**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Reentry Employment Opportunities Job Clubs**

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LAURA CASERTANO: Now I'm going to get myself right out of the way, and again, welcome to today's Job Clubs webinar. If you haven't done so already, again – and most of you have – or if you're just joining us let us know your name, the name of your organization, where you're located in the country, and how many are joining in a group.

And now I'm going to introduce today's moderator, John Hunter. He's a workforce analyst with the Employment and Training Administration's REO team. John?

JOHN HUNTER: Thank you so much, Laura, and good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for joining today's webinar on Job Clubs. As Laura, my name is John Hunter and I'm a member of the Re-entry Employment Opportunities team – or REO – at the Department of Labor's national office.

Today we will hear tips and strategies on starting a job club. But before we get started I would like to invite other members of the REO team to introduce themselves. Are there any federal officers joining us today?

Just to note, you may ask any questions during or after the webinar.

Now it's my pleasure to introduce John Rakis from the Coffey Consulting team, who will be leading the first part of the webinar. John?

JOHN RAKIS: Thank you, John. I'm going to be joined with Lenora Thompson today and we're pleased to be here. It's a great audience today to talk to you about job clubs.

We're going to cover a lot of ground in a short period of time today, so after the webinar we'll send out a summary of the content by email so you can follow up on any of the content if you wish.

Here are our objectives for today. By the end of the session you will learn how job clubs can improve employment placement and retention outcomes; learn how to start a job club; learn best practices for managing an effective job club; and learn about resources you can use to develop and support a job club. So if you're thinking about starting a job club or have a support group for your participants at the current time and are looking for ways to improve it, this webinar's going to provide you with a lot of useful information.

I'd like to start out by doing a poll. Do your participants have access to a job club or to a support group whose focus is employment? (Crosstalk.) Glad to see that many of you have a job club; at least seven of you do at this point, or partnering with your community partners.

And one of the things that we'll share with you, if you are partnering with one of your community partners you can share this information with them; perhaps help them improve their job club. And obviously if you want to start a job club – and six of you do – or offer your participants access to a job club, we're going to provide you with some really helpful tips in terms of starting one up, or how to find a partner in your community.

Well, great. Thank you for participating in the poll.

We're going to start out simply by how to start a job club. I want to start with the definition. Job clubs are small facilitated groups that meet regularly to assist members in their search for employment. These collaborative groups foster networking, offer moral support, and a variety of ways to search for a job.

Many job clubs have an educational component in which useful job skills are taught by the facilitator or invited speakers. And while workforce professionals may serve as facilitators for job clubs, many are successfully led by volunteers from faith- or community-based organizations. So as you think about job clubs or think about setting up one for yourself, you may want to involve a volunteer or somebody from the community in helping you run it or manage it.

Because the purpose of the job club will drive the rest of your decisions, you want to clarify the reasons for starting a club. You want to determine what the club will do and who it's going to serve. Will the club focus on enhancing job search skills? Or will its primary purpose be networking and sharing job leads? Will you invite all of your participants to attend or will you have groups based on the credential acquired by the participants? Clarity of purpose will help in making decisions that follow.

You don't want to reinvent the wheel – and I'm going to say this a few times during this webinar – you want to investigate other job clubs. There may be a job club in your community that meets your purpose or can serve as a useful source of information. So before starting your own, reach out to them and arrange to attend one of their sessions.

America's Service Locator maintains a good database of job clubs by zip code. We have the link here and we'll share that with you after the session.

If you don't have the capacity to support a job club you may want to partner with one and refer your participants to them.

Here's another step. You want to form a small design team. You're going to start one on your own, it's helpful to have a small team of committed people – maybe two or three – to help in the design, the decision making, and the implementation. They should be tasked with creating the agency's policy and procedure guidelines for the club and getting it up and running.

You'll also want the team to propose and develop partnerships in support of your job club. The job club is not something that you run on your own; it's something that you involve the community with, involve your partners with; make it real.

Here's a helpful tip. Ask your participants what job club services they would like to see. So as you create the parameters of your job club you want to ask them for their assistance. If they help you design it, they're going to be much more likely to support it. So get their feedback as you design your initiative. And if the job club is currently running, you still want to get their feedback to see what things can be done to improve it or enhance it.

Now, I said earlier there's no reason to reinvent the wheel. There are two comprehensive documents that can serve as a resource for you. The first is a toolkit created by the New York State Department of Labor, which is "A Guide to Starting Your Job Club," and that can be found on the Internet.

The second was developed by the state of Idaho. We'll send you these links in the follow-up document that will be sent out. These are two really good documents. I encourage you to download both of them and keep them in your online library and take a look at them. If you're starting one, some great tips here; and if you have one there are some great tips that we're going to share with you later that will give you some advice and guidance on how to keep it up and running and get the biggest bang for your buck from the job club.

So now Lenora is going to share some information about building partnerships in support of your efforts. Lenora?

LENORA THOMPSON: Thank you, John.

