

Developing an Effective and Comprehensive Job- Training Model

Community Foundation

Collective Impact Fall 2015 Grant Cycle

\$20,000



Common Agenda?

► Issue:

- Returning citizens in our community face many barriers to employment, however there is only a 3-8% rate of recidivism (compared to 31-70% depending on the state) if returning citizens are employed as soon as possible after release. Returning citizens also have barriers to maintaining employment, such as lack of access to transportation, stable housing, and frequent court mandated appointments.

► Solution:

- Provide transitional employment for returning citizens at a worksite that understands the barriers and contains training opportunities, with a support circle of trainers, case managers, job developers and peer mentors.

► Action:

- Finger Lakes ReUse will partner with human service agencies, employers, and community members, to provide an integrated support structure and to pilot a transitional employment and job training program for returning citizens. In the long term it will be replicable and freely adoptable for other organizations and employers offering job training.



Briana Bender, former ReSET Tech Apprentice, teaching computer class at Women's Opportunity Center



Quick Wins

- ▶ Rather than start from scratch, able to collaborate with recently established programs and organizations including URO, Mentoring for Change and the Second Chance Program.
 - ▶ Second Chance program, recently funded by the Division of Criminal Justice Services, already contains two important components necessary for successful re-entry - individual case management and job development.
- ▶ In research of best practices and information from URO focus groups, it is clear participants must be paid from day one.
- ▶ Adapted Challenge's Employment Assessment form to assess and track job readiness.
- ▶ Received facilitation services from Gwen Webber-McLeod, training ReUse staff to in effective program development processes.
- ▶ Piloted supervisory workshop series for ReSET trainees and ReUse supervisory staff, adding to leadership capacity of ReUse staff as well as skill training to increase trainee's upward mobility.



*(L) Andrew Hudson-Sabens, former ReSET Apprentice now employee of 2 years.
(R) Ivan Yalanzhi, former Social Services recipient, now employee of 9 years and Store Manager.*

Collaborating Partners

- ▶ Challenge Workforce Solutions: referral agency and service provider for current and future trainees; developer and collaborator of the Second Chance program
- ▶ Rescue Mission: collaborator and Case Managers for Second Chance program, service provider for future participants
- ▶ Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources: informational resource as a long-standing service provider in the community; collaborator and Case Managers for Second Chance Program
- ▶ Ultimate Reentry Opportunity: an informational resource because of their intensive work in context expert focus groups; network hub for reentry initiative partners
- ▶ Mentoring for Change at the Multicultural Resource Center: potential referral source and service provider for future participants via their mentorship program
- ▶ Cooperative Extension Prison Reentry Education Program: potential service provider for future trainees
- ▶ Tompkins County Department of Probation and Community Justice: service provider for current and future trainees
- ▶ Tompkins County Mental Health Department: service provider for current and future trainees



Methods of Communication

- ▶ Primary communication with collaborators is through meetings, email, phone calls, and attending collaborator's events.
- ▶ Communication has occurred approximately bi-monthly and often times more.



(L) Brendan Hart-Nutter, former ReSET Tech trainee now Brightworks employee. (R) Asia Cansler, current Tech Apprentice



Data

- ▶ Notes from URO focus groups (groups included formerly incarcerated women and family members, formerly incarcerated men, and advocates) conducted over the course of 2014 and 2015.
- ▶ URO presentations and summaries of data gathering
- ▶ The Report of the Jail Alternatives Task Force - July 2014 (As accepted by the Tompkins County Criminal Justice /Alternatives to Incarceration (CJATI) Board)
- ▶ New York State Bar Association Special Committee on Reentry - White Paper January 2016
- ▶ The Council of State Government's Justice Center's paper on "Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies: Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness" September 2013
- ▶ LaFrance Associates' paper on "Findings on Best Practices Of Community Reentry Programs For Previously Incarcerated Persons" May 2007
- ▶ Manhattan Institute and America Works report "Prison-To-Work The Benefits of Intensive Job-Search Assistance for Former Inmates"
- ▶ The United States Department Of Labor's "Prisoner Re-entry Toolkit"
- ▶ Model organizations such as: The Center for Employment Opportunities, The Safer Foundation, Homeboy Industries, and the Delancey Street Foundation



Lived Experience Voices

- ▶ Mentoring for Change peer mentors essential part of participants support circle
- ▶ Relied heavily on the views and concerns expressed in the URO focus groups by those with lived experience in incarceration.
- ▶ ReUse has observed the challenges and barriers experienced by returning citizens who were previous trainees in the ReSET program.



