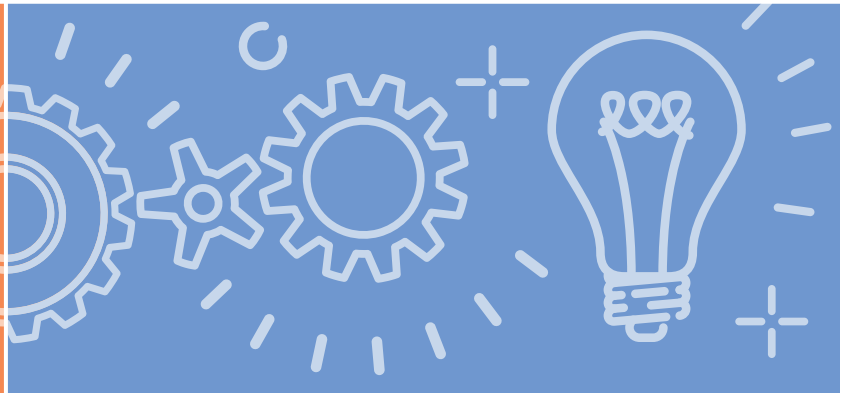
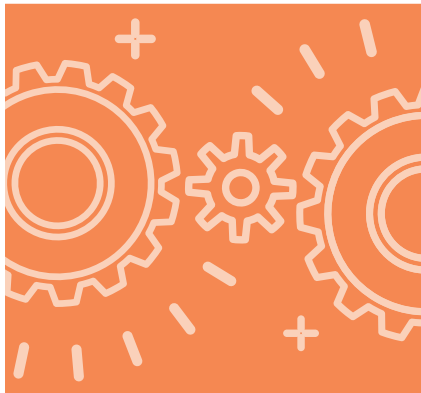


CUSTOMER CENTERED DESIGN

WIOA INNOVATION IN ACTION



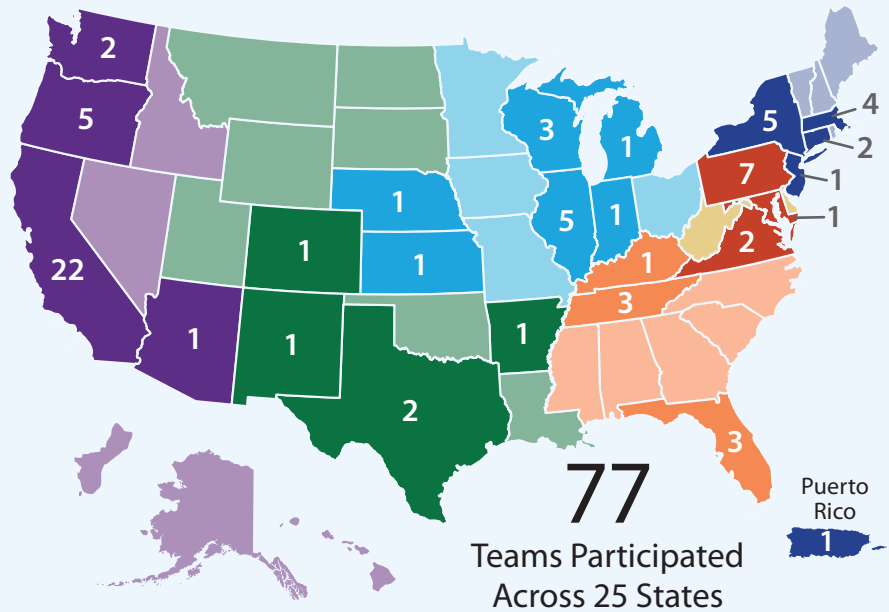
ROUND 2
2016



CUSTOMER CENTERED DESIGN

CCD is a generative process that starts with people and ends with surprising answers tailor-made to put our customers' needs at the center.

We can use it to directly learn from the communities we serve and to rapidly come up with innovative new concepts, quickly prototype them, and then make our ideas come to life with results for our customers.



Round 2 Event Timeline



Key Questions and Challenges



How might we design services and programs for out-of-school youth that will engage them and produce great outcomes?



How might we improve the customer experience and outcomes for our shared One-Stop Customers?



How might we put employers in the center of sector strategies and career pathway work?

77 Teams from 6 Regions Participated in Round 2



Region 1

13 (17%)

Region 2

10 (13%)

Region 3

7 (9%)

Region 4

5 (6%)

Region 5

12 (16%)

Region 6

30 (39%)

THE OPPORTUNITY

THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) gives us the opportunity to rethink the way we deliver services to our job seekers and business customers. The change starts with the questions we're asking ourselves.

WHAT IF INSTEAD OF ASKING:
How can we engage customers?

WE ASKED:
What do our customers really need and want?



Putting our customers at the center of our design process changes the questions we ask and the outcomes we achieve. WIOA asks us for transformational change, which requires thinking about issues in a new way.

What is Human Centered Design?

A collaborative, discovery-based journey.



Get inspired by the people you're serving. Start by listening to people to get new ideas about how to design for them.



Identify patterns and surprising insights to inspire new opportunities for design.



Brainstorm new ways to serve your customers.



Try out your ideas and get feedback from customers – so you can revise your prototypes and get more feedback.



Try out a pilot program and experiment with ways to implement your new ideas.

CUSTOMER CENTERED DESIGN



CUSTOMER CENTERED DESIGN (CCD) is a concept used by both private industry and non-profits to improve user experiences and outcomes. It was introduced to the U.S. Department of Labor through regional work in the Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) Region 6 to design more

effective services for the long-term unemployed. Being a customer centered designer is about believing that as long as you stay grounded in what you've learned from people, your team can arrive at new solutions that will bring innovation to our workforce system.

As part of technical assistance offered as the public workforce system implements WIOA, a National Challenge was launched which encouraged states, regions, and local workforce boards to form teams who immersed themselves in their customers' environments and re-designed services based on observations of this research. The Challenge provided access to a free seven-week online customer centered design course, and coaches from Maher and Maher were assigned to provide support throughout the Round 2 Challenge. An estimated 77 teams from 25 states signed up to take on the Challenge and progress through the five phases of the project.

Each round of the Challenge kicked off with a launch webinar and included five phases which provided teams with support along the way. After the launch webinar, teams completed a seven-week online course, followed by five weeks of implementing their design prototypes. The Round 2 Challenge culminated in the Learning Exchange & Celebration at the White House in September 2016, where top teams shared their project learnings and design impacts with key White House and U.S. Department of Labor leaders and federal staff.

Customer Centered Design Challenge Requirements

STEP 1: BUILD A TEAM

Customer Centered Design is a team-based initiative. Teams comprise four to ten people who represent a broad range of stakeholders and partners. Teams may include Workforce Development Council staff, American Job Center staff, and staff from partner agencies including Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, TANF, Organized Labor, and Community-Based Organizations.

STEP 2: SELECT A CHALLENGE QUESTION

The Customer Centered Design Challenge Question is rooted in partnership and innovation, leading with a “how might we” mindset.

1. How might we improve the customer experience and outcomes for our shared One-Stop Customers?
2. How might we put employers in the center of our Sector Strategies and Career Pathways work?
3. How might we design services and programs for out-of-school-youth that will engage them and produce great outcomes?
4. How might we help formerly incarcerated individuals obtain employment and education, develop healthy relationships, and make positive decisions?
5. How might we design services that are physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities?
6. How might we improve the customer experience for English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, across partner programs?

STEP 3: COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION GROUP SPACE

Teams collaborate on four major assignments required for course completion.

- Week 1: Form Your Design Team
- Week 2: Plan Your Research
- Week 3: Opportunities for Design
- Week 4: Share Your Solution
- Week 5: Design Kit: The Course for Human Centered Design Pre-Course Survey

The Workforce Innovation Group Space is a virtual platform open to all team members to share ideas and questions. Peers and coaches offer feedback and additional resources such as tools and templates.

STEP 4: CONDUCT PROTOTYPING AND TESTING

Teams spend five weeks in the prototype and testing phase, where they implement their learnings and document their process.

STEP 5: APPLY TO THE LEARNING EXCHANGE AND SYMPOSIUM

Teams who have completed the course and prototype phase are welcome to submit an application to the Learning Exchange and Symposium (For Rounds 1 and 2, White House Learning Exchange and Celebration). If approved, the team is invited to present their project to their peers and Department of Labor leaders.

Challenge Top 3 Key Takeaways

1

LISTENING TO THE CUSTOMER IS CRITICAL TO INNOVATION.

By listening to and empathizing with their customers – whether out-of-school youth, employers, or individual jobseekers in an American Job Center – teams identify needs and unmet expectations they had not realized were there.