Well, first of all, as John has said several times, we don't want to reinvent the wheel and you can't do this alone. So partner with what we call a One-Stop Career Center, or more commonly known today as the American Job Center. That is another name for the same place that's commonly known as that.

Also, consider partnering with a community-based organization or faith-based organization who can help you start the job club and provide resources and ideas. They might be able to make space available, provide guest speakers, or provide other forms of support beyond the scope of your grant.

Branding is very important for any new initiative, and given the job club name that reflects its purpose helps attract participants and is helpful when describing your club to your stakeholders, including the press. You want them to get it right and you want them to know what it is that you're all about.

You'll want to consider transportation needs and availability of your target members as you plan when and where to meet. Meeting once a week is ideal and the meeting should be at least an hour but not longer than two hours. You should allow sufficient time for everyone to participate.

The schedule of the meeting can affect its purpose. Meetings at the beginning of the week tend to focus on motivating participants for the days ahead; and meetings at the end of the week provide more of an opportunity to review job search efforts.

So now we're going to talk about establishment of parameters. Besides how many people you will accept, the schedule for the meeting and where it will take place, you should be small enough to allow everyone the opportunity to (speak ?) and large enough to create synergy needed for success.

A good facilitator is important to ensure that meetings stay on track and everyone has the chance to participate and benefit from the club. Ideally the facilitator has workforce development experience. He or she should have good leadership skills and be comfortable speaking in front of a group. But you don't want to select someone who will simply lecture. Remember the adage: you don't want a sage on the stage; rather, you want a guide on the side.

So here's a helpful hint. Have at least one dedicated staff person or a volunteers for every 10 club participants. The ratio of 10 to 1 is a good number and usually helps to keep things organized and running very smoothly.

Even a well-designed club will not succeed if it does not attract a sufficient number of participants. You will need to conduct outreach to ensure your population knows about the club and how it will help them. If your program is using social media, consider setting up a LinkedIn group or Facebook page for job club participants where they can share their experiences between sessions.

So now we have a few questions for discussion and we'd like to get you involved. We'd like to hear from those of you who have a job club or a support group with an employment focus. What tips can you share about starting one and what worked for you? And also, what didn't work? So we're asking now that you either unmute your phone and you speak or you can type in the chat box. I believe there were seven of you at the beginning who said that you have clubs, and there were also several of you who are working with partners.

So we'd like to hear from you. What is working and what has been a challenge, and maybe what didn't work at all? John, I know you've done these over the years; anything come to mind to you while they're –

MR. RAKIS: Oh, yeah. When we talked about publicity, I think, in terms of making sure that your participants know about the job club, it's also important to let your community know about the job club that you're running.

Do a press release if you're starting one up. Or if you have one, arrange for somebody to sit in, maybe a reporter that can do a story about the job club. The reason for that is that you want employers to know about the work that you're doing, and any way that you can network with employers is going to be good.

So let the public know about what you're doing, either through a press release or perhaps see if you can get on the radio to discuss the work that you're doing; let people know about the success you're achieving with this group; let people know about the jobs that people are connecting to.

And ultimately what you want to do is you want to get not only the support of employers – you want to invite them to come, actually, to speak to your participants – but you want to get other resources from the community. It could be foundation resources or it could be a company that wants to contribute one way or another to your work.

So get the word out, not just to your participants but to a larger audience in your community as well. And that's why I think having a catchy name, something that reflects the work that you're doing, can really be very, very helpful and that's why we mentioned it.

MR. HUNTER: I know that there are some of you out there that have done it. Would you like to unmute your phone and share what you've discovered about starting up a job club?

MS. THOMPSON: I think there were seven who said that they started and four who are partners with someone; but six of you said that you have not done it but you're on this call, so that means you would like to learn more about it.

So even if you have not started one, is there a question so far that comes to mind that you would like to ask us before we move on to the next slide? We would love to hear from somebody, and Laura has already said, unmute your phone by pressing \*6. You don't have to type in the box; you can just unmute your phone and say – (inaudible).

MR. RAKIS: By the way, if you haven't started a job club and you're a nonprofit organization, this may be a good project to propose to a foundation or to a local company for funding and support. People like to fund new initiatives, new ideas. If you aren't doing it, this may be a way to generate some new funds for your organization.

MS. THOMPSON: I know we mentioned partners with other groups and the faith-based organizations and your community. This is an excellent opportunity to get them involved, and they have a very, very large audience because most faith-based groups share information among themselves. So this is an excellent way to go about doing that.

OK. So we're going to continue on. (Crosstalk.) So now I'm going to turn it over to John and he's going to talk about best practices.

MR. RAKIS: Thank you, Lenora. One last point about involving your local Career One-Stops and faith-based groups. Faith-based groups may have the space that you don't have. This is something that I think – there are many faith-based groups that have been involved in job clubs around the country, and I think when you do your search you'll identify them.

They make great partners. Many do have the space and they want to do something. This is something that's really tangible; something that they can do on a regular basis; and something that makes a lot of sense because when we know that when people get support, guidance, they're much more likely to do better, especially if it's group support and guidance.

