**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Considerations When Writing a Statement of Work for an Evaluation**

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LAURA CASERTANO: With that, I'll get myself right out of the way. I want to welcome everyone to today's "Considerations When Writing a Statement of Work for an Evaluation." And I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Megan Lizik. She's a senior evaluation specialist and project officer for RESEA Evaluation. Megan, take it away.

MEGAN LIZIK: Thank you so much. Hello and welcome, everyone. My name is Megan Lizik, and I'm with the U.S. Department of Labor's Chief Evaluation Office. I'm excited to moderate today's webinar entitled "Considerations when Writing a Statement of Work for an Evaluation."

Joining us from DOL's RESEA study team are our colleagues from Abt Associates, Tresa Kappil and Hannah Engle. Tresa and Hannah are both senior analysts and evaluation technical assistance coordinators for the RESEA evaluation.

Before we get started, I wanted to take a step back and refresh everyone on the goals of our RESEA evaluation technical assistance and what we're trying to accomplish through these webinars. Evaluation is an iterative, ongoing process. What you learn from an evaluation -- either one you conduct or one another state conducts -- might leave you to think about changes you want to make to your RESEA program.

In turn, you might want to evaluate that new program, or component of your program, to continue learning more about what's most effective in helping people get back to work quickly and so on. This type of culture of continuous improvement or a culture of evaluation in evidence building doesn't happen overnight.

And we recognize that many of you are already engaged in some type of a cycle like this in your states where you seek to use data and evidence to continually inform your program or policy decision. This is why the RESEA evaluation TA that we've been providing are geared toward a broad audience of states with RESEA firm. We want to build capacity to use, understand, and develop evidence. These resources can ensure that everyone who is administering an RESEA program and everyone who is evaluating or considering an evaluation of their RESEA program has resources on key evaluation topics to either get started or to progress from where you're at.

You'll notice in the downloadable documents for today that this webinar has an accompanying worksheet. This worksheet is designed to help your RESEA team identify the information you need to consider to develop a statement of work for an evaluator. The worksheet is intended to help your team thinking concretely about the features of the evaluation your state would like to conduct, the skills and experience your evaluator will need, practical constraints around your evaluation -- things like budgets and timelines -- and then next steps toward getting your evaluator in place.

Once you have an understanding of these things, you can move forward with tracking your statement of work, including specific tasks and deliverables, and prepare to select your evaluator. Today's presentation stays at a bit more of a higher level since the tasks on deliverables might vary by state. And we're also geared towards thinking about states that will be used in the competitive procurement process. So the worksheet can be used by both those looking to procure an independent evaluator, as well as those that are planning to use an in-house evaluation team, as it will help you outline key parameters of your RESEA evaluation.

Please take a moment now to download the Microsoft Word version of this worksheet by clicking on the RESEA evaluation SOW webinar worksheet, which you will find in the file share box on the right-hand side of your Adobe Connect screen. You're welcome to jot down notes and ideas on the worksheet as we go along. But don't feel like you need to fill it in completely or in its entirety during the webinar. Indeed, some of the questions may need to be answered by other people in your state and with the thinking of your larger team at the table.

We hope that this will be a useful resource for you and your state team as you engage in your evaluation planning and evaluate your selection. That said, let's talk about our plans for today's webinar. First, we'll briefly review some of the key concepts from our RESEA evaluation TA webinar, Procuring and Selecting an Independent Evaluator, which we held last year. This webinar describes some of the foundational concepts for identifying and selecting an evaluator, including considerations for procuring an independent evaluator.

Next, we'll describe what a statement of work (SOW) is, why it's important to create one for your evaluation, and what kinds of information is typically included in your SOW. During this webinar, we will describe important considerations for your SOW, provide examples that can jump start your thinking, and highlight areas of your evaluation planning that might require more thought or discussion within your state team. While creating a statement of work can be useful guiding documents for all evaluations, including in-house evaluations, today's webinar is focused on helping those that are thinking about the competitive procurement process to create a statement of work.

At the end of this webinar, we'll reserve some time to answer some questions you have about writing a statement of work or selecting your evaluator. And you can feel free to enter your questions in the chat box at any time. Before we begin, I want to mention that we're using the phrase, statement of work. Your state may prefer the term, performance work statement, or standard of work, or perhaps even a different term. But the goal is the same. We want to establish clear written guidelines for your evaluator on the work that you expect will be performed for your evaluation.