2

IT TAKES COMMITMENT TO BUILD A TEAM, AND IT TAKES TIME.

Teams often struggle, especially early on, to find the time to meet as a group and work through the course work and prototyping process. Competing priorities and schedules make coming together challenging, but the outcomes are worth the effort.

3

CUSTOMER CENTERED DESIGN IS A GAME CHANGER FOR THE WORKFORCE SYSTEM.

Putting the customer at the center of service design dramatically changes the service delivery paradigm. It is a new way of thinking that has the potential to transform our entire system and our mindset.

WHITE HOUSE LEARNING EXCHANGE AND CELEBRATION: SELECTED TEAMS AND PROJECTS

Of the 77 teams who participated in the course, 33 teams completed and 23 applied to present at the White House Learning Exchange and Celebration. A group of Department of Labor officials reviewed the team proposals and approved 11 teams. In their own words, the following Learning Exchange Customer Centered Design teams offered personal accounts of their participation in the challenge.

CUSTOMER-FOCUSED TEAM PROJECTS — Team Voices —

Focus: SHARED ONE-STOP CUSTOMERS

ANNE ARUNDEL – Glen Burnie, Maryland

Our team consisted of the three core WIOA partners who are currently located together in the American Job Center. We had representatives from the WIOA Title 1 provider covering the Adult, Dislocated and Youth populations, the Wagner-Peyser provider, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Services provider. Our members came from various levels of staff ranging from executive leadership to front-line service providers. This diverse combination provided multiple perspectives of the customer-engagement activities our organizations provided.

THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Streamline a shared American Job Center customer experience?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Our goal was to create a cohesive introductory job seeker experience that improves the experience itself and leads to better outcomes. Hearing our customers say, "Wow, this is like no center I have ever been in!" is the reaction we wanted.

Initially, our team expected to examine just the customer flow process, but we quickly



realized that we had to look at something much larger – the total customer experience. Shifting our focus from us and our processes to how those processes appear from the customer's viewpoint was an absolute paradigm shift. We saw that we had to evaluate the entire service chain and how the system works for those using it. This meant facing some facts that we may have known but were reluctant to address. It also included admitting that silos still exist, many due to performance and funding considerations.

PROCESS

Looking at this project holistically, we started with a customer's first impression of the parking, facility, signage, interior environment, greeting, and more. As part of our immersion field research, we studied three different career centers, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Center, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Services provider. We interviewed customers in different phases and across a number of partners – new job seekers, alumni, community members – to learn what they would like to see in our service process.

What Our Customers Want

- Welcoming, physically comfortable, professional environment.
- Newer technology.
- Easy access to information and resources.
- Respectful and helpful staff (“Ask what we want!”)
- Hassle-free process.
- Clear communication.

We also realized that our customers vary in age, knowledge, and skill level, and that we must communicate with them in ways to which they are accustomed. Not all have access to new technology. Others who may not be aware of technology-based self-service solutions. Delivering information to all our constituencies in the same way may result in our failing to reach certain segments.

Environment

For inspiration on revitalizing our physical space, we looked to analogous operations – social services, emergency rooms, motor vehicles offices, Verizon stores – and evaluated them multiple times. We observed the success of features we might adopt to make our center more comfortable, welcoming, and accommodating:

- Formalized triage.
- Self-direct opportunities.
- Clear signage and a clearly communicated process.
- Up-to-date technology: kiosks, monitors, online check-in and queues.
- Resources for individuals to collect while waiting.
- Attractive wall visuals.

Insights

We learned that without a fully professional, friendly, and respectful environment, clients will be less likely to use the center. We needed to better communicate our menu of options, speed up the delivery of services, provide clear direction, and make our system flexible enough to adapt to changing client needs. Otherwise, we cause customers to miss out on opportunities. Above all, first impression is key.

Since we were already designing a new WIOA combined center and working on the blueprints, the timing of this project was perfect, as it forced us to re-evaluate our customer flow, our Internet café, and our entire process for responding to the needs of our diverse customer base.

PROTOTYPE

In brainstorming our prototype, we synthesized our ideas into three main areas: the “vibe” and energy of the center, the visual environment, and use of technology. We further refined our concepts into a two-pronged prototype:

- **A multi-dimensional intake process** incorporating both technology and in-person contact.
- **An inviting environment** that welcomes users to “their office away from work,” guides them with descriptive signage and clear expectations, and offers a respectful and knowledgeable staff.

Through negotiations and conversations between Workforce Investment Board members, partner agencies, and potential funders, the Customer Centric Design team would assist with the development of the customer-flow floor-plan model and help develop financial projections. The model would incorporate improvements to the center’s technical capabilities, including additional equipment purchases, as well as its visual environment.

MOVING FORWARD

Following the opening of our state-of-the-art career center, ongoing evaluations will ensure that the center continues to adapt to meet the needs of our customers and clients. In moving forward with WIOA, the subject of common intake and data sharing becomes more important and impactful. This is something our team has started to work on as we evaluate how technology can further improve our process.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

The implementation process is well on its way to completion as of this writing. In September 2017, we relocated to a new, larger center which has allowed more of our partners to have an active presence in the American Job Center. We have hired an intake specialist who interviews all new customers to determine needs, make referrals, and begin the assessment process by introducing the customers to an online career assessment tool that we have incorporated. We are developing other tools that will streamline the process of enrolling in center events.

The new center offers an open environment that is bright and well organized. Most of the staff are in cubicles with sliding doors to offer privacy when needed while still maintaining a connection between staff. Our re-designed Cyber Café is a more laid-back environment with WIFI, relaxed seating, vending machines, etc., where clients can bring their own equipment and work in a less formal setting.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

Since our project is still in its infancy, its long-term impact has not yet been determined, but the feedback we have received to date is very positive. Customers have recognized the physical improvements and feel that the professional atmosphere of the center helps motivate them in their job journey. The staff, as well, have been affected. They feel more connected to each other as colleagues and partners. Employee morale has increased and is evident in the fact that we seem to be taking our customer service to a higher level.

We have begun to incorporate CCD into our organizational thinking. For example, we plan to host several focus groups of business members, community partners, and job seekers. Through these meetings, we hope to solicit feedback on the services we already provide and get suggestions for new programs and better ways to connect clients to the resources they need.

GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD – Lowell, Massachusetts

The Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board project was a collaborative effort undertaken by more than a dozen people representing: the One-Stop Career Center, the Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board (GLWDB), Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Title I, Department of Transitional Assistance (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children /Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Community Teamwork, Inc. (our local community action agency), Abisi Adult Education Center (Local Adult Education Center), and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (Local Vocational Rehabilitation office). The GLWDB oversees the One-Stop Career Center, which is a fully integrated and co-located (Title 1 and Wagner-Peyser) One-Stop Center. We have had long-standing relationships with each of the partners, all of whom already had some presence in the One-Stop Center in Lowell, Massachusetts.

PROJECT OVERVIEW THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Improve the customer experience and outcomes for our shared One-Stop customers?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Career Center of Lowell, Massachusetts, is the city's central location for job search and job development for residents of all backgrounds. There are two paths for Career Center customers. Those receiving Unemployment Insurance (UI) must come to the center to continue receiving benefits. Non-UI customers have no obligation to return. We discovered that



only 39 percent of this second group were returning to take advantage of further services vs. 85 percent of UI claimants. While we had assumed that this low return rate was due to customers' lack of motivation, the CCD process allowed us to explore – and remedy – the true causes.

PROCESS

We wanted to find out how we might make customers feel more welcome at the Career Center and how we could provide better customer service overall. For answers, we had to consult with people who had used our services and with partners or counterparts who were familiar with what we do. Offering gift cards as incentives, we held customer interview sessions to get a job seeker's view of our One-Stop experience.

Our Customers Told Us

- They felt unwelcomed and uncomfortable about both the space and our approach, using the words "gloomy" and "misleading."
- They thought the membership orientation offered no clear next step.
- They did not understand the pathway to navigate through the Career Center.

Our assumption that the non-UI population did not have the self-motivation to return proved hasty. It was clear that their first impression of the center – or rather, their lack of it – was more of a contributing factor. When we sought comments and advice from some industry experts, including the Director of Career Services and the TANF/TAFDC Director of Employment Services for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, they noted that the first-time customer experience is critical. This pointed back to our customers' less than enthusiastic reactions to their One-Stop visits.

QUESTION: What color(s) would describe your initial feeling of entering the Career Center through the Seminar?

RESPONSE: Well, I came in feeling positive so I would say purple, but I'd also choose blue because that is how I left feeling.