So we've looked and identified a few best practices for you that are being used by job clubs which we feel may be useful to you. Most job clubs have a set of rules reflecting the core values established by the founders. The rules generally indicate how members will interact. Some job clubs decide to formalize these rules into a member agreement or a covenant.

Here's some examples of job club rules. These are the sort of examples you'll see for any type of support group meetings. Attend all meetings. Let someone know in advance if you can't attend. Maintain the confidentiality of the other members.

Share your knowledge and experience. We really do want people not just to attend, to be sponges at these meetings, but we want people to share their knowledge and also their experiences looking for work, some of the challenges that they're facing.

Be respectful of one another. Be encouraging and give constructive feedback. That's something that people may have some challenges with, and I think you can model for your participants or the facilitator can model what constructive feedback is.

And I think as you speak with – as you run these groups perhaps if you're doing an exercise where people are practicing their job skills, one way you can model giving constructive feedback is to say, OK, so so-and-so did this interview; what's one thing they did really well? What's one thing they really aced? And then you say, well, what's one thing that was OK, that they did well? And then finally you can say, now, what's one thing that they could use improvement with?

So by doing it that way – and any activities that you do, I think – one really great thing that they did, one thing that they did well, and one thing that needs improvement – if you do that consistently in a job club or in any activity that you're doing where people are observing and giving feedback to each other, you're modeling good behavior; you're modeling how to give constructive feedback. It's a technique that I've used over the years and I've found really works very, very well.

Another rule. Do not monopolize the group; let everyone have a turn. That's where, I think, as a facilitator you serve as a gatekeeper, and you make sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate; that nobody really takes over the meeting.

It's also a good idea sometimes to involve people in the group and actually have these definitions up on the wall. You may want to serve as the gatekeeper, but you may want to pass that task along to one of the participants, and say your job will be to make sure that everyone talks and has an opportunity to participate. You don't have all of the workload on yourself and it also encourages buy-in from the participants.

Pay it forward. When you find a job, return to assist others. When people come back and talk about their success in securing work and doing well, that's a great motivator. I think a facilitator can talk about what it's going to feel like when you get a job, but nothing compares to a person coming back and saying, I thought nobody would ever hire me; I thought this was going to be impossible. But based on the advice that I got and the training and the credential I got this great job and I'm really doing well. That really serves to motivate others. So you want to establish that pay-it-forward mentality.

If you're going to do an agreement I always like – so many times our participants are given a sheet of paper with the rules, sign here. I think work release rules and probation rules, parole stipulations and the like, those are necessary and you must share those with people and they must acknowledge receiving them.

I prefer with a job club or nonprofit program to use a two-column approach. One column is the obligations of the participant, which would be described here. The other column is your obligations, what you're obliged to do – to provide the space, to provide a safe space every week, to provide a facilitator, to provide an agenda – some of the things I've already touched upon.

In other words, what are your responsibilities? And then you sign that with the participant. I think that really – it's like a contract. It's like a real agreement. And when you put something in front on someone and just say, sign it, and they have to follow all those stipulations, it's not the same. But when they sign something that you sign, I think it really empowers them a bit. It feels that everyone has a stake in the success of the job club.

So another helpful tip – and I just mentioned this earlier – encourage participants to talk leadership roles. It could be something as simple as tracking time, taking notes; sharing leads. It eases your workload, but it also encourages buy-in from the participants. The more they're involved, the better the group will be.

And sometimes I found with running groups with this population, if you're going to use this strategy – and I think it's a good one – have a sign up on the wall which explains what these different roles are. So the person taking notes is the recorder. You'll have recorder and a definition; the recorder is the person taking notes. The timekeeper is the person tracking time. That's the person that makes sure that everything gets done in a timely manner.

So all these different roles can be spelled out, put on a sign, and then placed in your room and then people can take turns taking those different roles. It's not only a good practice to get people involved, but it also teaches them about meetings and about making sure that meetings run on time and that things get accomplished, and that they just can't rely on a facilitator to do everything.

It's really teaching them a good skill that they can probably use in their work going forward. I mean, how many times have you had to run groups in your job as people progress in their careers and they have to be engaged in group activities? It's good for them to know. Someone needs to track the time; someone needs to take the notes; someone needs to make sure – (inaudible) – that everyone contributes. So it's a good learning tool as well.

Decide on a meeting flow. You know, each session should have a general agenda. There are many different models for the flow of a job club, depending on the type of group, whether accountability is the focus, whether specific skills are taught, and so on and so forth. So each session should have a general agenda and a consistent flow, and I really believe that this is important – it's important for any meeting that you do.

If you're going to have a staff meeting it's good to have an agenda so that people know what's going to be accomplished. It can also serve as an invitation to attend the group. People say, oh, this is not just something that's being decided at the very minute that the job club starts, but is something that's been planned in advance.

So here's an agenda for a networking job club. There's different types of job clubs. Some can promote networking and job placement. Others can be used to train people to prepare people for job interviews.