So in this first part, let's revisit some of the important concepts from procuring and selecting an independent evaluator. As you'll remember, this webinar was hosted last summer in 2019, and it can be found on WorkforceGPS. We also have a link to it at the end of the slide deck for today. Selecting the evaluator is one of the most important evaluation decisions that your state team is going to make.

States that select qualified, experienced, and independent evaluators are much more likely to end of with evaluations that produce the information you need about your RESEA Program, that use appropriate evaluation designs that meet evidence standards for high-quality studies, and are completed on time and on budget.

When we talk about a qualified and experienced evaluator, what we mean is that the evaluator has the skills and the experience to conduct the evaluation your state is most interested in. Often, this means the evaluator will have prior experience conducting evaluations using the design type you're interested in, the analytic methods you're interested in, and perhaps has experience working with the labor and workforce topics that you're focused on.

So for example, if you're thinking about doing an impact study with a random assignment design, your evaluator should have prior experience conducting random assignment evaluations, and preferably those that use large volume of administrative data. Ideally, your selected evaluator will also have a fair amount of content knowledge on unemployment insurance programs or RESEAs so they understand important contextual factors about this type of program and the conditions in which it operates.

When we refer to independent, we mean that the selected evaluator should not be or have been involved in the development, oversight, or operation of your RESEA Program. Working with an independent evaluator helps ensure that your evaluation findings are objective and promote transparency. A qualified staff member from your workforce agency may be able to lead your evaluation. However, you'll also want to ensure that your in-house evaluator is separate from your RESEA Program and has not been involved in development, management, or operation groups.

For more information about key principles involved in independent evaluations, you can also refer to DOL's evaluation policy on the Chief Evaluation Office website. You can find qualified, independent, and experienced evaluators many places, including your state agency, university research centers, third-party research and evaluation firms, and independent consultants. The type of evaluator you select will depend on many considerations, like the kind of evaluation you want to conduct, the kinds of tasks and deliverables that are required, the skills that are needed to carry those out, and practical parameters, like budget, timeline, and state and local procurement rules.

You can refer to our previous webinar, Procuring and Selecting an Independent Evaluator, for more information on those points. When we're thinking about competitive procurement, it's also important to remember that those types of evaluator selection methods can take time. It starts with engaging key stakeholders on important choices, like what research questions you want to answer. You'll also need to write your statement of work, put out a request for proposals, and carry out a panel or selection process to choose your evaluator and award the contract. Altogether, it can take as little as three months, but perhaps even as much as a year to go through these steps.

Your agency's procurement office can give you an estimated time frame for how long procurement takes in your state. And you can keep this time frame in mind as you plan your evaluation timeline and activities. Finally, writing a clear statement of work helps ensure that your RESEA team and the evaluator that you're overseeing are on the same page about the evaluation's focus, purpose, timeline, and budget. A clear statement of work can help you better assess potential evaluator bids, and can set up expectations for ongoing project management by the state staff that will manage the evaluator.

Again, today's webinar about considerations for your SOW is tailored to those that are planning to procure your evaluator. But states that are thinking about using an in-house evaluator can also learn valuable lessons about how statements of work can establish clear expectations about the focus, purpose, timeline, and budget for your evaluation.

Now I'll turn things over to Tresa Kappil to talk more about the statement of work and its importance in your evaluation. Tresa, perhaps you're muted. I don't think we can hear you.

TRESA KAPPIL: Hello.

MS. LIZIK: Yes. We can hear you now.

MS. KAPPIL: Sorry about that. Thank you. First, I'll start by saying thank you so much, Megan. Let's begin with the basics. What is a statement of work? A statement of work is a written summary of the work, tasks, activities, and deliverables need for the evaluator to complete for your RESEA evaluation. As Megan mentioned, while we use this term statement of work in this webinar, your state may use another term, such as a performance work statement, or something similar. Writing a clear statement of work is important because it will clarify the evaluation focus and let potential bidders know what tasks and deliverables they should expect to complete for the evaluation.