PROTOTYPE

Both enlightened and inspired by the honest feedback from each of these groups, we conceived a prototype that would be implemented in two stages. First, we would create a more welcoming office environment, starting with the entrance and lobby. Then we would revamp our Non-UI Career Center Seminar.

To improve our space, we thought a simple change of appearance through paint color could make a world of difference. We took photos of our existing lobby and workshop room, created a flip chart to get reactions to some color choices, and then proceeded with our sprucing up. The addition of color to our lobby created enthusiasm for bringing a similar warmth to other areas of the center.

We were now ready to reinvent the seminar. We enlivened the style of the visual presentation, made the structure more compact, and the content more concise and relevant. After a few trial runs, we went live with an orientation presentation that concluded in half the time as the old one while still including all essential information about our services plus a new self-assessment tool and the option to sign up for a "triage" meeting with a career advisor.

MOVING FORWARD

We now need to better manage staff capacity to service the additional customers we are seeing due to our outreach and the triage system we put in place. We have more partner staff co-located with us. We meet with partners regularly to work on strengthening our co-case management of shared customers.

We plan to do another CCD project on out-of-school youth and will be submitting an application for the Youth Cohort Challenge recently announced by the Department of Labor (DOL). Whether or not we are selected by DOL for this cohort we will go forward with a CCD project.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

The new facelift to our entrance and the improvements in color and signage have prompted positive comments from staff, partners, and customers. Meanwhile, we have moved forward with several of our post-project plans:

- Establishing a referral desk aid to help transition customers to partners and community organizations.
- Running Career Center seminars at the local adult education center and the rehabilitation office.
- Dedicating a staff person to offer personalized triage for all customers who request it at Non-UI Seminars.

In addition, we increased our budget for staff training and had several staff members attend a customer service course.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

From our implementation in July 2016 through October of the same year we did seven non-profile (non-UI) orientations. We had 118 customers attend. Of those, 83 signed up for triage and 74 of them met with a career advisor. This is a 63 percent return rate vs. before this project when we had a 44 percent return rate.

Beyond our own success with our new orientation, our state agency has used our seminar PowerPoint as a good example of presentation content for UI recipients. We have been asked by other organizations in the state for technical assistance on the work we have done to engage non-UI job seekers.

Staff morale has improved a great deal. Staff is now more engaged in the development of how we deliver services and in presenting our work at conferences and webinars. We've been more active at attending community events, and this has given staff more visibility and purpose. We also interact more frequently with our WIOA partners and are creating a more robust referral system for our shared customers as a result.

THE INCREDIBLES – Alhambra, California

Our team members on this project were career coaches and program heads from Managed Career Solutions (MCS), an American Job Center of California (AJCC). MCS's vision is to provide proactive quality employment services to all job seekers, assist individuals with multiple barriers to secure employment, and aid entrepreneurs to grow and develop their businesses in order to facilitate workforce success.

THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Improve the customer experience and outcomes for our shared One-Stop customers?



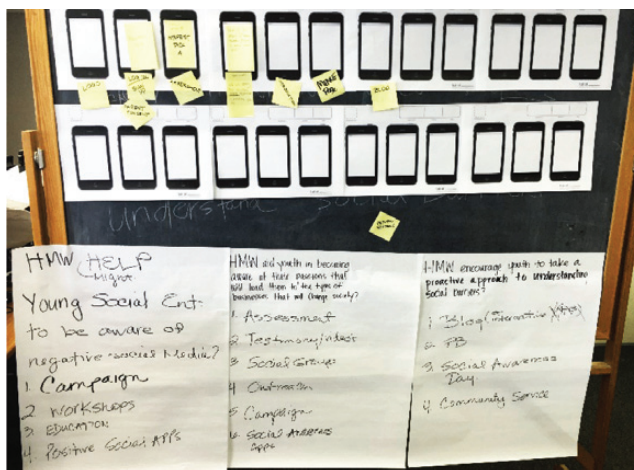
PROJECT OVERVIEW

As an AJC, we are a customer-driven agency. Our goal is to provide the highest level of service to our participants as we assist them in their efforts to become self-sufficient through work experience, occupational training, and employment. However, those we serve come from a diversity of backgrounds, and many face multiple barriers to finding and maintaining employment: incarceration, low income, homelessness, and lack of work experience and basic skills. In most cases, they are not even aware of the supportive services or resources that are available to them.

This Customer Centered Design project urged us to look beyond our existing framework and ask: "What if a resident of Los Angeles needs information on services after 5 PM or can't easily navigate from one agency to another?" The solution we eventually arrived at was a resource guide that could literally be in the palm of a person's hand.

PROCESS

We knew that we wanted to give our participants easy access to all available assistance in finding employment. We also wanted to consider providing resources for our special populations, including at-risk or disadvantaged youth and veterans. We originally came up with a website platform to share supportive services and community resources. However, in time, we began to understand that some clients could not afford a home computer or internet access. We then realized that the availability of affordable smart phones presented an alternative delivery mechanism, and we moved to the idea of a mobile application.



We spent several weeks brainstorming and collecting key details to inform our design. With our diverse team of career coaches, we were exposed to a variety of perspectives from different age groups, cultures, and life circumstances. We reflected on the difference between our clients' needs and our own perceptions of them. We considered the various components of our programs and how to incorporate them. Finally, we used drawings and paper models to ideate and refine our vision.

PROTOTYPE

Our prototype, the development and launch of a social services mobile device app that we called "My Community Sources," was designed specifically to give Los Angeles County residents quick and easy access to all service agencies in the county. By downloading the app to a mobile device, users would be able to locate health, employment, and social services at any time of day, in any number of locations. These would include, among others, WIOA services such as job leads, medical clinics, veterans' services, LGBT community services, food banks, and housing assistance. Agencies would be accessible by link and phone number, and all our partner agencies would be included.

This prototype took our original concept of a website platform one giant leap forward. Such websites and resource guides already existed, but they usually featured only a selection of resources – and none of them were in mobile app format. Being directly involved in creating such a program from the ground up would be a unique accomplishment.

Once our software was developed, we beta-tested the program with our AJC clients and asked them to complete user-input surveys following their download of the app. The product launched in the summer of 2016 and is now available as a free download on iTunes and Google Play.

MOVING FORWARD

We plan to continually revamp the application and add new resources and services. At the same time, we will be marketing it and sharing it with our clients and social service agency partners.

Another question for us to consider:

How Might We – Add services for Los Angeles County foster youth to our app?

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Our project encouraged MCS staff to consider participating in a year-long Workforce Development Professional Registered Apprenticeship Program. Our staff had the confidence that they could complete the course successfully based on their positive experience with CCD during this project.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

Our app implementation has increased customer satisfaction and has encouraged career coaches to find even more resources for our job seekers. The project has also increased our drive to connect participants to a greater number of resources and take a holistic approach to meeting their needs beyond the scope of our regular services.

MICHIGAN WORKS! SOUTHWEST – Kalamazoo, Michigan

The following partners were represented on the Michigan Works! Southwest team: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research/Michigan Works! Southwest/Workforce Development Board, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services/One Stop Operator, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Services, WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Services, WIOA Youth Services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Services (PATH Program), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Services (FAET Program). Vocational Education and Adult Literacy are also represented on the Michigan Works! Southwest Workforce Development Board.

THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Improve the customer experience and outcomes for our shared One-Stop customers?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Michigan Works! Southwest set forth to determine how we might improve the customer experience and outcomes for our shared One-Stop customers in our four-county area in Southwest Michigan. We had multiple questions we wanted to address in terms of immediate and long-term customer engagement, individualized service and follow-through, and marketing our services to the community.



We were able to positively impact our program operations and delivery of service through a two-fold concept that devoted staff to greeting each customer immediately upon entry and then mobilizing staff and partners in a collaborative effort to meet the needs of each person with individualized services.

PROCESS

Examining our system of One-Stop customer service with several questions in mind produced some productive insights.

- How do we initially engage individuals who walk into the service center?
- How do we focus solely on the needs of the individual regardless of barriers or eligibility measures?

INSIGHT: Customer service

- How do we more quickly engage individuals who come into the service center?
- How do we market our services to engage community members?

INSIGHT: Engagement

- How do we guarantee Michigan Works! staff are available to furnish wraparound services when required?
- How do we enlist community partners and employers to help provide wraparound services?

INSIGHT: One-on-one wraparound services

Our research evaluated our stakeholders' understanding of and satisfaction with Michigan Works! Southwest services. Through surveys designed for the purpose, we asked employers, job seekers, and community partners about their experience visiting the service center and their understanding of the value and mission of it. We asked job seekers about their prior knowledge of the center and its services. We used the results to identify areas for improvement as well as opportunities to more effectively engage and serve our customers.

