ability to observe firsthand the OJT process and paperwork;
 - b. Mock employer interviews prior to making a visit;
 - c. Getting feedback and additional suggestions on ideas shared during the program.
4. There was some recognition that a business services model is becoming more common and that the use of OJT's is more important as an employer solution. Many of the participants stated that they were reluctant to adopt this approach at first because of their lack of confidence/experience in promoting OJT's. The Peer-to-Peer Coaching program provided the catalyst for those individuals to change.
5. Each participating group identified something concrete taken away from the experience. One individual indicated changes have been made in streamlining the contracting process. Another individual reported changes in the way their office staff connects with businesses. A third participant returned from the Peer-to-Peer experience and worked with the local office to institute a Job Seeker OJT Workshop, an idea gained from the program.
6. Those in the role of Learning Team expressed some apprehension about the program and about the OJT NEG process prior to coming to the first session. Each person then indicated that such apprehensions quickly faded, largely due to the effectiveness of the Coaching Team and the Facilitator. The Learning Team in each grouping felt welcomed and respected; the coaches were always approachable. It was felt that being regarded as an equal to those in the coaching and facilitator roles was critical to making a comfortable transition.
7. The extent to which individuals felt there were direct results attributable to the Peer-to-Peer program seems to be related to the participant's years of OJT experience. Those with more experience felt there was less direct impact in the number of OJT's written or in the processes changed in their office. Those with little or no OJT experience reported more significant changes, from improvements in processes, to increased confidence in promoting OJT's.
8. One interesting outcome of the program is an observation made by the coaches regarding how much they gained from the experience themselves. Preparing for the program forced the Coaching Team to dissect, analyze and articulate each step of their own OJT process. Such reflection enabled them to re-think various aspects of their process and make improvements.
9. The majority of those interviewed had no suggestions to change the program. If called upon to participate in future Peer-to-Peer sessions, some interest was expressed by Learning Team staff to

serve in the role of coach. Those who had suggestions for future Peer-to-Peer programs, offered such ideas as:

- a. Changing the timeline to occur at the beginning of the OJT NEG grant period rather than towards the end.
- b. Improving the relevancy by devoting more time to analyze the performance gap of the Learning Team and then developing content and learning experiences directly focused on the training need.
- c. Exploring alternative delivery methods, such as videoconferencing.

Feedback obtained from telephone interviews – Employers

1. Overall, the opinions expressed by the employers interviewed towards the OJT NEG program were largely favorable.
 - a. Recent interactions with workforce staff, both workforce specialists and local staff, were positive. In a few instances, employers indicated a very high level of satisfaction when dealing with the business service representative. When any mention of dissatisfaction was made, it was in reference to situations that occurred in the past and were not representative of the more positive interactions now experienced by the employer.
 - b. The OJT program itself received high marks from those interviewed. Some employers remarked about the value the program brings to the state of Ohio. Others noted the incentive the OJT program provides employers when hiring.
 - c. Rather than holding negative perceptions about government programs, employers indicated satisfaction and surprise at the effectiveness of the program, with one individual calling the program “atypical” and another stating the program is “very, very beneficial, more beneficial than most.”
 - d. Some employers expressed surprise at the minimal amount of paperwork involved. Most of the employers felt the paperwork process was simple and easy.
 - For the most part, once employers were introduced to the program and were provided high levels of support by the workforce representative or team, the employers viewed the process as easy and straightforward, with one individual calling it “employer-friendly.”
 - This opinion was not shared by all those interviewed, with one employer regarding the initial encounter with paperwork as “horrible.” A specific criticism was raised noting the absence of helpful instructions on various forms required in the OJT program. When support from the workforce staff is weak, the employers struggle with the process and develop more negative attitudes. Weak support from workforce staff also resulted in employers submitting forms only to be told to fill out additional forms, increasing the employer’s level of frustration and dissatisfaction.
2. All of the employers interviewed indicated they found out about the OJT program through some form of personal interaction, as distinguished from outreach methods such as advertising, billboards, newspaper articles, etc. Viewed differently, what employers remember foremost – regardless of the outreach techniques used by a local workforce office – is their personal contact with workforce staff.
 - a. A few employers took the initiative to contact the local workforce agency or One-Stop when a need for hiring arose. They did not recall how they learned of the agency.

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- b. Several employers indicated they learned about the program as a result of being contacted by a local workforce staff member or workforce specialist [employers were typically unaware of the difference between the two roles].
 - c. Some employers found out about the program through the networking of the company's executive(s). In one instance it was a county commissioner suggesting OJT to the executive. Word-of-mouth among executives and attending business luncheons were other sources mentioned.
 - d. Another source for employers was finding out about the program through contact with employees of either their own company or of other organizations.
3. Opinions were mixed regarding how well employers understood the goals and benefits of OJT NEG when hiring the new employee.
 - a. Some employers expressed ease in understanding the basic points and procedures of the program. Those who felt this way also indicated they had workforce representatives who explained each step thoroughly and effectively.
 - b. Some employers stated they lacked understanding in the initial stages of the OJT, but they were just as quick to point out they were, themselves, busy with other tasks or that they failed to ask more probing questions, especially in light of the program details that need to be communicated. As such, they were more forgiving of the lack of understanding in the beginning.
 - c. A few employers found the initial level of understanding about the program problematic. To some extent, inadequate support from the workforce staff was associated with an employer's difficulty in understanding the goals, procedures, and benefits of the program.
4. Employer reluctance about the OJT NEG program consisted mainly of dealing with the unknowns – what the program will entail, what kind of constraints are involved, whether or not production will have to stop during monitoring, what can be done with unsatisfactory employees, and so forth. On the other hand, about half the employers interviewed expressed having no reluctance about the program.
5. The quality of employees obtained through OJT NEG gets mixed reviews from employers. That said, it should be noted that employers considered the quality of OJT hires to be comparable to that of their other hires – some winners, some not.
 - a. Over half the employers interviewed voiced favorable opinions about the quality of OJT hires. Companies that referred their own candidates to the local agency for OJT eligibility screening noted that they expected good quality, since the candidate already met their requirements.
 - b. In instances where employees were terminated or quit, it was not regarded as disproportionate for their company's workforce experience.
6. Some suggestions were offered by employers to help workforce agencies overcome any perceived stigma attached to hiring a person through OJT. A few employers even struggled with offering a suggestion because they had difficulty even identifying with such a stigma.
 - a. One employer felt the reimbursement of an employee's training costs becomes an incentive to hire because it provides a form of insurance against the risk of making an incorrect hiring decision, something not available in the normal hiring process. To this employer, the OJT

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- NEG program, by minimizing the risk, is exactly what turns a negative stigma into a positive and makes the program work for the employer.
- b. Another employer felt strongly that the problem rests in the fact that local businesses don't use the program simply because they don't know about it. One strategy is to emphasize the program's benefits and how they help the employer as much as they help the employee.
7. When asked what difficulties were encountered with the OJT NEG process, most employers indicated there was no problem at all, regarding the program largely as user-friendly. One employer remarked that the program was "a completely different experience from what I was expecting." Three areas of improvement were cited:
- a. In instances in which the OJT employee leaves the company before the end of the OJT contract period, the employer is left with a level of frustration that may go beyond the fact they lose the funding. The question asked is "What can be done to get a higher level of commitment on the part of the employee to stay with the employer?"
 - b. While some workforce staff provide exceptional service and support throughout the entire OJT NEG process, quality service is not evenly distributed across the statewide system. When employers are mailed or handed a packet of forms, one employer suggested that the packet and forms contain more specific and useful instructions for those who are totally unfamiliar with the process, the requirements of the program, and the procedures for properly completing the forms.
 - c. A comment was made regarding difficulty in working with the OhioMeansJobs website and the problem of entering wages that are not the typical hourly wage rate. This made it more difficult for the employer using the website to search for qualified candidates.
8. More employers invoice monthly for OJT reimbursement than do employers who invoice at the midpoint or at the end of contract. A few employers expressed preference for the monthly invoicing because they feel it is simpler and improves cash flow. This was not a universal preference, as some employers liked the midpoint and/or end of contract format, again for what they regarded as that particular format's simplicity.