This is an example of a networking job club agenda. There's a welcome. You want to make sure that everyone gets introduced. If there's any news to share, this is a good time to do it, at the beginning of the session. You want to do a review of what happened last week, especially in terms of job search goals.

You may want to talk about your organization's goals, but in the case of job clubs, you want to say, where are we today; how did everybody do? What members have actually secured work or have secured interviews?

This is the place, too, where you want to share job leads; and it's not just you providing the job leads, but it's also the participants getting involved because they will hear of things either from their probation and parole officer or perhaps they'll see something in their community, a help wanted sign that perhaps doesn't interest them but may interest somebody in the group; or in the course of they're doing an interview they'll learn that a company has several openings. This is where it's important to ask everyone to share job leads.

Having guest speakers come in – an employer, for example – really important. As I said, a facilitator is going to facilitate the process, but you want that facilitator to bring in people. Not necessarily – if you bring in an employer that's a big – I think really impresses the participants that are in the club and they can learn a lot from talking to an employer.

If your group is large you may want to do small breakout groups for networking purposes.

Breaks – all these things, just as basically a solid agenda.

Here's another agenda for a skills-focused club. Welcome, introduction – all the same sort of form initially – but then you have a speaker; a One-Stop job developer coming in who can give instructions, guidance. This is basically an agenda for people that need a lot of skill development, so you want to bring in people. And then you see the skills exercise where you actually practice and give feedback.

Remember the tips that I gave on providing feedback. You want to be able to let – everyone needs to give constructive criticism, not just the facilitator. And once again you get your job leads and then a closing motivational thought.

So two basic agendas, but I think, as I said, it's important to have an agenda for every meeting and you want to do that in advance, and you want to let the participants know that there's structure to the club.

Know your limitations. That's an old line from a Clint Eastwood movie. You never want to provide guidance outside of your training scope of practice. Know your limitations and have the resources available so that you can make a referral should the situation warrant it.

You also want to fill in any gaps in knowledge of guest speakers or experts, and that's something that really needs to be planned in advance. Once again, you want to involve the community in your work, and that's why I think if you get publicity for your job group – it helps in terms of getting volunteers who can come in and talk to your participants.

You know, it's very useful to have a resource directory that addresses the barriers most frequently faced by your participants. Alternatively you may want to have access to an online directory at the session. If an issue or a problem is raised during a meeting you want to provide a resource or referral as quickly as possible. So I always had a resource directory available in the room where the job club is taking place because issues came up.

It's really great to be able to open up the book and say, OK, we have a resource for clothing, for extra training or for housing or for treatment purposes, whatever; the resources are here, we can share them with you now; let's see if we can make arrangements for you to access those resources. You want to have those available because those issues are going to come up.

Well, here's another helpful tip. Now, I've never managed a support group that didn't provide a beverage or snack. Of course, you're going to need to find another source of support for this, but it's really worth the effort. Coffee or tea can help people concentrate and a light snack can boost a person's energy level. I've also found that when people break bread with each other they're much more likely to collaborate.

Another thing to note. When I did run a group for people that were actually in prison – come from prison to my work site, and I also had participants who had been released – I would always watch who was eating and who would sit next to the food, from the people that were outside the facility.

I found that if a person sat next to the food and really seemed to be filling up on all the food I would pull it aside later and I would always ask them, are you having some trouble with your food budget or whatever? Typically they would tell me yes, I haven't eaten in two days or a day. That would give me a clue that something else was going on in their life. We would try to help them with other funds that we had so at least they could have some food while they searching for work.

So when you bring people together in a group like this you want to observe their behavior and be alert for those sort of things. They may tell you that a person needs a resource that they may be too embarrassed to ask for.

Now, Lenora is going to share some guidance on what topics might be included in job club meetings. Lenora?

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you, John. I just want to make another comment about the food.

In your community there are many, many nonprofits that will gladly give you food. Panera Bread, if you have one of those in your community, they donate that's left at the end of every day. Subway donates; the supermarkets donate; really, just have to ask them. And your faith-based organizations are great for wanting to host things, and they provide food. I don't know of a faith-based organization that doesn't have a meeting that does not also have a light snack or things to go along with it.

So I just wanted to add that. There's some of you that might be saying, where do I get this from? And I would just share with you that it's from your community. Target is another one that will donate food for meetings. Most of them will do if you only ask one time and don't come back over and over.

MR. RAKIS: I want to add to that. Every nonprofit needs to have a scrounger; at least have somebody that's not embarrassed to ask for resources. My group had one. That's a person that just goes out there with your 501(c)(3) status tax form and just says, I need your help.

MS. THOMPSON: Right.

MR. RAKIS: If you don't have a scrounger on your staff, someone that feels comfortable doing that, look for a volunteer that can do that. There's lots of people out there that would love to work with a nonprofit that would love to help develop resources. They don't feel embarrassed about asking and they'll go out there on a full-time basis for you, I think.

I've had many, many volunteers in the past that have done that for me. It's amazing what they bring back.

MS. THOMPSON: Absolutely.