Often, writing a statement of work is the first step in your state's formal procurement process, including a request for proposal, or RFP process. The statement of work will typically become the basis for your contract with the evaluator. SOWs usually provide enough information so the bidders can reasonably respond with a bid that meets your needs. SOWs usually include information on background of the program or evaluation effort and intervention to be tested, the type of evaluations you would like the evaluator to conduct. Examples would be an impact study, outcome study, or an implementation study. SOWs also include some initial research questions and outcomes of interest.

Your selected evaluator may refine these once they come on board. But including this information in your SOW helps evaluators understand what you are hoping to learn from your evaluation. Statements of work for the RFPs in which they are [inaudible] also include information on desired evaluator qualifications. You might think of this as the minimum level of skills and experience the evaluation team need to demonstrate in order to have a successful bid. They will also likely include tasks and deliverables. This is the number of reports and presentations you expect from the evaluation.

And it should include a period of performance or a timeline. It's important to include this information because the evaluator will need it to accurately estimate a budget and timeline for their bid on your evaluation. Your statement of work and RFP should be detailed enough to get a reasonable bid and allow an evaluator to assess what your agency's needs are without being so specific that your bidder has very little room to provide creative solutions to your evaluation.

Lastly, some SOWs for procurement might indicate initial budget estimate. But they will not describe the final budget. In fact, some procurement offices might not allow a signal of the budget estimate. It will be important for you to check with your state's procurement office about how much information can be shared about the likely budget available for the RESEA evaluation effort.

Before I begin, let's see how much experience people have with the competitive procurement process and/or writing a statement of work. Please click on one of the options. I'll leave it for one more, five more seconds. It looks like most people either have some experience or no experience. And for the few people who have a lot of experience, we hope that the webinar will still provide important specifics of writing a statement of work to procure an evaluator.

Now that we talked about what's included in the statement of work, we will now turn to the worksheet that Megan talked about at the start of the webinar. The worksheet is divided into four sections. Each section is designed to focus your thinking on key aspects of your statement of work and evaluator selection. We will spend most of the remainder of our time together discussing the four sections of the worksheet. However, due to time constraints, we will not be discussing every question on the worksheet. Our time today will really focus on the questions that are most critical to developing your statement of work and ultimately selecting your evaluator.

Feel free to download the worksheet and enter notes as we go along, or take the worksheet back to your team for further discussion after this webinar. The worksheet is really designed to be a tool that can help you and your team organize your thinking around writing a statement of work and engaging in a competitive procurement process. Again, you can download the Microsoft Word version of the worksheet by clicking on the RESEA evaluation SOW Webinar worksheet in the file share box in the lower right-hand corner of the Adobe Connect screen.

So let's dive into the worksheet. The first section of the worksheet asks you to think about major components of your RESEA evaluation. Describing these major components in your statement of work will allow potential evaluators to appropriately respond to your requests for proposals. The first question in this section asks you to think about three major components of your evaluation. What intervention will your study evaluate? What are your initial research questions? And what type of evaluation do these research questions call for?

Let's start with the first component, the intervention your study will evaluate. As we have discussed in previous webinars, you may wish to evaluate your whole RESEA Program in its entirety or a select component of your program, like intensive case management. Since potential bidders will need to think through slightly different design considerations for a whole program versus a component test, it's important to identify what intervention or interventions you wish to test early on.

Next, you'll want to identify your research questions of interest. This will tell potential bidders what you are most interested in learning from your evaluation. Identifying your research questions is also important because some types of research questions require certain types of evaluations to answer them. Identifying your research questions will help you answer the third question on the slide, which is, what type of evaluations can [inaudible] to your research questions? This is in question 2 in section 1 of the worksheet for those of you who are following along on the worksheet.

In general, you can categorize research questions into three broad categories. Impact focus -- an impact study is the only type of study that can answer questions related to the effectiveness of your program. You can also have outcome focus research questions. An outcome study can answer research questions about outcomes related to your RESEA Program, but can't demonstrate that your RESEA Program caused those outcomes. Or you could have implementation focus questions. An implementation or process study can answer questions on how your program is operating in practice.

On the next slide we'll talk about these question types in more detail, but you can see how an impact focus research question will necessitate using impact evaluation. Let's look at some specific examples of research questions and appropriate types of evaluations to answer those questions. Impact focus questions try to get at the effect of your RESEA Program on claimant outcomes, and can be answered by a random assignment study or a quasi-experimental design evaluation, or QED.