Feedback obtained from online survey results

Responses from Workforce Specialists (including Veterans Representatives)

1. Data for the Workforce Specialist version of the online survey were collected on two different locations of the SurveyMonkey website in order to assist in analyzing differences between individuals designated as “High Performers” and individuals designated as “Other.” The data tables accompanying each feedback summary below offer a side-by-side comparison of how the High Performer and Other groups responded to a survey question.

2. A total of sixteen respondents completed the survey version for workforce specialists. Six of the respondents had been identified as High Performers by State WIA Staff, with the ten remaining respondents identified as Other staff. Workforce specialists and veterans representatives were represented approximately in the same proportion for both the High Performer group and for the Other respondents. In terms of experience marketing OJT’s, High Performers had the same number of individuals with less than one year of experience compared to the Other group, but they had fewer respondents with five or more years’ experience.

Figure 3 - Position Title of Respondent [Survey Question 1]

Position	Hi-Perf - State		Other - State	
	N	%	N	%
a. Workforce Specialist	4	0.67	6	0.60
b. Veterans Representative	2	0.33	4	0.40
c. Other (please specify)	0	0.00	0	0.00

Figure 4 – Years Experience Marketing OJT’s [Survey Question 2]

Years Marketing OJT’s	Hi-Perf - State		Other - State	
	N	%	N	%
a. Less than one year	2	0.33	2	.20
b. 1-4 years	2	0.33	3	.30
c. 5 or more years	2	0.33	5	.50

3. Of the nine OJT outreach techniques listed in the survey, data suggest that High Performers generally relied less on these techniques during the previous six months than did the Other respondents. The notable exception is that High Performers used the weekly lists provided by the State WIA Staff more than did the Other group. The Other group relied on mailing information letters or literature to a greater extent than did the High Performers group, perhaps a reflection of the High Performer group’s preference for face-to-face interaction as reported in the telephone interviews.

Figure 5 – Use of OJT Outreach Techniques [Survey Question 3]

Outreach Technique	Hi-Perf - State		Other - State	
	N	%	N	%
a. Cold call visit to potential employers	3	0.50	6	0.60
b. Telephone calls to employers	4	0.67	7	0.70
c. Contact existing or previous OJT customers	3	0.50	5	0.50
d. Mailing information letter or literature	1	0.17	6	0.60
e. E-mail information to employers	4	0.67	9	0.90
f. Networking with other agencies	3	0.50	8	0.80
g. Speaking to local business or civic organizations	3	0.50	9	0.90
h. Contact employers from weekly lists provided by State WIA Staff	3	0.50	3	0.30
i. Encouraging job seekers to promote OJT to employers	4	0.67	9	0.90
j. Did not use outreach for OJT NEG	0	0.00	0	0.00

4. In terms of how respondents ranked the effectiveness of various outreach techniques, High Performers ranked the weekly lists provided by the State WIA Staff as the most effective technique, whereas the Other group ranked speaking to local business/civic organizations and emailing information to employers as their most effective techniques. High Performers, too, ranked emailing information to employers as an effective tool.

Figure 6 – Top 3 Ranked OJT Outreach Techniques [Survey Question 4]

Item Outreach Technique	Hi-Perf – State Number of people giving a rank of -			Other – State Number of people giving a rank of -		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
a. Cold call visit to potential employers	0	0	1	0	0	2
b. Telephone calls to employers	0	2	0	2	1	1
c. Contact existing or previous OJT customers	0	0	1	2	2	0
d. Mailing informational letter or literature	0	0	0	2	2	0
e. E-mail information to employers	2	1	2	1	3	2
f. Networking with other agencies	0	0	0	0	1	1
g. Speaking to local business or civic organizations	0	1	1	3	0	3
h. Contact individuals from weekly lists provided by State WIA Staff	3	0	0	1	0	0
i. Encouraging job seekers to promote OJT	0	1	0	0	0	1
j. Other (As described in question 3k)	0	0	0	0	0	0

Ranking scale: 1 = most effective, 2 = next most effective, 3 = third most effective

5. When it comes to taking action steps to follow-up on OJT outreach efforts during the past six months, High Performers were more expansive in reporting the number and variety of things they did compared to the Other group. It is not clear from this study whether the difference is due to an actual difference in taking action or whether the difference lies in one group’s greater ability to recall and articulate their thoughts. [This might suggest that the ability to clearly articulate thoughts is a competency that separates high performance from other performance levels.]
- a. Both groups of respondents indicate the use of phone calls and emails as a means to follow-up with employers, though the High Performers provided evidence of a somewhat more

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

systematic approach to the task. Likewise, both groups list visits to the employer locations as a means for follow-up. Respondents in both groups identified ways in which they performed tasks that facilitate the OJT process during employer visits. The High Performers also expressed the importance of building customer relations and remaining “open” to meeting with employers anytime.

- b. Both groups cited instances of collaborating with system partners and promoting the OJT NEG program through such methods as the Chamber of Commerce, local radio programs, flyers, and others.
 - c. High performers additionally listed other follow-up action steps, including participating in Job Fairs and OJT Workshops, providing job seekers with information, and continually finding ways to streamline the OJT process for employers.
6. There was a significant difference between the two groups of workforce specialists in terms of rating the value of the resources provided by State WIA Staff during the past six months. High Performers rated the Weekly Employer Outreach List, the OJT Brochure, and the OJT Procedures Manual in the Good-to-Excellent range of scores. The Other group did not rate any resource in the Good-to-Excellent range. The resource rated lowest by both groups was the OMJ Resume Board (the 158+ days list).
- a. High Performers indicated the weekly outreach list was helpful; whereas, one Other group respondent was not aware such a list existed.
 - b. One High Performer respondent described a checklist/folder created for each OJT employer that enable the employer to better track what steps had been accomplished and what steps are yet to be completed in the OJT process. The folder contained all the necessary papers and contact information, and it showed how the OJT NEG had less paperwork than previous programs.

Figure 7 – Perceived Value of Resources Provided by State WIA Staff [Survey Question 6]

	Hi-Perf - State	Other - State
Resources provided by State WIA Staff	Ave. (N = 5)	Ave. (N = 9)
a. Weekly Employer Outreach List	4.50	3.29
b. OMJ Resume Board (the 158+ days list)	2.75	2.17
c. OJT Brochure	4.40	3.67
d. Visits to SHRM Chapters	3.50	3.33
e. OJT Procedures Manual	4.40	3.44

Rating Scale: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Average, 2 = Poor, 1 = Very Poor

7. The results of SHRM Chapter Presentations show no clear pattern between the two groups of workforce specialists. It is evident, however, that in at least some cases, respondents attributed OJT’s to SHRM presentations.