So some job clubs, often those with an educational focus, have expanded curriculum that they cover – (inaudible) – over a set number of weeks; for example, 10 weeks, eight weeks, doesn't matter the number of weeks. Others are less structured and more fluid.

In either case it is wise to create a list of topics to cover and speakers you would like to invite in advance. This allows for lesson planning and booking speakers as well as for letting others who might like to attend know what is coming up.

The kind of speakers for job clubs include recruiters, career counselors, placement counselors; we also refer to One-Stop centers or the American Job Center staff; motivational speakers; employers. All of these are individuals who you can ask to be speakers for your job club.

Job club leaders should regularly go out and talk to local employers about what their skill needs are, the types of people and experiences that they are seeking. That's so important because they will tell you exactly what they're looking for. Sometimes we think we know what an employer wants and an employer may have a different view altogether. So this will help you to inform members about what employers want as well as make the employer aware of the job club as a potential recruitment source.

Recruitment is very expensive for employers and it costs a lot of money, and employers are very willing to work with an organization or group that is sending them someone who is prepared, who knows exactly what the employer wants them to do, has the necessary skill, and is willing to do the work. And so here's another place where a job club can just be invaluable, save the employer money, but also help the participant be able to obtain a job.

Many job clubs have members that find employment and have members that return at least once to celebrate their success. This is extremely important because for many of our participants, successes have been few and far before in terms of times. This helps keeps us motivated and often the entire group feels it's had a hand in the member's success.

At the same time, it is important to be encouraging but also to not offer false hope. The leaders should help members set realistic expectations, that they may get several rejections before finding a job. And leaders should promote resilience. So it's important for them to understand that just because they are prepared and everything seems to be good on one end for them, that they still may not get the job.

And there are many reasons why someone may hire someone or may not hire someone. So I think when you prepare them for this, they're less likely to get upset and also be discouraged.

So at this point we have a discussion question and we'd like to ask you, please unmute your phones, please type something in the chat box. Let us hear from you. How do you promote resilience in your program? What kinds of things do you do? I know that there are a number of you who have job clubs and we don't want this to be a one-size presentation, because we know that it's important in active learning for the participants to hear from others who are doing the things that we're talking about.

So we're asking that you unmute your phone or type in the chat box, but let us hear from you. And even if you want to respond to the previous question about job clubs or anything that we've said thus far that you agree with or would like to put more emphasis upon, please feel free to say it at this point in our discussion.

One are the things that I've done to promote resilience – while you're getting ready to type or thinking about what you'd like to say – oh, I'm glad, a couple people are getting to type – is to do mock interviews. Mock interviews really help you to assist the participants with building their own self-esteem.

So Rochelle Perry (sp) wrote, "By keeping competition as a discussion topic." I'd like to hear a little more about that, Rochelle, so if you don't mind, could you unmute your phone and let us hear? I think I know what you're talking about but I'm not quite sure, and I'd like to hear from you so that you can tell us exactly what you meant by that.

The other thing is, is that it's really good to help people to understand that just because they may not receive one particular job, it doesn't mean that there's not something better waiting for them, and that's something that I share with people that I work with all the time. There's an old adage that says that when one door is closed, another opens, so we just never know if something better is waiting.

So Rochelle wrote, "Listening by computer but I'll write more." OK. Thank you, Rochelle. Thank you so very much.

John, would you like to add anything about the discussion?

MR. RAKIS: Yes. I mean, one of the things that I like to do with participants in the job club to inoculate them against failure is practice those job interviews, and say "what if." What if you get turned down for the job? How will you react to it? Let people discuss that.

The other thing that's I think really useful for this group of people is to provide them with skills that actually help them manage stress, because what is the job search process? It's a stressful process. So how do you respond to stress in a positive sort of way? Obviously you don't want people having a drink or using drugs, but there's other techniques – deep breathing exercises, muscle relaxation.

Those are skills that can be taught and practiced, and it's a good idea to use this forum, I think. Put that on the agenda, practicing relaxation skills, and teach people the skills that they need to react in a positive way to stress as opposed to using drugs or alcohol.

I see we have some more – (technical difficulty) – someone joined us. I think we hear someone in the background there.

MS. THOMPSON: No. It's OK. Go ahead.

MR. RAKIS: So I see Denice, "Bring in a speaker that's overcome (embarrassment ?)." That's great because they serve as a role model.

MS. THOMPSON: Rochelle wrote a little more. She says, "I mean taking the baseline issue, not the criminal record history, but the market and what the employer's looking for."

And Conrad, thank you also. He says, "Our organization promotes resilience by doing mock interviews along with bringing in mentors to speak with them. These mentors sometime are in the same position and often bring light at the end of the tunnel. They talk about some place they've been and have walked in the person's shoes. Nothing like someone saying I've been where you are, I understand what you're going through, and that I understand and can offer you suggestions to navigate this. So helping them with all these tips for resilience is extremely important."