Steve Ayers, former Social Services recipient, now ReUse Field Crew staff of 7 years



Lessons Thus Far

“Paid training can make all the difference for our clients.”

~ Kathy Lind, Tompkins County Department of Probation and Community Justice

“Employment is the number one factor for successful reintegration...”

~New York State Bar Association. Special Committee on Reentry.

- ▶ Citizens returning from prison require income immediately, as it reduces recidivism and increases long term job retention.

“Everyone needs a place like this to come to. Here I feel like I belong.”

~ Carlette Crowe, returned citizen, ReUse Work Study student

- ▶ Meaningful employment, though more difficult to measure, is also very important as it increases confidence, creates a sense of purpose and community.



Carlette Crowe, TC3 work-study student, referred by OAR

Lessons Thus Far

- ▶ Individuals need to be well-matched to their transitional employment site. Referring individuals to training programs that do not match their needs and interests have been shown to be a setback for their re-entry and can increase recidivism, as well as take away resources from those who would have been better matched.
- ▶ Case Management, Job Development and Peer Mentorships are essential to translate transitional employment to long term stable employment.
- ▶ 6 months - 1 year is recommended length of time for transitional employment.
- ▶ Milestone rewards encourage continued participation in services and job training programs. Supplement limited income.
- ▶ ReUse staff would benefit from continued leadership training to increase their sensitivity and mentorship capabilities with returning citizens.



Shared Measurements

- ▶ Initial and follow-up employability assessments.
- ▶ Tracking Second Chance Milestones and ReUse Transitional employment milestones.
- ▶ Tracking permanent employment.
 - ▶ OAR recording recidivism of participants in supported employment programs vs those unsupported.



Sarah Bonawitz, BEAM program coordinator, leading ReSET training on resume writing



Mutually Reinforcing Activities

- ▶ Enhancing opportunities in Second Chance program with ReUse Transitional Employment Program.
- ▶ Offering short term employment incentives and store credits to Second Chance participants.
- ▶ Monthly support circle meetings with participant, trainer, job developer, peer mentor and case manager.
- ▶ Tracking data on recidivism rates of supported employment returning citizens vs. unsupported.
- ▶ Active attendance in URO working groups to stay in touch with the evolving Common Agenda.



Short-term plans

- ▶ Offer short term employment incentives and store credits to participants in Second Chance program and/or on-board two transitional employment participants in Fall 2017.
- ▶ Actively seeking funding for next year's participants.
- ▶ Implement a facilitated conversation with collaborating agencies to develop Memorandums of Understanding to provide program services, coordinate shared measurement tools and mutually reinforcing activities facilitated by Gwen Webber-McLeod.
- ▶ Obtain milestone rewards, such as gift cards to grocery stores.
- ▶ Engage with more volunteer workshop instructors to add skill development offerings at ReUse.



ReUse volunteer denailing deconstructed lumber



Long-term plans

- ▶ Comprehensively track local data on recidivism rates of supported employment returning citizens vs. unsupported, making case for increase financial support from government (According to study by America Works - \$5000 to place and retain returning citizen vs. \$31,000 to imprison for one year.)
- ▶ Collaborative housing project, partnered with TCA and INHS, part of Ithaca ReUse expansion, in feasibility stage (2018).
- ▶ Create a replicable job-training model that can be shared with other communities.



Amy Cowan, current ReSET Retail Apprentice, BEAM participant