Figure 8 – OJT Results from SHRM Chapter Presentations [Survey Question 8]

	Hi-Perf - State		Other - State	
OJT Results	N	%	N	%
a. A SHRM presentation was not scheduled in my area	1	0.20	0	0.00
b. I don’t know the results	0	0.00	1	0.14
c. No OJT’s resulted from the presentation	2	0.40	3	0.43
d. 1 to 2 OJT’s	2	0.40	1	0.14
e. 3 or more OJT’s	0	0.00	2	0.29

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

8. Interestingly, High Performers expressed having difficulties that affected their OJT outreach activities to a greater extent than did the Other group. The most prevalent difficulties include:
- Use of the OhioMeansJobs website;
 - NEG eligibility requirements made it difficult to obtain candidates for employers;
 - The low level of support from local One-Stops and other county agencies

Figure 9 – Difficulties Encountered that Affected OJT Outreach [Survey Question 9]

Difficulties Encountered	Hi-Perf - State		Other - State	
	N	%	N	%
a. Yes	4	0.80	3	0.33
b. No	1	0.20	6	0.67

9. State procedures did not appear to be a hindrance to either group of workforce specialists in marketing OJT’s, with the exception of one High Performer respondent. For the most part, respondents regarded the state’s procedures as a decided factor in making the OJT NEG program more streamlined and easy to promote. One respondent dissented, describing the state procedures as cumbersome.

Figure 10 – Did State Procedures Hinder Ability to Market OJT’s [Survey Question 10]

Hindered by Procedures	Hi-Perf - State		Other - State	
	N	%	N	%
a. Yes	1	0.20	0	0.00
b. No	4	0.80	9	1.00

10. The value of support offered by the State WIA Staff during the past six months was perceived differently by the two groups of workforce specialists. In each of the response choices, High Performers rated the items higher than did the Other responders. High Performers rated six out of eight types of support Good-to-Excellent; the Other group gave a Good-to-Excellent rating in three out of the eight items. The type of support that has the widest rating difference is “Timeliness of information and support offered to you.” The High Performer group gave this type of support its highest rating; whereas the Other group rated it in the Average-to-Good range. The type of support regarded the weakest, by both groups of respondents, was “Amount of information about job seekers.” Both groups rated this item in the Poor-to-Average range.

Figure 11 – Perceived Value of Support Offered by State WIA Staff [Survey Question 11]

Support offered by State WIA Staff	Hi-Perf - State	Other - State
	Ave. (N = 5)	Ave. (N = 9)
a. Amount of information about OJT policy	4.40	4.11
b. Amount of information about employers	3.80	3.13
c. Amount of information about job seekers	2.80	2.43
d. Amount of information about OJT procedures	4.40	4.11
e. Access to OJT forms and documents	4.80	4.33
f. Learning opportunities available to you (such as webinars, weekly teleconference, etc.)	4.40	4.11
g. Timeliness of information and support offered to you	4.80	3.89
h. Availability of State WIA Staff to assist you in marketing OJT’s	4.00	3.33

Rating Scale: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Average, 2 = Poor, 1 = Very Poor

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

11. There are commonalities between the two groups of workforce specialists in terms of how they perceive factors that affect their ability to successfully market OJT NEG to employers. Both groups identified the screening process of job seekers as important. Likewise, the extent to which the process is streamlined was a factor in both groups. High Performers appreciated the process of working through the independent fiscal unit. On the other hand, respondents in the Other group reported having to deal with processes that varied county-by-county. A third important factor mentioned was common to both groups – the level of knowledge possessed about the OJT NEG program.
12. The kinds of support offered by the State WIA Staff during the OJT NEG program was generally well-received by respondents. Mention was made of the marketing brochure/materials and the training. Many respondents appreciated the quick response, access to State WIA Staff, and easy processing of forms as factors they liked. High Performers expressed some dissatisfaction with the job seeker screening process.
13. Both groups of workforce specialists regarded face-to-face visits with employers as a best practice. High Performers stressed the value of making the OJT NEG process as simple as possible for employers. Also, High Performers seemed to express a higher degree of persistence in establishing a relationship with employers.
14. What did not work for workforce specialists? Both groups remarked about the problem that resulted with offering to find eligible OJT NEG applicants for prospective employers. Some respondents, instead, found it more effective to tell the employer to refer their applicants to the WIA staff for subsequent screening.
15. When asked what new competencies were gained by workforce specialists resulting from the OJT NEG program, responses included:
 - a. Increased knowledge/understanding of employers and job seekers
 - b. Improved knowledge about the OJT contract/process and SCOTI system
 - c. Improved team building and project management skills
 - d. Greater level of self-confidence

Responses from Local Workforce Staff

1. A total of 47 respondents completed the survey version for local workforce staff. Six of the respondents had been identified as High Performers by State WIA Staff, with the 41 remaining respondents identified as Other staff. More than half the respondents (24) represented Local Workforce Area 7 [see Table 19, page 84 and Table 30, page 91]. Respondents came from 36 out of 88 counties, with Union and Mahoning counties each having 3 respondents. More than half (24) of the Other group had five or more years of experience marketing OJT's, whereas, the majority of High Performers had from one to four years of experience.

Figure 12 – Years Experience Marketing OJT’s [Survey Question 3]

Years Marketing OJT’s	Hi-Perf - Local		Other - Local	
	N	%	N	%
a. Less than one year	0	0.00	5	0.12
b. 1-4 years	5	0.83	12	0.29
c. 5 or more years	1	0.17	24	0.59

- Of the nine OJT outreach techniques listed in the survey, High Performers tended to encourage job seekers to promote OJT’s and use emails to send information to employers. The Other group tended to rely on networking with other agencies as well as calling or emailing employers for their outreach activities. The most notable difference between the two groups of respondents is that the Other group reported using cold call visits to employers more than did the High Performer group. When combined, both groups were least likely to use the weekly lists provided by the State WIA Staff.

Figure 13 – Use of OJT Outreach Techniques [Survey Question 4]

Outreach Technique	Hi-Perf - Local		Other - Local	
	N	%	N	%
a. Cold call visit to potential employers	0	0.00	15	0.37
b. Telephone calls to employers	3	0.50	26	0.63
c. Contact existing or previous OJT customers	3	0.50	21	0.51
d. Mailing information letter or literature	3	0.50	18	0.44
e. E-mail information to employers	5	0.83	26	0.63
f. Networking with other agencies	3	0.50	27	0.66
g. Speaking to local business or civic organizations	3	0.50	20	0.49
h. Contact employers from weekly lists provided by State WIA Staff	0	0.00	4	0.10
i. Encouraging job seekers to promote OJT to employers	5	0.83	26	0.63
j. Did not use outreach for OJT NEG	1	0.17	1	0.02

- Additional outreach activities used by local workforce staff include interacting with Chambers and other business organizations, contacting employers when jobs are posted, and advertising on various media.
- High Performers among the local workforce staff did not rank any particular outreach technique higher than others. They did, however, give no Top 3 ranking for cold call visits or for mailing information letters or information as effective outreach techniques. The OJT outreach techniques ranked highest by Other respondents include contacting existing/previous OJT customers, emailing to employers, and encouraging job seekers to promote OJT’s.