PROTOTYPE

We sought to address our insights as they aligned with key issues from our stakeholder feedback by testing a two-tiered system that encompassed two separate, but complementary, prototypes.

- **Navigator** who greets customers immediately upon entry to assist them.
- **Wraparound individualized meetings** with customers to facilitate their employment success.

Navigator Prototype

A staff member would greet each customer at the One-Stop door rather than requiring customers to approach the front desk. The navigator would be empowered to assist the customer, whatever their needs, and to address those needs immediately. This prototype responded to our first two insights: *Customer Service* and *Engagement*.

A trial ran from June 13 – 24, 2016, with the customers of the Kalamazoo Michigan Works! Service Center. Through it, we were able to identify and evaluate several factors: employment status, barriers, education levels, current involvement with the center, services being provided, and referrals made. Follow-up calls were attempted to the 39 individuals who received intensive service. We sought to discover: Will individuals get back to work more quickly with this service?

Customer response to our One-Stop navigator:

"Thank you for simply asking me how I was doing."

The major challenge presented with the navigator role was being able to dedicate the necessary amount of time to each job seeker. This is why a follow-up component at the 30-day mark was critical to provide further assistance to customers and determine next steps.

Wraparound Prototype

Through this second prototype, we would attempt to meet whatever needs a customer may identify – whether they can be addressed by Michigan Works! or whether they require the assistance of a community partner. The goal would be to provide the service or make the referral immediately. To be successful this would obviously require the commitment and collaboration of all staff and partner programs.

One wraparound meeting was facilitated with a customer. Experts from across Michigan Works! Services came together regardless of their program or service specialty. Within 24 hours of the wraparound meeting, the customer was scheduled for a mock interview with staff, and her resume was submitted to four employers. An assessment and application appointment was scheduled with one of those employers.

MOVING FORWARD

As we continue our use of the navigator and wraparound meetings with follow-ups, we hope to apply these practices to shortening the period of unemployment or unemployment assistance for One-Stop visitors. We also plan to expand the prototype model to all four counties.

Other next steps include increasing One-Stop visits by marketing our services (in a more concentrated focus on our *Engagement* insight) and pursuing additional funding to support a full-time, permanent staffer to fulfill the navigator component.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

The influence of the customer centered approach has been demonstrated by the implementation of a series of customer service standards to which our staff has fully committed. The 32 standards encompass such areas as internal customer service, confidentiality, email communication, telephone communication, staff conduct, and general customer service. The application of the standards is being evaluated through the internal monitoring process.

Staff also participated in the Family Centered Coaching Training funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in Washington, D.C. This emphasis on serving customers and their families is an ongoing extension of the focus on customized services offered during our CCD project.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

Staff's quick response to the utilization of a customer centered mindset and innovative thinking to improve the customer experience has been a welcome surprise. Their willingness to change the way Michigan Works! Southwest operates has truly been an inspiration. As a supplement to our pilot CCD project, Michigan Works! Southwest has established a Customer Service Academy where all staff in the system receive customer-focused training on a quarterly basis.

In addition, outside of the scope of our original work, we redesigned the layout of two of our service centers by moving staff right next to the entrances with the goal of providing a more effective customer service approach.

WOW WDC – Pewaukee, Wisconsin

The Waukesha County Workforce Development Center is located on Waukesha County Technical College's Pewaukee Campus in a separate, stand-alone building. There were 10 of us on the WOW WDC team. We represented all center partners, all types of positions (management to front line), all areas of workforce development (education, training, public assistance, labor exchange, veterans), and all ages.

THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Improve the customer experience and outcomes for our shared One-Stop customers under 30 years of age?

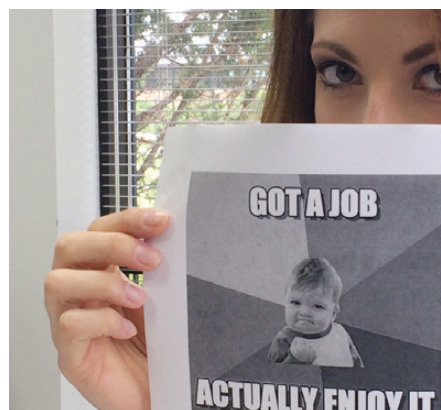
PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Waukesha Workforce Development Center, in a three-county region bordering Milwaukee, is well established and has been nationally and globally recognized. We rarely felt compelled to change our existing approach to service delivery. However, we wanted to evolve to better connect to younger generations who embrace the world from a different cultural perspective and with a high degree of technological savvy.

Throwing out our old perceptions was both liberating and scary. Technology is transforming everything at exponential speed, and the new talent we seek to cultivate is changing how we relate, communicate, and offer services to them. This is the customer experience of the future, now. As a result of this process, we saw that the way to stay relevant to all our demographic segments is to connect with them in new ways, both within our physical center and in the virtual realm.

PROCESS

To wrap our brains around the future of our center, we surveyed everyone who worked here, plus customers, members of boards, thought leaders, and members of the online forum used by participating Department of Labor challenge teams. We observed an onsite Youthbuild class, the teen section of the library, a restaurant, a coffee shop, and the local technical college campus. We interviewed One-Stop customers who were under 30. We consulted a customer interface expert, an economic development consultant, a millennials marketing consultant, several workforce professionals, and futurist-author Vivek Wadhwa.



“We can’t imagine what the future will look like.”

– Vivek Wadhwa,
Futurist & Author

We learned that we need to:

- Go where our customers are.
- Talk to them in their language.
- Offer services they value.
- Let them tell one another about us.
- Be authentic.

The phases of our process overlapped and intertwined. We ideated, prototyped, and iterated strategies for our physical environment and our virtual space simultaneously. One insight was that the look and feel of our center should engage all the senses as soon as a visitor walks through the door. Color, sight, sound, and comfort were all equally important. We experimented with a variety of changes in these areas even as we continued our research.

To gauge customer reaction, the center's operations coordinator moved her office to the reception area to observe. This gave us additional insights. The stylish new chairs proved inviting for some, uncomfortable for others. Customers welcomed finding books about professional development instead of just fliers about community services.

We noticed that individuals wore headphones with music that could almost be made out from across the room. Meanwhile they held smartphones and toggled between three or four screens on the computer as they worked.
#way.more.connected.than.even.we.imagined

Later we realized that our staff needed to be factored in, too. We're an ecosystem. Our staff culture, our physical center, our systems, and our online outreach are all interconnected. Spontaneously, we refurbished the break room to help gain staff buy-in.

PROTOTYPE

Our ever-evolving and multifaceted prototype began with:

- A re-invention of our front-end customer experience.
- A carefully crafted virtual customer interface – #where.they.are.
- Ways to tell our stories.

Updating our Look

We began transforming the environment of our entire center with grouped seating areas, open-concept work pods, and theme-decorated rooms. Reception was re-envisioned to feel more like a coffee shop or professional business lounge with comfortable chairs and art installations. Electronic signage and video displays helped reduce the clutter of file folders and brochures.

Our futurist expert Vivek Wadhwa told us that workforce development needs to be hands-on, fun, and relevant to emerging technology. Enter "science toy of the month." We've displayed a reflective hologram, a magnetic iron filings hourglass, even a smiley face sensor-driven drone that flies for eight minutes – or until it crashes. We wondered if we were disrupting the order of the public service universe!

Virtual Connections

We decided that before launching a hard-hitting Twitter and Instagram campaign promoted by a heavily followed blogger, we would take some "baby steps" in old-school social media – by making our first modest post on Facebook since 2013.

MOVING FORWARD

We continue to utilize a few interns on a regular basis to carry out the innovations that began with the project. The social media intern set the course for 2017, and an updated approach will be pursued in 2018. The graphics intern that was on board during the project continued through 2016, decorating the

center lobby in alternating themes. New interns were selected in 2017 to assist with sign-in technologies, videography, and a YouTube channel. Plans for how to morph projects will continue in 2018.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

We now have a social media team, a posting schedule, and a plan to expand to more popular and contemporary platforms after we have tested and learned how best to brand and launch ourselves. We hope to eventually integrate Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, the center's website, and our web-based resources. We have begun recording information from inter-agency, all-staff meetings and employer events for use by staff and in future outreach.

The center front end was streamlined, consolidated, and re-decorated to facilitate employee and customer interface. We have installed three electronic room boards and an electronic sign for the lobby and have also purchased three new iPads for front reception and videography.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

The impact of this project on our service delivery has been noticeable. Customers have commented on and contributed to the process. One told us that, while job transition is hard and scary, she feels that she can let herself breathe when she comes to a place that is so welcoming and friendly. She was the first walk-in customer to agree to an iPhone interview.