MR. RAKIS: And remember when you do those mock interviews, to engage everyone in the group, providing them feedback. Structure that feedback so that they provide constructive criticism. I've found that using that technique that they say, what's one "wow" that they did, something that they did well and what's something that needs improvement.

Follow that format every time, and then make sure that everyone in the group is listening to that mock interview and then provides feedback. You just don't want the facilitator to provide feedback, because if that's the case people really aren't learning. But if they actually have to listen and provide feedback they're learning in the process as well. So it's a great technique and it works every time.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you, John. OK.

Establish a "pay it forward" mentality. That's a term that's become pretty popular. We used to pay it back, give back; now it's pay it forward. Some people say give forward.

Many job clubs find that it is helpful to create a culture in which members who've found employment come back not just to celebrate, but to assist other members with their newfound network and contacts. This is very important because they now have done it. They are successful. They've been hired.

They may match them up as mentors. For example, increasingly employers offer referral bonuses that (make this ?) additionally beneficial for all those involved. Many employers – (inaudible) – know how expensive it is to recruit individuals, and then they hire someone that doesn't work out. But if they're referred by someone who is clear about what the company is looking for, it becomes a win-win for all of those involved and it's really good for the employer and also for the participant.

Each group member should receive a copy of any handouts used during the session. There are also many types of handouts that might be useful to job seekers. For example, groups with an accountability dimension may hand out accountability sheets with questions from members to answer. One group might ask high and low points of a week, key accomplishments of the week, goals for the upcoming week, things learned that might be helpful to the group, and help most needed.

These accountability sheets – or sheets that are handed out – are really helpful to the participants because many of them do need a little more structure in their lives; and they find that when they're given sheets with questions and things that they have to focus on, it helps them to stay focused.

Groups might also hand out job search organization – (inaudible). There's other information available on the WorkforceGPS. So please remember to have handouts and possibly have folders for your participants to put these things in. I know some of these things may sound very basic, but these are things that the participants might need.

Rochelle wrote that, "Ten people can be qualified for a position but selection – is more. How the person came across in the interview, how they respond to any and all requests and the assumptions that a person will fit with the rest of the team." That is very important, Rochelle, because people look at the climate and whether or not they think that you'll work as a part of the team.

Paulette (sp) wrote, "I used to highlight success stories and post them up on a bulletin board for other clients to view. I've seen that in organizations that I've walked in and it's very exciting to see the success stories and the picture."

And Susan (sp) wrote, "We offer weekly group discussions regarding job search strategies and career advancement. In addition, we have community partners come in to share their personal experiences." Thank you all for adding that information and hopefully you'll continue to add information.

So now we'll look at a few job club topics. I'm sure that you could come up with many of your own, but I chose three just to say something about it and hopefully you'll respond. The 30-minute (sic) pitch seems so simple to do but it does require a lot of practice and it requires a lot of focus; and it is something that many people don't do very well. This is something that would be very helpful as a topic in your job club.

The other one I've chosen to mention is (the whole ?) employer research. Nothing impresses an employer any more than they know that the participant or the person coming for the interview has really done his or her homework and they know something about the employer and who they are and they don't ask questions that are common questions, that if they had done just a little bit of research on the company, that they would find out this information.

Another one that I really put a lot of emphasis on is nonverbal body language or communication, because it says so much about who you are when you don't even think that you're sending a message to someone. So if you're not focusing, looking; if you have your arms folding; you look disgusted – some people don't even realize the message that they're sending.

And the last one for me is one that I know today will engender a lot of discussion, is dressing for success. Today there are so many ways that people are dressing – and it is not the old way that maybe we thought about it – but there are certain things in certain fields depending on where you're going that still apply.

I helped a young man recently get a job – an afterschool job – at McDonald's and encouraged him to wear a shirt and a tie; something to help him to stand out from all the other applicants. So dressing for success is still important and it's still important for our participants to understand that they're not going out to a nightclub; they're not going out with their friends on a Saturday; but it is important to dress for success.

If anybody has a topic that really is endearing to them, please write it in the chat box. Even if we move to another slide we'd like to still hear from you on that item.

MR. RAKIS: You know, Lenora, I know a correctional industries program that emphasizes the 30-second pitch. They teach everybody the pitch and they practice it. They pride themselves, they can stop anyone on the factory floor and say, give me your pitch, at any time and that person can just get it out without hesitation.

MS. THOMPSON: You're absolutely right. That 30-second pitch sounds very – like it should be simple but it can be very complicated because it takes many hours of time, practice, (content ?) to make sure that it flows, makes sense. It's not as simple as it may sound.

MR. RAKIS: I think it's a great idea to – once you have people practice it and master it, to just do those surprise inspections, or whatever you want to call it. Give me your pitch. It really does – because it catches them off-guard, but if they can do it off-guard they'll do it well in front of an employer.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you.

Periodically it is useful to stop and examine what is working and what is not working in the group. When turnover occurs, the dynamics and needs of the group may evolve. Members may suggest changes that would help the group improve in meeting their needs. (Inaudible) – should evaluate and adapt as needed.