Figure 14 – Top 3 Ranked OJT Outreach Techniques [Survey Question 5]

Outreach Technique	Hi-Perf – Local Number of people giving a rank of -			Other – Local Number of people giving a rank of -		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
a. Cold call visit to potential employers	0	0	0	2	2	2
b. Telephone calls to employers	1	0	0	4	5	3
c. Contact existing or previous OJT customers	1	0	0	11	4	3
d. Mailing information letter or literature	0	0	0	1	1	1
e. E-mail information to employers	0	1	1	1	5	9
f. Networking with other agencies	1	0	1	2	3	4
g. Speaking to local business or civic organizations	1	0	1	4	5	1
h. Contact employers from weekly lists provided by State WIA Staff	0	1	0	2	1	0
i. Encouraging job seekers to promote OJT to employers	0	2	1	5	2	6
j. Other (as described on 4k)	1	1	1	4	2	2

Ranking scale: 1 = most effective, 2 = next most effective, 3 = third most effective

5. There appears to be a difference in terms of the techniques used by the local workforce offices to market OJT's to job seekers. Viewed as a whole, offices of the High Performers use the outreach techniques proportionately more than the offices of the Other group. In particular, High Performers used the OJT Brochure, OJT Workshops for job seekers, and print media to a greater extent than did the Other group's offices. The Other group cited additional techniques such as presentations during orientation, use of workforce specialists in the area, and interaction with Chambers, Economic Development offices, and HR organizations.

Figure 15 – Use of OJT Outreach Techniques by Local Agency [Survey Question 6]

Outreach Technique	Hi-Perf - Local		Other - Local	
	N	%	N	%
a. Billboards	1	0.17	4	0.10
b. Radio/TV	2	0.33	9	0.22
c. Print (newspaper, newsletters, etc.)	4	0.67	17	0.41
d. Online. social media, website	2	0.33	16	0.39
e. OJT Brochure	6	1.00	26	0.63
f. Promotional campaign through One-Stop partners	3	0.50	13	0.32
g. OJT workshops conducted in One-Stop	4	0.67	8	0.20
h. My agency did not market OJT's to job seekers	0	0.00	1	0.02
i. Other (please describe, limit 150 characters)	0	0.00	0	0.00

6. A variety of techniques were considered Best Practices in terms of promoting OJT's to employers during the past six months.
 - a. Both groups of respondents felt that action taken to build strong relationships with employers was important. Responding quickly, providing additional service, assisting in paperwork, and similar actions were examples cited by the groups.
 - b. Both groups stressed the importance of simplifying the way the OJT NEG program is explained to employers. High Performers further pointed out the effort to simplify the overall OJT process as a Best Practice.

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

- c. Several respondents of the Other group mentioned face-to-face visits to employers as a Best Practice, and some respondents in the group suggested they tend to deal with a company’s Human Resource staff, though it is not clear this is regarded as a Best Practice.
7. The level of support provided by their business support team or One-Stop partners is perceived differently by the two groups. High Performers rated the support they receive in the Good-to-Excellent range. The Other respondents rated the level of support in the Average-to-Good range.

Figure 16 – Support Provided by Business Service Team or One-Stop Partners [Survey Question 8]

	Hi-Perf - Local	Other - Local
Level of Business Service/One-Stop Support	Ave. (N = 6)	Ave. (N = 33)
Very substantial support [5]		
Considerable support [4]		
Moderate support [3]	4.33	3.73
Limited support [2]		
No support at all [1]		

8. A number of follow-up action steps were identified by both groups. Most importantly, both groups reported continued contact with employers as part of their outreach efforts, sending brochures, making phone calls, sending emails. Respondents of the Other group cited additional action steps such as keeping an updated list of interested employers, using Constant Contact to email electronic brochures, media advertising, interacting with state staff and local One-Stop staff, use of job seekers in promoting OJT, and others.
9. The perceived value of resources provided by State WIA Staff during the past six months was essentially the same for each group of local workforce staffs. The OJT Brochure and OJT Procedure Manual were rated slightly higher than were the series of webinars and the information provided on the OJT webpage. All four resources were rated Good-to-Excellent by both groups. The resource with the lowest rating in both groups was the OMJ Resume Board list, which had an Average-to-Good rating.
- a. Respondents, in general, expressed wide use of the OJT Brochure and referred to several specific uses of both the Brochure and the Procedures Manual. Both groups expressed less satisfactory experiences with the OMJ Resume Board, noting technical problems in dealing with the site.
 - b. Some respondents in the Other group indicated the webinars presented by the State WIA Staff were beneficial for developing staff and for sharing resources from other areas.

Figure 17 – Perceived Value of Resources Provided by State WIA Staff [Survey Question 10]

	Hi-Perf - Local	Other - Local
Resources provided by State WIA Staff	Ave. (N = 6)	Ave. (N = 32)
a. Series of webinars presented by State WIA Staff	4.17	4.00
b. Information provided on the OJT webpage and online PowerPoint slide presentation	4.00	4.09
c. OMJ Resume Board (the 158+ days list)	3.60	3.50
d. OJT Brochure created by the State WIA Staff	4.33	4.31
e. OJT Procedures Manual	4.33	4.20

Rating Scale: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Average, 2 = Poor, 1 = Very Poor

10. Workshops presented by Strader Taylor and John Chamberlin received Average-to-Good ratings by those who attended in both groups. A number of individuals in each group marked “Did not Use” and were not calculated in the average scores.

Figure 18 – Perceived Value of Resources Provided by State WIA Staff [Survey Question 12]

	Hi-Perf - Local	Other - Local
Resources provided by State WIA Staff	Ave. (N = 6)	Ave. (N = 31)
a. Workshop on "Selling OJTs to Employers" presented by Strader Taylor, November 2011	3.67	3.59
b. Workshop on "Implementing OJT in Ohio's Workforce Development System" presented by John Chamberlin, October and November, 2010	4.00	3.78

Rating Scale: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Average, 2 = Poor, 1 = Very Poor

11. Unlike the results found in the Workforce Specialist version of the survey, the High Performer group reported having little difficulty when marketing OJT NEG during the past six months. Respondents of the Other group were more evenly split in feeling they encountered difficulty when marketing OJT’s. Among the difficulties encountered:
- Employer confusion over various OJT programs and duplication of forms.
 - The timeline given for the OJT NEG period, specifically the lack of time to develop and implement the program at the local level.
 - Lack of resources/capacity at the local level (inadequate staffing, money for advertising).
 - Respondents in the Other group were far more likely to cite employer reluctance as a difficulty they encountered, including the attitudes and receptivity of employers to work with a government program, reticence towards working with the unemployed, comparative quality of hires, etc.

Figure 19 – Difficulties Encountered that Affected OJT Outreach [Survey Question 13]

Difficulties Encountered	Hi-Perf - Local		Other - Local	
	N	%	N	%
a. Yes	2	0.33	14	0.48
b. No	4	0.67	15	0.52

12. Respondents in both groups generally rated the support they received from the State WIA Staff during the past six months favorably. High Performers rated the value of seven out of eight types of support in the Good-to-Excellent range; the Other group rated six out of eight items in that same range. The type of support rated lowest, by both groups, was “Amount of information about employers”, which was rated as Average-to-Good. The type of support that showed the widest difference between groups of respondents was “Availability of State WIA Staff to assist in marketing OJT’s.” High performers rated the item in the Good-to-Excellent range; the Other group rated it Average-to-Good.