Staff who were not part of the process have begun helping out, offering suggestions and comments in support of the changes. The staff person who was the most resistant has become supportive, engaged, and positive. The impact for those of us on the team has also been transformative. It has opened our eyes to what is going on in the world as it relates to our prototyping and younger generational behaviors.

Focus: YOUTH OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

H.Y.P.E. (HELPING YOUTH PURSUE EXCELLENCE) – San Diego, California

The H.Y.P.E. team combined the talents and energy of the San Diego Workforce Partnership, the local leaders in Workforce Development; young adults who have been out of school, providing insight on the experience and cultural dynamics of that population as well as feedback during implementation; our program partners Access, who brought their programmatic background in engaging with out-of-school youth; educational partners San Diego Continuing Education with their understanding of the issues surrounding dropouts vs. youth who stay in school; and Sharp Healthcare, experienced in Customer Centered Design and our partner employer because of their similar recruitment and retention concerns.

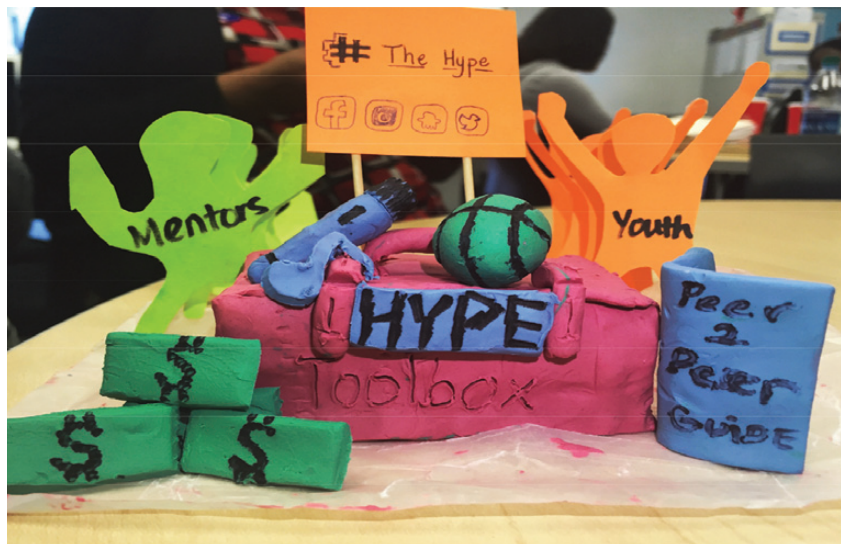
THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Design services and programs for out-of-school youth that will engage them and produce great outcomes?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Out-of-school youth face any number of barriers that inhibit their ability to improve themselves or their circumstances. Some constraints are beyond their control: lack of money, transportation, childcare, or family support. They may be subjected to negative peer pressure in the form of gangs or drugs. Other obstacles may be attitudinal. School may not seem relevant to them, or they may be unable to visualize

possibilities for themselves. Existing programs often do not adequately engage them. Overly long workshops, non-relatable topics, an excess of paperwork, and non-youth-friendly staff were just a few of the elements we identified which might prevent youth from taking advantage of such programs. Through our project, we hoped to find ways to help this population circumvent these roadblocks to opportunity.



PROCESS

We had conceived our CCD project as one that would be guided by youth, and we were fortunate to have two Price Youth Scholars on our team. We hoped to make the most of their vantage point in our research and prototyping.

We customized separate interview guides for out-of-school and in-school youth – in order to compare the two groups – and for employers and youth service providers. We engaged in-school, out-of-school, and employed youth to conduct surveys as they immersed themselves in their own neighborhoods and other locations they identified as out-of-school hangouts. Meanwhile, we interviewed the youth service providers, business departments, and job center support staff. The responses centered around three themes:

Family and Friends are at the center of young adult life. Youth spend their free time with them, discover new things and get job referrals through them, rely on them for transportation, take part in their activities, and spend money to help them. So ...

How Might We – Target friends and family to engage out-of-school youth?

Programs have negative connotations for out-of-school youth. These young adults have little connection to programs or clubs. They perceive these as something that's required. So ...

How Might We – Change the messaging to engage out-of-school youth?

Money has a major impact on program engagement and retention. Youth tend to use their funds for transportation, tuition, and other necessities, so they tend to remain in programs where costs are covered and resources are provided. So ...

How Might We – Help youth with costs related to enrollment and engagement?

From both our research and our convenings with youth and youth program partners, it was evident that assistance and intervention is most effective with out-of-school youth when it comes from a trusted person – someone in their community, or at least someone who understands their culture. And meeting their basic needs is of paramount importance.

PROTOTYPE

The process led us to our ultimate challenge question:

How Might We – Outreach to out-of-school youth through family and peer-to-peer connections?

We hoped to address this with our prototype, the “Outreach Toolkit,” which we envisioned as a file case of information including:

- A peer-to-peer guide for deploying young mentors for out-of-school youth.
- Ideas for outreach events, locations, activities, and leadership opportunities.
- Messaging and social media tactics.

The guide would explain how to recruit, hire, and train youth ambassadors and how to find local resources to help out-of-school youth. In support of the guide, we would assist in activating outreach locations, developing activities and referral incentives, and providing training in the use of messaging and social media.

From previous experience, we suspected that it might be difficult to convince our youth programs and partners to change their way of working with this population. So, when we introduced the Peer-to-Peer Guide during our on-boarding training, we performed a demonstration exercise involving 55 providers and a panel of eight youth, ages 16-24. Posing the same questions to each group produced wildly dissimilar answers from the providers vs. the young adults, clearly demonstrating the disconnect between out-of-school youth and program partners. This use of Customer Centered Design principles helped us test these assumptions and proved useful in our service provider outreach.

MOVING FORWARD

Going forward, we plan to use a CCD project to create a business service guide for our toolkit. We will continue to hold youth feedback and learning sessions as well as professional development for staff and youth training providers. We will also initiate customer satisfaction surveys to analyze whether those taking part in the program would recommend it to family and friends.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

In April 2017, we attended a conference, “Flip the Script: 53,000 Reasons to Change the Story of San Diego’s Opportunity Youth,” a gathering of our region’s young adults, parents, employers, workforce professionals, service providers, educators and more. We used this opportunity to interact with attendees and further explore our own solutions.

We also conducted a CCD project to increase the efficiency of invoicing. We rolled this out on July 1, 2017, and have continued to adjust the procedure, but as of this writing, it has saved our staff and program partners staff 1-4 hours per invoice.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

We have seen the impact of our toolkit among youth providers who have been utilizing our guide. They have increased enrollment/engagement for the first and second quarters of reporting and continue to do so.

Meanwhile, we have been expanding our toolkit by continuing to utilize Customer Centered Design to pose additional challenge questions. As we have investigated these with interviews and research, each has evolved further, leading us to new prototypes for addressing such issues as transportation, safety, mental health, and aspects of multi-generational parenting from self-care to financial literacy.

KERN YOUTH PARTNERSHIP – Bakersfield, California

We were a team of local partners including Employers' Training Resource, Economic Development Department, California Department of Human Services, Kern High School District, and the City of Bakersfield.

THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Assist youth with finding education and employment opportunities by engaging them through our youth partners?

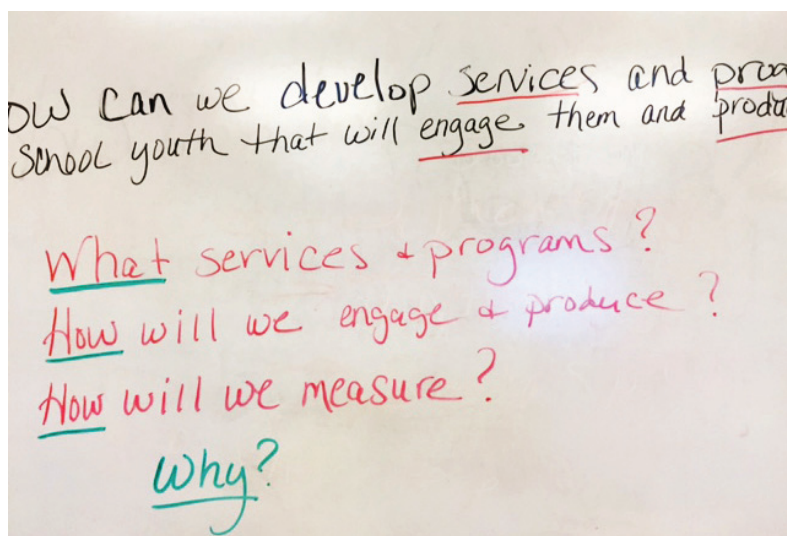
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Kern County is ranked second-worst in the nation for disengaged youth, defined as “those not actively engaged in school or the workforce.” These young adults struggle to find resources to help them re-enter the educational system and/or employment because they lack the knowledge or have barriers that prohibit them from reaching these goals without substantial assistance. Our aim was to design a comprehensive program to engage in-school youth on local high school campuses to educate them about local resources available to them for educational and employment attainment.