The job club must remain relevant to the participant, so it is extremely important because as the numbers start dwindling and people start coming in late or not coming on time or not coming at all, it is usually an indication that they've lost interest or it needs to be revamped or you need to add something in to keep people excited about what is going on.

So we have another helpful hint here. Consider using SurveyMonkey to evaluate the progress of your job club. This allows people to anonymously say how they feel – feel that they can openly discuss what is going on. And today just about everybody has a smartphone, so this would be something that would be easy for them to be able to do.

If all the job club participants have an email address then SurveyMonkey is easy for you to get feedback. And if anyone has used SurveyMonkey – I know I have a number of times and I've been asked to complete a few questions on it – it's not very difficult and it's easy and quick to do.

Michelle (sp) wrote – I'm not sure if you're asking a question – "Any suggestions for re-entry population?" I'm not quite sure, Michelle. If you give just a little more information, then maybe we can respond to your question.

OK. John?

MR. RAKIS: OK. Sharing job leads. It's all about jobs, actually; isn't it?

And I think one of the incentives that people have for attending a job club is that they get job leads. So it's important, I think, to do some homework upfront, preparing a list of job leads in advance and sharing them with the group. You can also ask participants to bring in any leads that they might have and create a list from that.

Many job clubs have a weekly email to members, where they share job leads. Simple practice, but it's one of those things that really gives people incentive to come.

Here's a topic that I probably wouldn't have discussed with grantees a couple years back but – virtual tools. If it's possible to set up an invitation-only LinkedIn, that doesn't cost anything. It's limited to those people that you invite. That's a great way to share job leads and provide support between meetings.

Now, in order to have a LinkedIn group, a participant needs to have a LinkedIn profile. Once again, that's something that I might not have recommended a few years back, but as we move forward and as our society becomes more integrated with social media it's really becoming a must as people advance in their careers.

They might not need LinkedIn for that first job, but they probably will need it for that second and third job as they advance in their careers. I think 90 percent of all recruiters use LinkedIn now to recruit participants and vet them.

Another good thing about having a LinkedIn profile is that if you have a criminal record, if you've been involved with the law, if you've had your name in the newspaper for reasons that you don't want other people to know about, if somebody does a Google search on your name the first thing they're going to see, if you have a LinkedIn account, is going to be your LinkedIn profile, that the time that you robbed the grocery store or stole a car or did something that you don't want people to know about or that you don't feel proud about.

So I think having a LinkedIn profile not only prepares people for career advancement – and that's something that we really want to focus on for our participants going forward; not just that first job, but where you advance in your career. But it also puts them in a positive light if somebody does a Google search on them.

So if that person has a LinkedIn profile and you can help them set that up, the next step is to set up a LinkedIn group. A LinkedIn group is something that you set up; it doesn't cost anything; you decide who belongs to it. You send out an invitation via email, and then once a person accepts the invitation, they're part of that group.

And the nice thing about a LinkedIn group is that if you want to post job leads on a LinkedIn group the only people that are going to see it are the people that belong to the group. And if you want to provide advice to the participants in that group, the only people that are going to see it are the people that belong to the group.

And people in the group can pose questions to each other. They can post job leads if they see one. They can post news about themselves. So in many respects a LinkedIn group is a virtual job club. Now, obviously there are people that are – programs that are work release, perhaps – that can't access that at this point in time. Hopefully that will change in the years to come.

But I think in terms of career advancement this is where you want to position your clients. You want to get them a LinkedIn profile; you want it to look professional; you want to have a great title on it; you want to have a good photo. And then ultimately you want to make sure that people update their profile and then participate in the group that you set up.

So, "Are there any suggestions for re-entry population?" I see Michelle is saying.

MS. THOMPSON: I just wanted to say that everything we talked about, Michelle, was directed to the re-entry population, but job clubs work whether you're in re-entry or not in re-entry.

So unless you want to unmute your phone and give us a little more information, but John and I both, we work continuously with the re-entry population and we are well aware of their needs and things that they need to do that are different from sometimes – (inaudible) – population. But the things that we've written here apply to both populations. John, you may want to add something to that.

MR. RAKIS: Yeah. I was able to convince a correctional assistant to actually bring prisoners from the prison into my office. But that's something that I think is probably not practical to suggest to anyone.

However, one can start a job club in a prison or in a work release facility; bring in – and I've done this – bring in guest speakers, bring in employers. And you can teach people about – you know, they may not be the right target to set up a LinkedIn profile, but you can teach them about what LinkedIn in and how social media can be used for career advancement purposes. You being there.

And then when they get out and they get referred to a nonprofit or they get involved in America's Job Centers then they can set up a LinkedIn profile through the center. But you want to set the stage for it. You want to get people prepared for it. People need to learn about it. So that's one way of doing it.

A group can take place in a prison, in a work release facility; it can take place outside, obviously. It can take place in a church. The location – it can take place in any location as long as you provide a facilitator, as long as you manage it and do all the things that we talked about in this webinar – have an agenda, deciding what you're going to do, how you're going to go about doing it; involving volunteers. All these things can be done in almost any setting.