Figure 20 – Perceived Value of Support Offered by State WIA Staff [Survey Question 14]

	Hi-Perf - Local	Other - Local
Support offered by State WIA Staff	Ave. (N = 5)	Ave. (N = 31)
a. Amount of information about OJT policy	4.50	4.20
b. Amount of information about employers	3.00	3.61
c. Amount of information about job seekers	4.00	3.64
d. Amount of information about OJT procedures	4.67	4.21
e. Access to OJT forms and documents	4.00	4.59
f. Learning opportunities available to you (webinars, weekly teleconference, etc.)	4.25	4.24
g. Timeliness of information and support offered to you	4.75	4.25
h. Availability of State WIA Staff to assist you in marketing OJT's	4.50	3.68

Rating Scale: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Average, 2 = Poor, 1 = Very Poor

13. While respondents in both groups cited specific individuals at the State WIA Staff who provided support, there was, at the same time, a level of confusion about what constitutes the State WIA Staff. In particular, there may be uncertainty about whether or not the workforce specialists assigned to the areas around the state are considered part of the State WIA Staff. That said, some Other group respondents commented favorably on the support received from workforce specialists who assisted with employer contacts. Other types of support receiving favorable comments from the Other group respondents concerned the timeliness of response from the State WIA Staff, the answers to questions, and the quality of information offered.

14. Several respondents offered suggestions for improving the marketing of OJT NEG:
 - a. One commenter expressed a desire for more clarity/information on what the state expects to have included in training outlines and in determining appropriate length of training.
 - b. Citing the unique differences that exist in smaller, rural counties, one respondent desires more relevant examples that can be presented in the webinars.
 - c. Echoing some of the concern voiced by the WIB Directors, another respondent mentioned the need for greater clarity in roles and coordination with the workforce specialists.

Recommendations

The most salient learning point from the findings is that best practices were as much a product of attitudinal as they are procedural reasons. Clearly, top performers are singularly focused on serving the employer. Similarly, local offices that operate with a business services paradigm – one that is employer-responsive – tend to have the greatest success with OJT NEG. In both individual and organizational instances, high performance results are directly associated with workforce professionals who *sincerely want to exceed the expectations of their employer customers* and continually find ways to strengthen the relationships and streamline processes towards that end.

Individuals, as well as local offices, that “don’t get it” often have no clear models at their disposal from which they can learn to transform their way of doing things. Perhaps that is why the Peer-to-Peer Coaching program had such a profound impact on the less experienced workforce professionals participating in the program. Accordingly, some of the recommendations below suggest the creation of models by which individuals and local workforce offices can learn from.

1. *Develop a competency model for workforce staff that can be made available to workforce professionals throughout the state.* A competency model depicts the best practices and key competencies (skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, values, and other characteristics) found in those who perform at an exceptional level. The model could aid WIB Directors in assigning people to positions critical to building employer relations. A variety of methods could be considered for the design of the model and for making it accessible to workforce staff, such as videoconferencing, informational guides, video clips posted on the OMJ website, peer-to-peer coaching, and others.
2. *Develop a model OJT Workshop for Job Seekers.* Those local workforce areas using this technique were vocal in their enthusiasm for it. By creating a model of best practices for an OJT Workshop for Job Seekers, local offices can more quickly and competently adopt the technique. It was evident that some of the Learning Teams in the Peer-to-Peer Coaching program were unaware of the OJT Workshop concept. A model would be helpful when spreading information about the program across the workforce system.
3. *Extend the Peer-to-Peer Coaching Program to other WIBs and into other key programs.* Restrictions on travel notwithstanding, having connections with local workforce areas who have best practices – in any operational concern – has the potential for strengthening the overall system, efficiently and effectively. The Peer-to-Peer Coaching Program can be developed further and applied to OJT NEG and other critical areas. Ideas for expanding the technique include conducting workshops for training more facilitators, development of a Coach/Learner/Facilitator user guide (either in print or perhaps even some multi-media alternatives), and consideration of other mediation of content (such as web-based and mobile learning delivery).
4. *Improve coordination and clarify roles between workforce specialists and the local workforce offices.* Whereas workforce specialists were, indeed, effective component in the OJT NEG program, some WIB Directors and local workforce staff pointed out issues that can be improved through better coordination, especially in the beginning stages of a program.
5. *Bring more consistency across counties in terms of paperwork and other requirements of OJT NEG.* Some workforce staff pointed out that the difference in processing some kinds of paperwork varied by weeks in neighboring counties. Employers facing a hiring delay of

weeks by virtue of being in a slower county jeopardizes both the chance of using OJT NEG and the future relationship with that employer. Along these lines, encourage county offices and One-Stops to adopt continuous process improvement methods to streamline paperwork and make OJT NEG more employer-focused.

6. *Improve the flow of job seeker information to workforce staff.* In both the interviews and online survey results, comments were made about the accessibility and usefulness of job seeker information. Some individuals were not aware of lists such as the Weekly Employer Outreach List or OMJ Resume Board; some respondents were troubled by the technical issues encountered on the OMJ NEG tab; and some workforce staff were frustrated at the inefficiency involved with finding qualified individuals from the job seeker list due to outdated information.

Part of this improvement process may consist of an exploration into whether the information structure should be aimed at a *push* strategy (with emphasis on how workforce staff need and use the information), a *pull* strategy (with emphasis on how the information structure can best benefit the needs of the employer, as happens in “reverse referral” instances), or both.

Appendix

Appendix A – Sample Email Invitations to Participate

From: NEG <NEG@jfs.ohio.gov>
Subject: OJT NEG Best Practices Focus Group Discussion Meeting
Date: June 5, 2012 12:56:48 PM EDT
To:

Dear WIB Directors:

Over the past year, our WIBs made a concerted effort to increase the number of OJTs funded through the National Emergency Grant. This effort resulted in an extraordinary increase during the past few months, due in large measure to the support of our WIB Directors.

I now invite you to be an important part of an evaluation study with the goal of identifying OJT Best Practices. By sharing your unique knowledge and experience as a Director, OWD can uncover ways to improve the overall OJT process and create an inventory of the most effective techniques used statewide.

Our plan is to conduct a small focus group of highly-engaged WIB directors' discussion during the lunch hour of the next Director's Meeting in Columbus on June 20th from 12:05 PM to 12:50 PM at room A110. The focus group discussion will last 45 minutes and will be led by Carol Wargo and Russ Brock, of Wargo-Brock Workforce Dimensions LLC.

The entire evaluation study will be summarized in a report and include data gathered from the focus group, online surveys, and interviews with employers and job seekers.

Please let me know if you can participate in the focus group by responding to this e-mail. By sharing your knowledge and experience, you will play an important role in helping improve the way we market and use OJT's when solving the needs of Ohio's employers and job seekers.

Also, we are willing to place an order to Benny's, a local caterer, if you do not wish to bring a lunch. Benny's menu is attached, all priced at \$5.00, and exact change is greatly appreciated.