Research question, a question an agency can hope to answer by conducting an impact study as the selection for RESEA improved claimants employment outcomes from what they would have been otherwise. You will notice that this would require a test of the whole RESEA Program, and not a component of it. A state can be interested in studying the impact of a component of their RESEA Program as well. Examples of research questions for an evaluation of a component is, does more case management by my agency staff improve claimant outcomes?

Let's now look at the research questions that can be answered by an outcome study. As you recall from the last slide, while outcome study can tell you how much a claimant achieved a particular outcome, an outcome study cannot attribute this affect or impact solely to the program because outcome studies do not include a comparison. Example of outcome study research question would be, how soon do claimants in my state become reemployed?

Implementation focus research questions focus on how the program was designed for operating in practice and can be answered by implementation or a process study. An example of an implementation study or research question could be, what reemployment services and activities do claimants participate in, and how do their experiences vary across the state? These are just a few examples of research questions. Your agency may be interested in different topic areas. Your evaluation might also include multiple research questions.

For example, your agency might be interested in both the program's impact on employment and earning, as well as how the RESEA Program operates underground. This might mean including impact and implementation focus research questions. And as a result, your evaluation would require impact studies while implementation study. The final question in this section asks you to think about the stakeholders that you may want or need to be involved in planning the evaluation, as well as the stakeholders who may be interested in your evaluation findings.

Engaging with key stakeholders within your agency when planning the evaluation will help ensure that the evaluation reflects your agency's priorities. How much your RESEA team consults with other stakeholders will be a reflection of your agency's culture with a respect to research and collaboration. These provide a list of potential stakeholders here. This list is not exhaustive. Not all RESEA programs would need to consult with all stakeholders.

When planning your evaluation and writing your statement of work, you may also wish to consider who the ultimate audience are for your evaluation, what they will be interested in learning from your evaluation. Considering the audience will help you determine what tasks and deliverables you should include in your statement of work, while a final report that outlines all the methodological details, as well as finding [inaudible] for an evaluation. You may want to consider including other deliverables in your statement of work that will be more easily consumed by a wide range of audiences, including brief one-pagers and summaries.

Let's turn to the second section of the worksheet, which deals with the competencies and skills your evaluator will need to conduct your desired evaluation. It's important to clearly describe what skills and competencies potential evaluators need to be able to demonstrate so that that response is included information. Without including this information in your statement of work, your team may not be able to assess whether respondents to the RESEA have skills and competency to conduct the evaluation you envision.

The first question in this section of the worksheet asks, what kind of professional capabilities, competencies, and skills does your evaluation design require of an evaluator? As we've already discussed, selecting a qualified independent evaluator is one of the most important decisions your team will make when planning your evaluation. Describing the minimum qualifications the evaluator needs to demonstrate in their responses to bids will ensure that your team is in the best position to work with an evaluator that can reasonably conduct the evaluation you envision.

When thinking through the qualifications you would like an evaluator to demonstrate, you might start by asking bidders to describe, one, the experiences their team has with your preferred evaluation type or types. This likely includes asking them to describe their proposed approach to evaluating the identified interventions using the preferred evaluation types or type, which will also likely include asking them to describe their previous experience conducting these types of evaluations. You can also ask about staff experience. This likely includes asking bidders to provide information on the education and experience with individual team members.

This could include asking potential bidders to submit resumes or bios of key staff. Ideally, bidders will propose a mix of staff, including more experienced and educated staff to lead evaluation efforts with more mid-level and junior-level staff to execute date-to-day evaluation activities. You can also ask about data now with experience. RESEA evaluations will have a wealth of administrative data to draw on. Given the likely importance of this data for RESEA evaluations, you may wish to ask potential bidders to demonstrate their experience and expertise obtaining, cleaning, and analyzing large volumes of administrative data, especially unemployment insurance and employment services, or other labor-related relevant data.

You can also ask about time commitment. You want to ensure that the evaluation team and its key staff have sufficient time to commit to your RESEA evaluation. For example, you wouldn't want a project director who only commits five hours a month to your evaluation because it's not enough to get all the necessary work done. You can ask bidders to fill out a table or chart or otherwise describe how much time they have available for this evaluation. Lastly, you can also ask about independence from the RESEA Program. Demonstrating independence is particularly important if you are using an in-house evaluator.