PROCESS

To plan our research and find members of our target population (ages 14-24) to poll, we spoke to three staff members, ages 19-23, at Employers' Training Resource as well as some recent high school graduates working part-time as Peer Support with the Kern High School District Career Resource Department. In addition, we contacted a few local experts on the local Workforce Development Area Youth Committee.

Using what we learned in these conversations, we created a short survey that focused on the demographics and specific challenges our local youth face as they navigate the education and employment process. We were able to compile data from 93 respondents in seven different collection sites from the Kern High School District to a recent Youth Employment Strategies workshop. The data we collected and analyzed highlighted some of the primary barriers faced by our local youth with regard to education and career paths:



- Youth place a higher emphasis on practical work experience than traditional education (though many realize formal education is important).
- Goal-setting is important as they plan for the future and helps with their sense of direction.
- The primary concern in finding employment stems from a lack or limited scope of work experience.
- Public transportation is a primary means of moving through the community, and a lack of reliable transportation has a negative impact on success.

PROTOTYPE

We wanted to devise a plan that would enable us to reach young adults with the career and education support they needed without their being stymied by the lack of transportation. Our solution was a series of class modules, job fairs, and roundtable discussions, all held on campus at High School Career Centers within the Kern High School District. The workshops, developed in partnership by Employers' Training Resource, Economic Development Department, and the Kern Department of Human Services, will address the soft skills topics youth need as they pursue jobs or further education.

Building on the interest generated by the workshops, we would invite local businesses to participate in mini job fairs to introduce their companies and career opportunities to the students. The businesses would represent the four primary industry sectors: natural energy resources, healthcare, construction, and manufacturing/logistics.

In addition, Employers' Training Resource would invite current youth education training providers to speak about their services with the participating out-of-school youth participants. Employers' Training Resource, Employment Development Department, and Kern Department of Human Services would also discuss their services and offer enrollment to participants.

SOFT SKILLS WORKSHOPS

- ➔ Personal Inventory.
- ➔ Resume Development.
- ➔ Job Searching Strategies.
- ➔ Interviewing.
- ➔ Professional Attire.
- ➔ Interpersonal Communication.
- ➔ Leadership.

MOVING FORWARD

We have not yet been able to conduct any trainings or events on the Continuation School campus. However, we have held youth-oriented events at our Youth Re-Engagement Center at our downtown library, including a Game Night to introduce the center and its program offerings.

We are in the beginning stages of planning an annual Youth-specific Job Fair to introduce in-demand local jobs to youth who might be interested in entering those fields.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

We conducted free web design workshops at the Youth Center which were well-received by the youth in attendance.

We have made staff field trips to Southern California youth centers in Long Beach and San Pedro. There we discussed best practices for engaging youth and city-wide initiatives being implemented to introduce government-supported youth programs.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

While we have not been able to measure long-term impact as of yet, we are hopeful that more youth will hear about future planned activities via the social media outreach of our partner organizations.

We are moving toward serving more out-of-school youth through our own agency rather than out-sourcing these services (except for those we are unable to provide on our own). In doing so, we can use CCD principles to more fully engage youth and better ensure that we are meeting their needs.

Focus: FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY – Pleasant Hill, California

Our team partners included representatives from: the Workforce Development Board, who were the leads on this project; One-Stop Career Centers; Business Services; Contra Costa Re-entry/Probation; County Office of Education Inmate Education/Vocational Programs; and Volunteers of America - Transitional Housing and Vocational Programs. Prior to this project, all of our organizations had worked with at least one or two of the other partners.

THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Help formerly incarcerated individuals obtain education and employment, develop healthy relationships, and make positive decisions?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Our Customer Centered Design team looked at how to improve access to services for formerly incarcerated individuals and improve the perception of those who have "paid their dues." Our solution was to connect a returning citizen to resources within 72 hours of their release. Because of the transformative nature of the project, the scope of the intervention required the involvement of additional stakeholders and necessitated multiple simultaneous systemic changes for the solution to have impact.

PROCESS

Research & Synthesis

We wanted to learn about the release process – find out whether or not inmates were aware of existing community resources and identify both met and unmet needs of the re-entry population. We began by talking with currently incarcerated individuals as well as parolees living in transitional housing. We also spoke to some re-entry experts (public defender, re-entry coordinator, case manager) and studied the discharge processes of analogous organizations such as hospitals and the military.

We heard from inmates who were released at midnight with no place to stay or who were left on the curb at the local train station. We heard about some being released in paper suits because they had no personal clothing "in property." Most had no concrete knowledge of how to access resources after their release. There were struggles with drugs or alcohol and with finding steady employment. Housing stood out as an almost universal unmet need.

Ideation

We talked about how we could identify inmates with upcoming release dates and alert them to long-term community supports while giving them some starter services and basic necessities. Any feedback we could get from these individuals would inform the referral process for re-entry services and provide us with information on the effectiveness of our prototype. One of the challenges we ascertained from our interviews was that needs vary from person to person.

PROTOTYPE

We hoped to facilitate re-entry with a prototype that would provide individuals with:

- **A Transition Team** offering coaching and guidance toward services and resources.

- **A Transition Plan** covering major life elements – education, employment, health, housing, transportation, legal, financial, and social.
- **A Transition Welcome Kit** containing basic necessities and access to transportation and communication.

The newly opened Re-entry Center in West County agreed to be the hub for distributing the Welcome Kits. To test our system, we found a diverse group of seven incarcerated individuals through random selection and met with them to review the contents of the Welcome Kit. We then convinced the jail to place into each participant's "personals" a one-day public transportation pass and a Welcome Card with instructions for accessing the Re-entry Center.



Upon release and arrival at the center, participants would have a one-on-one meeting with a Re-entry Coach/Resource Navigator before receiving the Welcome Kit itself, which contained a basic smart phone loaded with the newly released 211 Re-entry Resource App, a public transit card, a \$50 Walmart gift card, and a certificate for career coaching/ resume assistance at a One-Stop Career Center. Feedback mechanisms included a survey and one-on-one conversations with Re-entry Center staff.

The results of this trial run were that the majority of participants (five out of seven) received the referral

to the Re-entry Center at the time of their release. However, only two of those five actually arrived there to meet with staff and receive the Welcome Kit. Only one released individual had completed the survey as of our project proposal submission. Although the feedback was positive, this did not offer enough data to draw conclusions.

Key Findings

- Adequate prototyping of this solution for this population may require a much longer timeframe than was available to us for this project.
- The re-entry process actually starts at the time of first arrest; effective solutions require longer-term systemic interventions.
- Substance abuse issues severely impede the ability to access resources.
- Regardless of what people say they need, they may make another choice in the moment.

MOVING FORWARD

In the short term (1-2 months), the team plans to reach out to the individuals who have not responded to encourage their participation and solicit feedback. It may be worth testing whether the Re-entry Center was the best first stop for resources. Potential alternatives could be to identify a team of supports (perhaps including family members) prior to release.

The team will re-tool the welcome process and Welcome Kit once there is enough feedback to proceed. If we are unable to reach the remaining original participants, we will look at other ways to re-distribute the

Re-entry App, transit card, and career coaching certificate. Testing each one separately may yield more concrete results.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

One of the important lessons of this project was how technology could be used to support collaboration. We enhanced the effectiveness of traditional tools (group meetings, conference calls, etc.) with new offerings such as Trello and an interactive electronic whiteboard.

In addition, while learning the importance of identifying the needs of the end user when designing solutions, we also witnessed the positive rippling impact of having buy-in from organizational leadership.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

The efforts of this team have inspired the Workforce Development Board to use this project to focus on the re-entry population. This came at a particularly opportune time, the Board having been just awarded a grant to fund Contra Costa Sustainable Occupational Achievement & Re-entry Success, which operates as a partnership with the local Probation Department to provide vocational training to the formerly incarcerated population.

In addition, there is an enthusiasm to apply the CCD process to other endeavors such as the AJCC Redesign and the Employment & Human Services Service Integration Sites (SIT).