Ron Weber Section Chief, WIA Program Management

From: NEG <NEG@jfs.ohio.gov>
Subject: OJT NEG Best Practices Survey
Date: June 5, 2012 4:17:41 PM EDT
To:

Thank you for your valuable work during the recent OJT National Emergency Grant effort. The results were impressive and helped Ohio meet and exceed our OJT goals.

The Office of Workforce Development invites you now to help us evaluate the OJT NEG by completing a short online survey. This is your opportunity to share your knowledge, experience, and opinions in a way that will benefit workforce professionals throughout Ohio.

The link below will direct you to the survey, which will take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The open dates for completing the survey are between June 5 and June 15, 2012.

The responses you provide will be confidential and will be used to improve the way we market and use OJT's when solving the needs of Ohio's employers and job seekers. One practical outcome will be the creation of an OJT Best Practices inventory to help us all achieve more successful results.

I encourage you to participate in the survey today and am confident the results will offer great insight into improving OJT NEG in the future.

Click on the link below to begin the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/OJT_NEG_Survey_Local_Staff

Ron Weber Section Chief, WIA Program Management

Appendix B – Questions for Focus Group Discussion with WIB Directors

1. In recalling what your local agency has done with OJT NEG during the past six months, are there specific areas you could identify as Best Practices? – things where your local system or staff consistently produces superior results in offering OJT's to employers and job seekers?
2. To what extent would you recommend this OJT Best Practice serve as a benchmark for other WIB's throughout the state? Why or why not?
3. In what kinds of situations or circumstances does your agency and staff members seem to be most successful in your OJT outreach efforts? For example, are there characteristics about employers, job seekers, your staff's ability, the local business conditions, etc. that seem to make the likelihood greater for success for your OJT outreach? In what ways do these situations or circumstances differ from what you might otherwise consider the "norm"?
4. What OJT outreach techniques do you use that might be considered unusual when compared to other WIB's?
5. When it comes to marketing OJT's in your area, what competencies (that is, what knowledge, skills, abilities, values, attitudes, thought processes, or other characteristics) seem to be possessed by local staff members who are regarded as Hi-Performers?
6. What factors or problems did your local agency encounter during the past six months that made the OJT NEG outreach effort more difficult? What was done, if anything, to overcome these difficulties?

System Processes in Support of OJT NEG

7. When looking at some of the options that have been available, not every local agency participated in OJT NEG or used such things as wrap around monies, additional outreach monies, or Peer-to-Peer coaching. What might be some reasons why these options would not be used by local agencies?
8. Many managers are familiar with the concept of a dashboard that shows the critical performance measures of an organization. What would be on your dashboard if you were measuring and managing the overall effectiveness of OJT NEG? What benchmark distinguishes excellence vs. other levels of performance?
9. How frequently did your agency invoice employers for OJT's? Monthly? Midpoint? At the end of the OJT? Why did you choose this option?

Appendix C – Sample Telephone Script

Employers

Good morning / afternoon.

Could I speak with (Mr. / Ms.) _____ please?

When would be a good time to contact him / her?

Is there someone else who would be aware of your employees who were part of the On-the-job Training Program through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services?

My name is _____ with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Am I pronouncing your name correctly?

You recently hired an employee through our On-the-Job Training Program and your local One-Stop agency, and I'd like a few moments for a follow-up survey. Would you be able to answer a few questions now or would it be better to call back at a later time?

When would be a convenient time to call back?

If you don't mind, I'll put you on speakerphone so I can jot down some notes while we talk.

I should add that the questions are mostly general, and I'll use your remarks only to prepare a general summary about the OJT program so that our state office can continue to improve it. You will not be identified in any of the feedback that appears in the final report.

High Performers

Could I speak with (Mr. / Ms.) _____ please?

When would be a good time to call back?

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm working with Ron Weber and the State WIA staff to evaluate the OJT/National Emergency Grant during the past year.

Am I pronouncing your name correctly?

You had a great deal of success with OJT's this year, and we think some of your experience could be considered a Best Practice. Would you be able to answer a few questions now or would it be better to call back at a later time?

When would be a convenient time to call back?

If you don't mind, I'll put you on speakerphone so I can jot down some notes while we talk.

I should add that the questions are mostly general. I'll use your remarks only to prepare a general summary about the OJT program so that our state office can continue to improve it in the future. You will not be identified in any of the feedback that appears in the final report.

Voice Mail Message

Hi, (Mr. / Ms.) _____

My name is Russ Brock, and I'm working with Ron Weber with the State WIA staff to evaluate the OJT NEG program this past year.

Ron indicated the way you were successful with OJT's might be a Best Practice and we'd like you to share some of your ideas about what you do, so that we can continue to improve the program.

I'll call back another time and maybe we can take a few minutes to talk.

Hope to talk to you soon. Thank you.

Appendix D – Questions for Telephone Interviews – High Performers

1. In recalling what you did with OJT NEG during the past six months, are there specific areas you could identify as Best Practices? – things where you were able to consistently produce superior results in offering OJT's to employers and job seekers?
2. To what extent would you recommend this OJT Best Practice serve as a benchmark or model for other workforce staff throughout the state? Why or why not?
3. In what kinds of situations or circumstances seem to be most successful when you sell OJT's? For example, are there characteristics about employers, job seekers, your agency's ability, the local business conditions, etc. that seem to make selling OJT's more successful? In what ways do these situations or circumstances differ from what you might otherwise consider the "norm"?
4. What approaches or techniques of selling/promoting OJT's do you use that might be considered unusual when compared to other workforce professionals?
5. When it comes to selling/promoting OJT's in your area, what competencies (that is, what knowledge, skills, abilities, values, attitudes, thought processes, or other characteristics) seem to be most critical to your success?
6. What factors or problems, if any, did you encounter during the past six months that made selling OJT's more difficult? What did you do, if anything, to overcome these difficulties?
7. What suggestions can you offer to the State WIA Staff to improve your effectiveness in marketing OJT's in the future?

Appendix E – Questions for Telephone Interviews – Peer-to-Peer Coaching Participants

1. In your opinion, what, if anything, was the most effective aspect of the Peer-to-Peer Coaching experience?
2. In your opinion, what, if anything, was the least effective aspect of the Peer-to-Peer Coaching experience?
3. When you think about the roles of the Coach, the Learner, and the Facilitator, what did you like best about the way people handled their roles? What did you like least?
4. How confident are you that your participation in the Peer-to-Peer Coaching experience had a direct impact, either positive or negative, on your results in marketing OJT NEG? What kind of examples or explanation can you offer to support your belief?
5. What other kinds of benefits, if any, occurred as a result of this experience? Consider, for example, ways in which this experience affected participating staff, the One-Stop as a whole, employers, or job seekers.
6. If you participated in another Peer-to-Peer Coaching experience, what would you do differently?
7. What suggestions could you offer to the State WIA Staff to improve the effectiveness of a Peer-to-Peer Coaching experience in the future? For example, what kind of information or materials would be helpful?