However, you may also wish to have external bidders describe how they will maintain independence, transparency, and objectivity in their evaluation efforts. In this slide, we provide an example of a staff and the likely qualifications that a potential bidder might propose for a large prospective impact study.

While this example is illustrative only, it might not reflect what is right for your state-specific evaluation. It will give you some insight into the mix of staff that are likely to be bid for evaluation and paths those staff will engage in and what qualifications they bring to the evaluation.

Starting at the top of our table, it's important to note that the more senior staff, including principal investigator and project director, are the most expensive staff, but often have less time to dedicate to the project than mid-level staff. This is because senior staff tend to focus on project design and oversight, and leave the evaluation implementation to experienced mid-level staff.

While your state will likely have a lot of interactions with the principle investigator and the project director in the beginning and end of your evaluation, you will likely have less interaction with them in the middle of your evaluation, as mid-level staff do the work of implementing the evaluation.

Junior-level staff often do tasks that require less evaluation experience, but are critical to the success of completion of the evaluation, including taking notes on site visits, weekly calls, collecting data, and completing preliminary data cleaning, etc. The example in this slide provides some general rules of thumb when responding to your RFP. Bidders should provide estimates for the amount of time each staff member plans to spend on the project. Likely in the budget estimate that they provide.

I'll now hand it over to Hannah to talk about other important considerations for writing your statement of work.

HANNAH ENGLE: Thank you, Tresa. Next, section 3 of the worksheet consists of questions that focus on identifying practical parameters to be considered when developing your evaluation's SOW. The first question in this section asks, what budget and resources do you have to support your evaluations? A key resource of funding available for your evaluation is your RESEA program funds. As stated in UI program guidance, states can use up to 10 percent of their RESEA program funds per year on your evaluation activities.

There may also be state or local funds that can supplement your evaluation. One of the most important resources available to you are the staff in your agency who may be able to support pieces of your SOW and RFP development. For example, your in-house evaluation, LMI, performance management, IT, and/or other staff may be able to assist with your preliminary thinking on evaluation design and management. Once you bring on an evaluator, these staff may also be able to help with data access and assessment, as well as ultimately transferring data to your evaluator.

You may also want to look for in-house staff that have the appropriate evaluation, education, and expertise to oversee your evaluator's work and facilitate their evaluation efforts. Only the evaluator will be responsible for the vast majority of evaluation activities. They will need an internal point person who can help them complete the evaluation activities as needed.

In thinking about how to develop your SOW or begin effort to engage in the competitive procurement process, it may be a good idea to start by connecting with the staff in your state procurement office. In addition to alerting you to any important state rules around procurement or important templates for SOWs or RFPs, your agency's procurement office may be able to help you form the panel of program staff leads and in contracting staff who can weigh in on evaluator selection efforts.

You can design clear selection criteria or evaluation factors so you can review and rank proposals in a panel. They can also establish clear expectations for how you will consider technical and cost factors. And lastly, they can lead any necessary negotiations once an evaluator is selected and contracts need to be signed. Your legal and contract team may provide important reviews to ensure that your SOWs and RFPs are in line with current state laws and address important legal and contractual topics, like data security and confidentiality, rights to publishing, period of performance, and more.

Question 2 in this section asks, what timeline does your evaluation type require? Including the period of the performance and/or a timeline in your SOW will enable your potential evaluator to develop a reasonable plan for completing your evaluation. Generally, evaluations are multiyear efforts. It is important to think through your timeline because it will have important budget and contract implications. On this slide, we have provided some very general timeline estimates by evaluation type.

How long your evaluation will take will depend on the specifics of your evaluation. Implementation studies often take between 12 and 24 months. It often takes time for evaluators to develop qualitative data collection instruments, and several months to collect data in the field your interview, focus groups, or observations. Several months are needed to analyze data and write up findings. Outcome studies, depending on what outcomes you are studying, may take 1-4 years. Outcome studies of approximate short-term outcomes take less time because this information is collected more quickly.

Outcome study that examine long-term outcomes that tend to have data lags like employment and earnings can take longer. Data access and longer follow-up periods, as well as data analysis, contribute to longer timelines on outcome studies. Perspective impact studies, like random assignment studies or perspective QEDs, may take at least four or more years to complete. Perspective impact studies often take longer because it takes time -- often multiple years, for example -- for sample to build.