GET-ER-DONE BREVARD – Rockledge, FL

Our team included representatives from CareerSource Brevard, Florida Department of Corrections, Brevard County Sheriff's Department, Brevard County government, the non-profit community organization My Community Cares Brevard, and the local workforce board. While each of our organizations have worked together in various capacities, this was the first time all the partners joined together to comprehensively address a specific challenge.

THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Better serve applicants with criminal backgrounds to obtain stable employment?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The scope of this project was to assist applicants with criminal histories in obtaining stable employment. Initially, we thought that we needed to first focus on the formerly incarcerated individuals themselves.

It wasn't until we had

proceeded through several phases that we had our "Aha" moment. We realized that we needed to start with our employers – just as Career Source Brevard has done with its "Business-to-Jobs" model. After all, if we don't have the employers, we don't have the jobs for the individuals we serve.



PROCESS

We identified immersion locations (Brevard County Jail, Cocoa Probation and Parole Office) and analogous inspiration locations (Brevard County Adult Education Center and University of Central Florida Admissions) so we could study best practices and find interview subjects.

"I don't know who will hire me."

"When they hear about my background they run me out the door."

Our field research elicited some illuminating comments from individuals with criminal backgrounds. Everyone we spoke with really wanted to work, but they struggled to find employers who would hire them.

We received mixed feedback from employers. Some said they "believe in second chances" and would hire someone with a record. Others said it depended on the type of offense. Many said they didn't know about the available incentive programs for hiring people with criminal backgrounds. As we reviewed our notes and observations from our interviews and research, we saw that we were really trying to solve two problems:

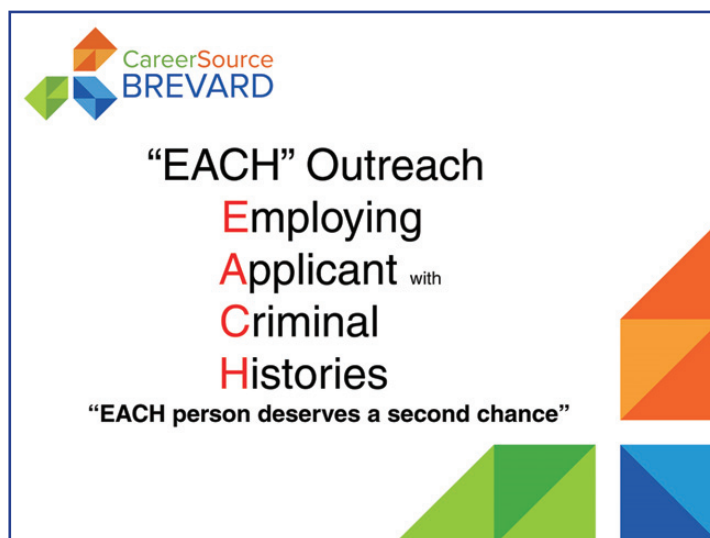
- Strengthen support for individuals with background issues.
- Educate employers to promote more opportunities for this population.

PROTOTYPE

Our prototype, entitled "EACH Outreach: Employing Applicants with Criminal Histories," was a three-part solution.

1. EACH Database

We surveyed our local employers, gauging both their willingness to hire individuals with criminal histories and their awareness of incentives that may be available for doing so. Those who were open to hiring individuals with criminal records would be added to the EACH Database for staff and career seeker use. Employers who were unaware of the incentives would be directed to our second solution.



2. EACH Orientation for Employers

This online platform would be available through our CareerSource website to educate employers on benefits available when hiring individuals with criminal histories. It would include information on the Federal Bonding Program and Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program and feature success stories from employers who have hired individuals with criminal records.

3. EACH Incentive Letter for Career Seekers

Our staffing specialists would give this letter to career seekers with criminal histories to take to job interviews. It will highlight available employer incentives and invite businesses to contact CareerSource staff for additional information and assistance with these programs. The letter would

provide a confidence boost for formerly incarcerated career seekers and perhaps act as a good segue into the difficult discussion about applicants' pasts.

MOVING FORWARD

We are planning a large job fair for May 2018 and will extend a special invitation to customers being served through the Department of Corrections (DOC) referral process and employers on our EACH database. During the year, we host several smaller recruiting events at each center location sending alerts via the Employ Florida messaging system or email blasts.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Just two weeks into our survey of local employers we added 62 to our EACH database. More than 31 employers requested additional information on the Federal Bonding and Work Opportunity Tax Credit programs. At the time of our proposal submission, our staff had issued 11 EACH Incentive Letters to career seekers with criminal backgrounds.

We have also been working with the Department of Corrections in a number of ways beyond our project prototype: giving presentations about career services to customers on probation, participating in community panels and events, and developing win-win solutions for DOC customers. One such collaboration has been creating a process for Corrections to refer their customers to special grant programs such as Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Matthew National Emergency Grants. This helps us meet employment goals and helps Corrections' customers find gainful employment.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

Department of Corrections can now directly refer their clients to CareerSource Brevard for placement services. Based on internal tracking as of December 12, 2017, we have received 82 referrals from DOC, 18 of whom have secured employment after visiting the career centers and working with staff.

We have made progress with adult education and training. For customers served in WIOA and other special grants, during 2016-2017 we served 60 participants with criminal histories (6.70 percent of total participants served) with 28 earning credentials and 34 securing employment thus far. In 2017-18, we have served 34 participants (5.21 percent of total participants served). Six of these have already earned credentials and two have secured employment.

Because of our work on this project, our staff are now more keenly aware of how to serve customers with criminal histories. They make additional efforts to reach out to DOC referrals to help engage even those who may be unresponsive or not actively involved. The long-term impact is being seen as these customers (re)build their work history and secure employment in order to support themselves and their families and make contributions to their communities.

NORTH CENTRAL PA: COLLABORATING FOR SECOND CHANCES – Ridgway, Pennsylvania

Team members for this design challenge included Workforce Development Board staff, representing not only the board but also economic development (due to our co-location with the regional economic development agency in our region), as well as many other workforce programs; WIOA Title I staff, who represented workforce as well as TANF and EARN programs. Adult Education, Probation, YWCA, and a Homeless program were also team members.

THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Empower incarcerated individuals to obtain employment and education post-release?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

There are six county jails in these rural counties of North Central Pennsylvania. Despite having prison ministry, GED, and mental health providers in some of the jails there are no workforce programs being offered to inmates pre- or post-release. The system also lacks a comprehensive assessment to ensure that appropriate referrals are



made for all offenders. The CCD process has started the conversation about these issues, and our team had the opportunity to make a strong impact on the community by addressing the needs of this population. We are committed to continued work on our prototype with the goal of reducing recidivism in our area and, in turn, providing local employers with a pool of skilled workers.

PROCESS

We understood the importance of learning both from the people who are affected by the lack of employment transition opportunities for the incarcerated and from those who work in the criminal justice field and witness its effects first-hand. We tried to be as thorough as possible in our research, interviewing and surveying people in a number of related groups: currently and formerly incarcerated individuals; their family, friends, and peers; employers; ministry volunteers; re-entry professionals; probation and parole officers; public defenders; mental health providers; and others. We observed in immersion locations such as jails, prison ministries, local court sentencings, and the Salvation Army. We studied analogous locations including grief support groups and Red Cross meetings for people overcoming traumas.

Our most striking – and most common – observations were that most people with criminal backgrounds are repeat offenders, have committed a drug- or alcohol-related crime, lack family support, lack positive relationships, and have both short- and long-term goals.

Our secondary research – articles and documentaries – helped us explore best practices in programs aimed at helping individuals post-release. Our takeaways were that any such program must be holistic (taking the whole person approach), provide opportunity, and employ cognitive-based interventions.

PROTOTYPE

The prototype we arrived at was to bring the services of PA CareerLink to inmates while they are still incarcerated so that they leave the jail with improved education, interview skills, resumes, and ideally, secured employment, which will empower them to make positive decisions after their release. Putting key necessities in place and completing some job-seeking steps during incarceration would allow inmates and staff to focus on career or education plans post-release. Components of the plan would include:

- **Peer Specialist**, either paid or volunteer, to work with inmates inside the jail.
- **Assessment** of inmates using the developed workforce assessment tool and triage with focus on immediate skill building using cognitive behavioral interventions.
- **Support**, in coordination with key stakeholders, to ensure post-release housing and follow-up appointments to address needs identified in assessments.

An advisory board of key stakeholders (court, corrections, attorneys, employers, previously incarcerated individuals, family members, etc.) would provide guidance to this program.

Challenges

In this rural region, obtaining financial resources is always a challenge. We planned to start small and bring together multiple agencies in each county to leverage non-monetary resources. Navigating the bureaucracy of six different counties will pose another challenge. Within the program itself, addressing inmates' cognitive behavior issues may be the most formidable test. Ultimately, however, we hope that the success of this project will demonstrate its benefit and encourage the county and other entities to contribute to its support.