Appendix F – Questions for Telephone Interviews – Employers

1. In your experience now in working with an OJT agreement, what is your overall opinion of this kind of work/training arrangement?
2. How did you find out about the OJT option for hiring employees?
3. To what extent do you think you understood the goals and benefits of OJT NEG when hiring the new employee? How effective was your local workforce agency in communicating this information to you?
4. What reluctance, if any, did you have in using the OJT option for hiring a new employee from your local workforce agency?
5. Now that you have had experience with OJT's, how would you rate the quality of employee(s) you hired overall?
6. People in our local workforce agencies sometimes hear “What’s wrong with this person if you have to pay me to hire him?” In your opinion, what do you think it would take to overcome this attitude or belief by an employer?
7. Please tell me if there were any kinds of obstacles or difficulties you encountered with the OJT process.
8. In terms of ease of use, describe your experience or reaction to filling out the OJT monitoring form and invoice. For instance, share with me any of your experience in terms of invoicing your local agency for reimbursing your new employee’s cost of training. When you invoiced for the OJT, did you invoice according to the payment schedule defined by the local agency or some other schedule?

Appendix G – Questions for Telephone Interviews – Job Seekers

1. Before you got your job through the OJT program, were you aware of the On-the-Job Training funds available to you and the employer? If yes, how did you first learn about them?
2. How important was the availability of these OJT training dollars to helping you get hired? In your opinion, do you think the employer would have hired you without these funds?
3. At the beginning of your OJT experience, did you go to the state's website and use the Earn and Learn Workbook or the PowerPoint slide presentation?

Yes No Not sure

4. If yes, what parts, if any, were most useful in helping you get a successful start as a new employee with your employer?

What parts, if any, were not useful to you in helping you?

5. If no, is there a reason you did not use the state's website and online resources?
6. What kind of experience did you have, either positive or negative, when dealing with the workforce staff person, such as getting advice, answering your questions, providing support, etc.?
7. For you, what has been the most beneficial part of working with the OJT program?
8. Please tell me what, if any, kinds of problems or difficulties you encountered with the OJT process.

Appendix H – Sample Telephone Interview Notes/Content Coding Form

Interview Date: _____	Interviewer: _____	Person(s) Interviewed: _____
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Class		Key Word Code		
What/Action/Behavior/Event (A)	Competency Needed (E)	001	_____	005
Who/Relationship (B)	How/Process (F)	002	_____	006
When/Time (C)	Where/Situation/Conditions (G)	003	_____	007
Results/Consequences (D)	Why/Reason/Motive (H)	004	_____	008

Question __:			
	Comment(s) of Person(s) Interviewed	Class	Code
Question __:			
	Comment(s) of Person(s) Interviewed	Class	Code

Top 10 Best Practices for Workforce Staff

Our study found that OJT marketers who are Top Performers –

- 1. Seek out opportunities to have frequent and meaningful face-to-face interaction with employers and others in the business community. They don't rely on mail, e-mail, or phone to do what should be done in person.**
- 2. Are singularly employer-focused and display a sincere, constant effort to respond quickly and exceed employer expectations.**
- 3. Have developed excellent interpersonal relations skills and a mental agility that consists of competencies such as the ability to think like an employer, flexibility in a variety of situations, and ability to solve unique problems.**
4. Strive to assist employers throughout the entire OJT process and make it as easy as possible. They take ownership of a customer service problem and manage the process until a solution is found.
5. Approach their jobs with a positive attitude and enthusiasm that is visible to employers and other people they are in contact with. They have a passion for the work they do.
6. Show a high level of persistence that enables them to hang-in with an employer until a relationship can be successfully formed. They don't give up simply when an employer says "no."
7. Make an effort to systematically track and know what outreach tactics successfully attracted employers to the program.
8. Gain practical knowledge and experience by connecting with other WIB's and sharing best practices, such as through the Peer-to-Peer Coaching program.
9. Leverage the power of OJT Workshops for Job Seekers by working with eligible candidates and preparing them to spread information about the OJT program to employers and other unemployed individuals.
10. Are quick to give credit to other team members, and work collaboratively with other One-Stop partners and related agencies in getting more support for their OJT outreach and coordination activities.

*** Items in bold are identified as exemplary practices in the Executive Summary**

Top 10 Best Practices for WIB's and One-Stops

Our study found that local workforce areas that are High OJT Performers –

- 1. Place top-level, executive emphasis on OJT's and a business services approach. OJT is viewed as having strategic importance towards building strong relationships with employers.**
- 2. Maintain close links with the business community by building on-going, collaborative relationships with local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development offices, and business organizations such as SHRM.**
- 3. Display a high capacity to adapt to the needs of the local business community and remain flexible enough to change the way things are done in order to meet employer needs and expectations.**
4. Have a business services model, with jobs structured to be employer-focused and aimed specifically at facilitating the OJT process. Staff members work continuously to find ways to simplify and streamline the paperwork, recruiting, and contracting requirements for employers.
5. Engage in learning/sharing opportunities and best practices with other workforce areas, through such means as Peer-to-Peer Coaching.
6. Manage the process internally by effectively communicating with local staff and providing training, reinforcement, and recognition for exceptional performance with OJT.
7. Are more vigilant and alert to new information and changes at the state level. They are more apt to have regular contact with State WIA Staff for information and resources that help coordination and implementation.
8. Use a blanket contract that streamlines the employers' hiring and training process and reduces paperwork.
9. Develop and promote OJT Workshops for Job Seekers. Job seekers leave prepared to explain the OJT program to employers and other unemployed individuals who may be eligible.
10. Make an effort to clarify roles and responsibilities of the individuals involved with OJT at the very early stages of the program.

*** Items in bold are identified as exemplary practices in the Executive Summary**

Appendix J – Summary of OJT NEG Outcomes

Summary of OJT NEG Outcomes

This description of the OJT NEG project and outcomes was prepared by staff from the ODJFS Office of Workforce Development, WIA Program Management Section.

Background

The OJT NEG was a discretionary National Emergency Grant (NEG) funded with federal Stimulus (ARRA) dollars issued by U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to encourage greater use of On-the-Job Training (OJT) as a placement strategy by the nation’s workforce system. Ohio received a grant of \$3,865,742 on 6/30/10 with an original grant end-date of 6/30/12, later extended to 9/30/12. The terms of the grant required that funds be spent on prolonged unemployed dislocated workers – individuals who meet the WIA definition of dislocated worker and who had been jobless beyond the state’s average Unemployment Compensation (UC) duration, which was 22.53 weeks in Ohio when the project began.

Implementation

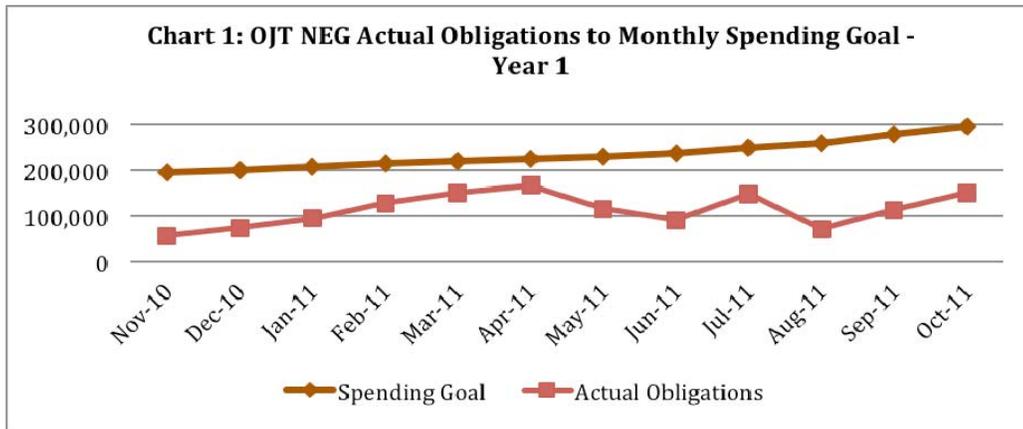
The required implementation plan was submitted on 8/31/10 and approved by DOL on 9/30/10. This plan described the state’s policy requirements, project implementation parameters, outreach methods, and the expected number of participants, originally projected to be 500 and later increased to 777 as the project grew in popularity and the level of participation exceeded original projections.