Once the sample is accumulated, you will need to also wait for the follow-up period, i.e., the point at which or through which you are measuring outcomes to be complete to the last individual included in the sample. Once the follow-up period is complete for all claimants included in the study, you will need to obtain, clean, and analyze the data and then write up the findings. If you do a retrospective impact study, your study timeline could be shorter -- perhaps 12-24 months. Regardless of what type of evaluation you plan to use, please note that the planning period for this study can take an additional 6-12 months.

These are just examples. You will need to think through some important things in order to determine what a feasible evaluation timeline is for your state. As demonstrated above, the type of evaluation will play a large role in creating a realistic timeline. As noted in the last slide, sample accumulation or build is one of the biggest factors driving your timeline. Particularly if your state plans to use an impact study, it will be important to have a rough sense of how long it will take to accumulate your samples.

For example, your team would likely need to write a slightly different statement of work for an impact study that will take just one year to accumulate samples, and the statement of work for an impact study that will take 2 or 3 years to accumulate samples. The table on this slide provides some very rough sample-size estimates that vary based on the type of intervention you plan to test and the outcomes on which you plan to estimate impact.

If you plan to use an impact study, your team may use the table on the slide to estimate how long it would reasonably take an evaluator to build the sample for your study. Once your evaluator is on board, it will be their job to determine a more precise estimate of the sample size for your impact study. Generally, studies that allow more time for sample build will have larger sample size, which will increase your evaluation's likelihood of detecting impacts.

Sample size needs will vary from evaluation to evaluation. And these estimates are solely to give your agency some sense of how much time will be needed to achieve these numbers. Looking at this table, we can see that the sample size needed to detect impact is larger for component evaluations than whole program evaluations. The sample size needed to detect impacts on employment is larger, while a somewhat smaller sample is needed to detect impact on UI duration, and even smaller to detect impact on proximate outcomes like meeting attendance.

Using what you know about the number of claimants your state is likely to refer to RESEA or serves your RESEA during study period, you may be able to determine approximately how long your evaluator will need to build the sample. Now let's walk through a practical example. Let's say your state is interested in conducting an impact evaluation to test the effects of your whole program on employment outcomes. Based on this table, you would estimate that your evaluation might require a sample size consisting of approximately 10,000-25,000 claimants.

If your RESEA Program anticipates serving about 8,000 claimants annually, you can reasonably expect that your evaluator will need 2-3 years to accumulate the needed sample. Alternatively, if your state is interested in conducting an impact study to estimate the impact of the whole program on just UI duration, you could estimate that it would take 1-2 years to accumulate sample. Again, it is up to your evaluator to determine the exact sample size. But you can use this table to do a vet check to see whether your evaluation timeline in the evaluator's proposed plans are feasible.

During the sample accumulation period, you will need to do budget hours for evaluation staff to monitor study progress, check in with your evaluation team, and where appropriate, collect and analyze data. You may have many questions about how to use this chart to estimate your timeline. You can always email us at resea@abtassoc.com for more information or talk through this estimation with one of our evaluation TA leads.

Your timeline will have effects on how you structure the contract or funding arrangements for the evaluation. While evaluations are often multiyear efforts, RESEA is funded annually. Many states' procurement laws do not allow state agencies to write or issue contracts for unfunded activities. In order to maintain a continuity of evaluation services, you may wish to consider how to structure your contract so that the initial evaluation planning work can begin using current funds, while leaving open options for your selected evaluation team to complete future tasks once those funds become available.

There are three approaches to take into consideration when you think about how to fund your evaluation contracts. The first is to write an SOW and RFP that includes a base contract that allows your evaluator to get started on planning and designing the evaluation. This contract would be supported by current contract year funds. The same RFP and SOW would then include optional tasks that your agency would exercise 10 years later when the funds become available.

For example, if you were writing an RFP or SOW for an impact study, you could imagine a base contract that included funds so that the evaluator can engage in initial planning conversations with your state, write an evaluation design report, and come up with an appropriate evaluation protocols and procedures. You can then imagine a number of optional tasks, like evaluation launch, monitoring, data collection, data analysis, and reporting that could be exercised in years later once additional funds become available. A major advantage of this strategy is that it allows the same evaluation team to complete tasks over a number of years.