MOVING FORWARD

We will continue to prototype and modify the assessment that we have developed. We will also engage additional partners as appropriate, build advisory groups in each county, solicit local foundations and county officials for financial support, and assess the video conferencing capabilities of each county jail to possibly offer workforce related workshops. Meanwhile, we will work to equip all partners with information about programs in this area, including the Federal Bonding Program and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

We have since held meetings at each county jail to introduce our workforce program. This led to a collaboration with another local non-profit and a team of AmeriCorps volunteers providing work readiness curriculum in two of our county jails. The AmeriCorps volunteers also helped organize a book drive that collected books for two county jails.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

We have increased collaboration with probation officers in each of our counties. In addition, there is now a connection between our One-Stop staff and each of our county Criminal Justice Advisory Boards. This includes meeting attendance and making referrals to each other's programs and services.

Workforce Solutions (North Central Workforce Development Board) continues to utilize the Customer Centered Design methodology in many of our activities including grant writing, policy development, and strategic planning. We also encourage our One-Stop partners to apply the CCD approach to day-to-day operations at the One Stop centers.

WESTMORELAND-FAYETTE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD SECOND CHANCES WORK! – Youngwood, Pennsylvania

This project provided an opportunity for supervisors, specialists, and case managers from several agencies to pool our knowledge, resources, funding streams, and outside partner relationships to help break down barriers for formerly incarcerated individuals. Among us were staffers from youth-focused departments at Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board, PA CareerLink Westmoreland County, PA Department of Labor and Industry at PA CareerLink Westmoreland County, and Adult Education and Jobs Development staff from the Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette County.

THE CHALLENGE

HOW MIGHT WE – Help formerly incarcerated individuals obtain employment and education, develop healthy relationships, and make positive decisions?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Understanding the demographic shift in the workforce from Baby Boomers to Millennials, it became increasingly clear that formerly incarcerated individuals will play a significant role in tomorrow's workforce. Yet, this population faces numerous barriers to further education, employment, financial stability, and a successful, productive life. The question for our team was how to remove at least some of these barriers.

PROCESS

To investigate this pressing issue, we spoke with formerly incarcerated men and women, local employers, education providers, and representatives from the criminal justice system. We interviewed each group using a set of general questions for background and then dug deeper into how to overcome educational, employment, and other life barriers after incarceration.

AHA MOMENT
Structure and Step-by-Step
Process = SUCCESS!

What we found was that progress for this population is made in small steps. Building structure, increasing self-confidence, and preventing self-sabotage is key to preventing a sense of being overwhelmed and a return to the criminal justice system.

Our vital insights fell into three main areas: self-sabotage, lack of motivation – among both the individuals and potential employers, and lack of resources for this population. Among our findings:

- Employers often focus on a person's offense, not their job skills.
- The previously incarcerated may have unrealistic views of their employability.
- Transportation constitutes a huge barrier for this group.
- Lack of a personal support system makes it difficult for former prisoners to reshape their lives.

As we reviewed our input and brainstormed solutions, we asked How Might We –

- Create a system which includes a resource guide to be distributed to county prisons?
- Encourage formerly incarcerated individuals to accept their responsibilities?
- Showcase the skill sets of formerly incarcerated individuals to employers while building the individuals' self-esteem?

Using these questions, we constructed a detailed storyboard to enumerate all the steps an individual would take from jail release through re-entry counseling and job seeking all the way to employment and the renewed self-esteem necessary to build a new life. We noted in sub-steps any obstacles they might encounter and actions that would be required along the way.

PROTOTYPE

We decided to create a process to assist the formerly incarcerated through these steps. Our step-by-step guide would help them prepare in advance for the re-entry process – hopefully transitioning into employment and post-secondary education or training – thereby increasing the likelihood of success after release. The guide would be distributed to our target population, all partnering agencies, probation and parole offices, county prisons, and local helping agencies. It would be comprehensive but also user-friendly and convenient.

We came up with the idea of a simple plastic accordion folder containing four color-coded file folders. Each folder would be dedicated to a specific area of need:

RED – Personal information and identification documents.

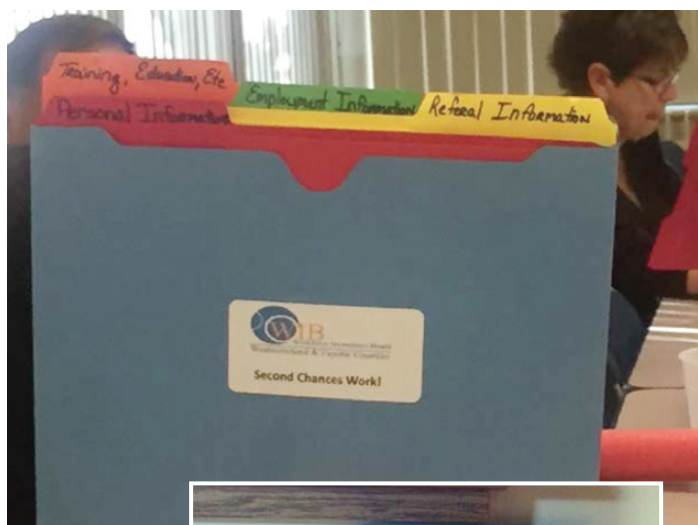
YELLOW – Basic life needs such as housing, transportation, and counseling.

GREEN – Employment.

ORANGE – Education and training.

The folders would include information about all the area resources available in these categories. Each would be labeled with a simple “Do You Need” cover page as a guide to its contents, so users could easily find and access whichever resources they needed at the time.

To start, the resource guides were given to a select group composed of formerly incarcerated individuals, members of various judicial agencies, and potential employers. From these groups, we learned what was missing and what outside factors still put obstacles in the way of success: lack of funds, housing, and immediate support, for instance. Based on the feedback, we made our first refinements. We eventually created a new



iteration which we would distribute, along with a pocket guide, to formerly incarcerated individuals on the day of release. We planned to update this as needed.

MOVING FORWARD

We are beginning to utilize transitional funds through our State Funded Workforce Funds in addition to our normal Labor and Industry Funds to provide services to the formerly incarcerated population.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Our CareerLink Team developed a referral process for use in the County Jail and Prison through which formerly incarcerated individuals can be referred to employment specialists for assessments of grade and skill levels. In addition, the Private Industry Council, one of the organizations represented on our committee, is now taking adult education into the prison system and working with the Dads Matter Program to provide career-readiness training and job-search techniques to those participants.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

In the long term, we have identified areas that need attention. While the process we put in place is having some positive effects, we are challenged by barriers such as drug abuse and lack of commitment among participants. However, we have continued to build partnerships with the courts, the prisons, and employers. We meet bi-monthly with representatives of our local court system, our adult education provider, and public officials, including commissioners and state representatives, to focus on employment opportunities and other issues that impact the formerly incarcerated.

Although our project did not lead to additional CCD projects specifically, we have used this model in helping to create vision statements for our Youth Council and when looking at developing better service outreach to our clients.



“As organizations across the country use CCD as their preferred way of doing business, we are seeing amazing anecdotal evidence that when you improve customer experience, you improve customer outcomes.”

Virginia Hamilton, Regional Administrator,
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment
and Training Administration, Region 6

CUSTOMER CENTERED DESIGN DESIGN WORKFORCE RESOURCES

WEBINARS



The Customer Centered Design Challenge Launch (Round 2)

https://ion.workforcegps.org/resources/2016/04/19/11/01/The_Customer_Centered_Design_Challenge_Launch



Customer Centered Design Prototype Phase

https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2015/12/08/15/07/Customer_Centered_Design-The_Prototype_Phase

PODCASTS



Customer Centered Design – Part 1

Customer Centered Design – Part 2

Both podcasts can be accessed here:

https://ion.workforcegps.org/resources/2015/09/02/17/11/Customer-Centered_Service_Design_Initiative

VIDEOS



Voices of Experience on Customer Centered Design

https://ion.workforcegps.org/resources/2016/04/11/11/58/Customer_Centered_Service_Design

OTHER RESOURCES



Design Kit: The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design – (Book/Guide)

<https://www.ideo.com/work/human-centered-design-toolkit>



Design Mind Blog – (Blog)

<http://designmind.frogdesign.com>



The Open Book of Social Innovation – (Book)

<http://youngfoundation.org/publications/the-open-book-of-social-innovation>



Prototyping Framework – (Resource/PDF)

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/prototyping-framework>



The Bootcamp Bootleg (Book/Guide)

<https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources/the-bootcamp-bootleg>

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