ODJFS began accepting local requests for OJT NEG funding on 11/4/10. To encourage local areas to utilize OJT as a training service, ODJFS launched the project with a series of OJT-related technical assistance and training events as summarized in the following list:

Date	Event	Date	Event
10/18 to 10/22/10	Series of in-person OJT legal and procedural training sessions by OJT expert John Chamberlin	11/3/10	OJT NEG data entry, reporting, and fiscal requests training (webinar)
10/28/10	OJT NEG training for Dept. of Development Business Service Reps (in person training)	11/22/10	OJT NEG make-up training (webinar)
10/27/10	OJT NEG policy and form templates training (webinar)	January 2011 to November 2011	Series of monthly OJT NEG Updates and peer-to-peer OJT Webinars

Challenges

In spite of the state’s efforts to encourage OJT usage by local areas and to quickly expend the OJT NEG dollars, obligation of funding during the first year of the project was slower than expected. Chart 1 shows the monthly obligation of OJT NEG funds by local areas during the first year of the project compared to the monthly spending goal necessary to fully utilize the grant. At no time in the first year did the local areas meet the spending goal per month.



Several reasons for under-performance were identified through conversations with local staff and by surveying WIB directors and local area OJT contacts in March, 2011:

- Employers are not hiring.
- Employers resist hiring prolonged unemployed individuals due to the stigma of joblessness.
- Individuals who meet the definition of prolonged unemployment are difficult to find and place.
- Federal extensions to UC benefits have enabled some laid off workers to avoid re-employment.
- OJT NEG rules prevent approval of training through temporary staffing agencies which many Ohio employers utilize for hiring of new workers.

Corrective Action Plans

To overcome these challenges, ODJFS developed two corrective action plans to increase utilization of OJT NEG funds and to ensure the entire grant would be invested in Ohio prior to the end date. The action plans, dated 9/7/11 and 4/23/12, amended the original implementation plan and provided a variety of creative solutions as summarized below:

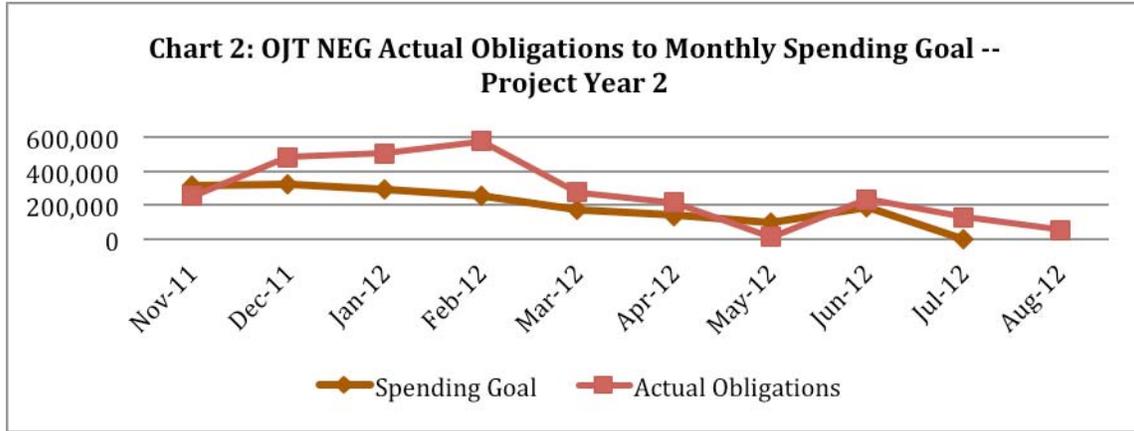
Action Plan #1

- OJT NEG funds issued to local areas to conduct local OJT outreach campaigns
- Inclusion of ODJFS Veterans Services staff in statewide OJT outreach and approval process
- Statewide OJT sales training conducted by national consultant, D. Strader Taylor
- OJT Mentoring project to pair experienced areas with learning areas to share best practices

Action Plan #2

- ODJFS outreach campaign to notify employers that belong to local SHRM chapters or posted jobs on OhioMeansJobs.com of available OJT funding
- Inclusion of ODJFS Workforce Specialists in statewide OJT outreach and approval process
- Issuance of OJT NEG funding for locally requested wrap-around services such as case management, outreach, administrative costs, and supportive services for OJT NEG participants
- Local desk reviews of OJT obligations to identify excess funding that could be returned to ODJFS

Chart 2 displays the remarkable increases in monthly obligations that resulted from the above initiatives in the second year of the project. Obligations frequently exceeded the monthly spending goal in the second year.



Grant Utilization

Thanks to statewide corrective actions, the ongoing dedication of state Workforce Specialists and Veterans Services staff, and the efforts of local area business service teams and WIA staff, the OJT NEG funding was fully obligated and spent within the grant period and 778 prolonged unemployed Ohioans returned to gainful employment through OJT. Statistics highlighting the outcomes of the project are provided in the following section.

OJT NEG Project Statistics

Project Goals and Outcomes

	Goal	Outcome	% of Goal
Total Participants	777	778	100%
Grant Expenditures	\$3,865,742	\$3,865,742	100%
Average OJT Wage	\$13.08	\$12.84	98%
Areas participating in NEG	20	17	85%

Operational Statistics

Employer Statistics	Statistic	OJT Approval Statistics	Statistic
Total Employers Served	399	Total OJTs Approved	778
Average OJTs per employer	1.9	by local workforce area staff	608
Counties with employer participation in OJT NEG	64 of 88 (73%)	by state Workforce Specialists	154
		by state Veterans Services staff	16

Evaluation of OJT NEG Operations and Outreach – June, 2012

OJT Wage Reimbursement %	Statistic	Highest Performing Local Areas		Obligations
50% of trainee wages	451 (58%)	Local Area 7	285 OJTs	\$1,327,586
75% of trainee wages	109 (14%)	Local Area 11	59 OJTs	\$311,583
90% of trainee wages	218 (28%)	Local Area 3	51 OJTs	\$181,137
Total	778 (100%)	Local Area 17	47 OJTs	\$159,490

Next Steps

To identify which of the various initiatives were most effective at generating more OJTs, ODJFS decided to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of OJT NEG operations and outreach. A contractor was commissioned to gather feedback from WIB directors, employers, participants, and state and local workforce professionals (including high performers who exhibited the greatest success at marketing and approval of OJT). The results of this evaluation identify best practices for OJT outreach and will help Ohio improve the implementation and service delivery of future projects that involve outreach to employers and rapid enrollment of participants.