Another perhaps less desirable option is to re-compete the evaluation contract each year as funding becomes available. This strategy may cost your team additional procurement dollars, and runs the risk that your original evaluation team will not be selected during subsequent bids. While this is not strictly speaking a problem, it does present an opportunity for significant loss of institutional knowledge and could lead to important delays in completing your evaluation. The specific approaches that are available to you will depend on procurement roles specific to your agency. Your state's procurement office will be able to help you determine the best strategy for your evaluation.

Question 4 in section 3 of the worksheet asks, what consideration should you factor into your budget? For evaluation, level of effort is often a nice way to think through budget considerations. Level of effort refers to the amount of time for and costs needed to perform a specific task or project. Since much of an evaluation's cost is staff time, level of effort for staff can be a nice way to think about how to budget your evaluation. Level of effort estimates will, in part, vary by the number and types of tasks and deliverables you ask your evaluator to complete. Most evaluations, regardless of the evaluation type, will need to budget a level of effort for writing an evaluation design report, data collection, data analysis, and report writing.

Level of effort will also depend on a mix of staff your evaluation requires, including project directors who lead the evaluation and should devote significant time to the evaluation, and mid-level staff who often lead day-to-day evaluation efforts and will also commit a fair amount of time to the evaluation. Beware, plans that you [inaudible] junior staff for most tasks. These staff may not have the skills needed to complete some aspects of the evaluation. Before partnering with a potential evaluator, you will need to give some consideration to your evaluation budget.

Each budget will be customized to the evaluation your state plans implement. In general, smaller, less complex evaluations will cost less. So it may not generate causal impact findings and/or might not generate findings that are applicable to your entire RESEA population. As you think about putting together an evaluation budget, consider the following factors -- first, evaluator qualifications. Most experienced evaluators can be more expensive, but will likely produce stronger evaluations that are more likely to be clear standard in terms of sample size. Large sample sizes may be needed to detect impact. Evaluators may need more time to analyze data as your sample size grows.

Data complexity -- RESEA evaluations may use data from multiple data systems to capture the information needed to answer research questions. Evaluators may need additional time to link, clean, and analyze data from multiple data sets and cost associated with data collection. Administrative data sources may charge a fee for accessing their data. Costs for surveys include staff time to develop and revise instrument, time to locate respondents, financial incentives for participants, and time to administer the survey.

There may be additional travel and other costs; evaluation teams may visit state headquarters and AJC sites several times to develop evaluation procedures and conduct implementation studies. If your evaluator is not based locally, it will be important to consider the budget for their transportation, lodging, meals, and incidentals.

And lastly, writing and revision -- planning and revision of evaluation deliverables is key to ensure high quality products. It is strongly recommended that you budget for a number of planning meetings and several rounds of revision from each major deliverable. As you consider bids, try to make appropriate trade-offs between quality and cost competitiveness. If a potential bid seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Do not hesitate to ask the evaluator more questions about the services they claim to offer you -- who will be providing these services and their experience providing these services in the past. While there will be some cost variation in potential bids, all bids should be responsive to the key needs outlined in the RFP, and their budget should be reflective of the associated level of effort.

Next, what kind of level of effort is required for your evaluation? When thinking about level of effort, budgeting, and cost, please note that the tasks, deliverables, and staff mix your evaluator plans to use will drive costs. On this slide, we have provided some examples of the kinds of tasks and deliverables that are common to different study types. While these lists are not totally comprehensive, we think they will help your team think through the costs associated with each study type. As you'll note, prospective impact studies are often more complex and take longer than other kinds of studies, resulting in a higher level of effort.

Now that you have thought about and gathered information needed for your statement of work for your evaluation and the factors that might affect it, section 4 of the worksheet consists of questions to help you think about the next steps for writing your statement of work, watching your competitive procurement process, and selecting an evaluator. The first question in section 4 asks you to consider how your state's procurement rules will affect the types of evaluators you will be able to select from. Your state will likely have specific requirements and rules for procuring vendors and contractors, including evaluators.

If you do not plan to use an in-house evaluator, it is important to work with your state workforce agency's procurement office early on to determine what procurement rules should guide your evaluator selection process.