Hopefully, Michelle, that answers your question. If it didn't, please type in again and I'd be happy to take a second crack at it.

MS. THOMPSON: Right, right. Thank you.

MR. RAKIS: So if anyone would like to – is using a virtual tool with your participants, if you're using social media to help people either secure work or advance in their careers, let us know how you're doing it; if you're using Facebook in that regard. I know there are several of you out there that are using a Facebook page for your organization.

If you're using that to generate job leads, if you're using it to share job leads with your participants, whatever way. We'd love to hear about it. This is pretty much cutting-edge stuff and it is the future of job development, and I think we need to be testing the waters at this point and trying different things and using whatever tools that are available to us.

I see Rochelle is typing; give her a second to type.

MS. THOMPSON: I was going to add, too, John, that many of you know – the little box that you see on flyers and have squiggly things in it, it's called a QR code, or quick response code. Embedded in those codes are also sometimes information about jobs, and employers post information about jobs. So I would have to agree with you, John, that the technology is moving in a manner that things that we're doing today we just never even thought about five years ago in terms of doing.

And almost everybody has a smartphone today of some kind, and that QR code is something that carries a lot of information. And whether they can use it or not, they ought to be aware that this occurs and is something that is available to them.

MR. RAKIS: We've shared on that topic before.

I see Rochelle says, "While I agree with both of your comments I would add that when you add social media or other computer literacy resources to the group, not addressing the mix of competency can have a negative effect on sustainability of members at a higher level."

That's where assessment really is very, very important. And I think as you decide who is in your group you want to do the assessment first to make sure that they're at relatively the same skill level, so that if you do bring up topics such as social media or computer literacy, that the people that are attending the group are working at that level. That all speaks to the need for doing a really good assessment as people come into your program to see what their needs are; and then as you decide what avenues to direct them in, those avenues are based on your assessment.

You don't want to mix – put somebody in a group and talk about how to use social media if they can't use a keyboard or if they're illiterate, for example. There's obviously some steps along the way that they need to take before they get to that level.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you for that comment, Rochelle, because sometimes we all need to be reminded of that, and everybody is on a different scale when it comes to social media and we should never use terms and words that we assume everybody understands. So thank you for that reminder to keep that in mind.

But again, as John said, we need to do the assessments in the beginning to make sure because we don't want to lose people, and that would be a way that someone would drop out, because they feel that it's too advanced for them.

MS. THOMPSON: And Lenora, you mentioned the QR codes. We see them all the time and very few nonprofits that I know are taking advantage of them. They're not exactly the latest technology; it's quite old at this point. However, a QR code is that little square that has – can't picture what it looks like, even – black and white boxes.

If you use your smartphone it will bring you to a specific website, and it doesn't cost anything to generate a QR code. You just cut and paste your web address into a QR code creator, which is free on the Internet, and it produces the code for you, and then that's a GIF file, and you can copy and paste that onto a business card or onto literature.

So it is one way, if you're doing a handout to somebody and want to link – give them information that's on the Internet, you can put the GIF file – image – on the handout. And if they have a smartphone they just have to do a scan of it and it'll bring them right to the web page. So if you have a business card you can put the QR code on your business card as well, and if you meet an employer you can give him or her the business card, and if they scan the QR code it'll bring them right to your web page.

So it's free, it's easy to do, and it's a great technique for at least telling the world that you're up to snuff on the latest stuff in technology.

MS. THOMPSON: John, I don't see any more comments or questions.

MR. RAKIS: Let me just move on, then. I just would like to – if you have any questions about any of the topics that we've covered – suggestions, thoughts, ideas – we'd love to hear from you at this point. You can type them into the chat window.

We did cover a lot of ground today. We'll share with you the links in a separate document. See if anyone's typing at this point.

MS. THOMPSON: And I hope that staff – those of you who are on the call – will possibly share this with your staff. You will get the PowerPoint; you will have the conversation recorded; and you'll see everything. So this is a good form of staff development, and hopefully those of you who were not doing this have gotten some ideas and will start a job club; and those of you who have job clubs will have learned maybe a couple things that you think about, do differently, or add to your job club.

MR. RAKIS: And if you need some guidance on either setting up a club or if there are any of the tips that we shared today that you think might be useful in terms of the groups that you're running – whatever type of group that you're running – you'd like some more information about it, you can talk to your coach and your coach would be happy to provide you with any extra resources that you might need.

We have a few extra comments and I thank you for those comments. And what I'd like to do right now is turn it over to John for the feedback.

MR. HUNTER: Very good. Thank you so much, Laura, Lenora, and John Rakis for the outstanding presentation on how to start a job club.

Just wanted everyone to know if you have any future questions on starting a job club please reach out to your TA coach at Coffey Consulting and they'll address those questions.

Also, please watch for future webinars on WorkforceGPS, webinars on other topics and other trainings.

And if there are no more questions, thank you everyone for participating and being a part of this webinar. Have a good afternoon.

(END)