Depending on your state's laws, it's possible that your state's procurement rules may give strong preferences to certain types of evaluators, including those whose qualifications have been preapproved by state or are on a prequalified list or based or headquartered within the state jurisdiction to have existing evaluation partnerships with the state or your state workforce agency who provide the best price independent of other consideration, or other factors that you may not be aware of.

It is also possible that your state workforce agency already has a preexisting relationship with a qualified evaluator. We recommend checking with your state procurement office to explore if these relationships exist. Your procurement office may be able to help, provide you with a list of evaluators the state has worked with in the past. Preexisting relationships with qualified evaluators may include staff for departments internal to your state workforce agency, partnerships with university research centers, or a preapproved of qualified evaluation firms that have been vetted by your state.

If there is an existing and current agreement with an external evaluation partner, you may be able to include your RESEA evaluation in their current statement of work. Your procurement office may be able to help you do this. You will likely need to work with the evaluator on important SOW and budget issues for the additional work related to the RESEA evaluation. If internal staff or a department will lead your evaluation, you should write a draft statement of work and meet with the evaluation team to: clearly define roles and responsibilities, fill in methodological details to the proposed design, and agree on a schedule of tasks and deliverables.

If your agency will start a new competitive procurement process to your RESEA evaluation, it will be important for your team to understand that process in detail from the very beginning. Many competitive procurement processes start with the release of a request for proposal, RFP, or RRQ, which are formal written announcements inviting bids on the statement of work. Potential evaluators use information in the RFP, which includes the statement of work, to submit appropriate technical proposals and cost bids for the evaluation contract. Your SOW will be a key aspect of the RFP.

Competitive procurement or RFP process will depend on local, state, and federal procurement rules. Seeking help early on in the process will help you make plans that need procurement rules that apply to your evaluation. If you plan to procure an external evaluator, your procurement contract and your legal team may help you think through important contract considerations. To prevent any delay that could set back your evaluation, it is critical to have a firm understanding of who needs to be involved in developing and finalizing the RFP, how the RFP will be advertised, who will be in charge of the advertising.

It is particularly important to advertise the opportunity widely in order to boost your chances of receiving a number of highly qualified bids; and who will be involved in proposal evaluation, the panels, how long will paneling last -- so understanding of the timeline needed to move from issuance of the RFP, paneling negotiations, collection, and ultimately award process. And then finally, who needs to be involved with approving the final evaluator selection.

Once you release your RFP and receive bids, you will then need to agree on the process by which you will select an evaluator. Your procurement office may have additional thoughts on how this traditionally happens in your agency. So you might start by bringing together a panel of programs, evaluation and procurement staff to develop clear evaluation factors with which to rate proposals and to set clear expectations about how your agency will consider technical and cost factors.

Once your team has set its factors for evaluating bids, you will need to determine the award process. This might include having your preformed panel assess applications and provide recommendations to your procurement office for contracting office. You can then determine that all of the appropriate factors have been considered and the proper funds are being used. Your contracting and procurement office can also help your team understand how many necessary negotiations will happen, as well as the timeline for award and signature of the contract.

Depending on your agency's processes, there may be more people involved in the award process than you initially anticipate. Working with your procurement office early on can help you set reasonable expectations for when you might have an evaluator on board. I'm now going to turn it back over to Megan for some closing remarks.

MS. LIZIK: Thanks so much, Hannah. And we've only got a few minutes here. I wanted to remind folks the previous set of webinars we've done are all on Workforce GPS. And at the end of the deck, are the links to a few that we mentioned today. We also have three more webinars coming up in this series. Ahead of our webinar on October 13th, I would encourage folks to watch the webcast where we presented findings from the REA impact study and discussed implications for RESEA programs and evaluations. And then join us on the 13th for a Q&A and a panel of some your wonderful state colleagues that participated in that study.

So with that, I do want to make sure that we have just a minute or two for some questions. If you have any, feel free to type them into the chat box. While you're thinking about that, I'll also remind folks that if you do have ad hoc questions that occur to you, or after the webinar today, you can always reach out to our team at the RESEA EvalTA inbox here on the right side of your screen.

And of course, we as the presenters are glad to hear your questions as well. Do we have any last questions before we let you all go today? Well, it sounds like things are quiet out there today. But as you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to our EvalTA team. And we look forward to seeing you on October 13th.

(END)