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Offender Employment Specialist Survey Results

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Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	3
II. Program Profile	3
III. Evaluation Methods	4
IV. Summary of Results	5
V. Full Results	7
Phase I: Offender Employment Specialist “Train the Trainer” Workshop Evaluation	7
Phase II: Offender Employment Specialist Online Follow-up Surveys	9
Facilitator Survey	9
Participant Survey	11
Endnotes	16

I. Executive Summary

During the 2007 Defendant/Offender Workforce Development Conference (DOWD) in Charlotte, NC, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) facilitated a three-hour Offender Employment Specialist (OES) “train-the trainer” workshop to staff from Federal Probation, Federal Bureau of Prisons, State Departments of Corrections, Community Corrections, and other agencies. This workshop led to the delivery of OES training across the country to corrections staff in federal, state, and local jurisdictions.

Evaluation of the workshop occurred in two phases. Phase I was conducted immediately following the completion of the “train the trainer” workshop while Phase II involved follow-up surveys to trainers and their participants. Phase I results indicated that many of the participants were satisfied with the workshop and that they would provide OES training in their own jurisdiction.

Phase II results yielded a small sample size. However, those that did respond reported training approximately 1600 staff using the OES curriculum. Those that facilitated OES training were asked to provide a follow-up survey to their participants. Results from those surveys indicated that participants learned and applied new knowledge and skills as a result of attending the training.

II. Program Profile

A majority of offenders enter the criminal justice system lacking the skills needed for today’s labor market and many leave custody without a significant improvement. However, studies suggest that an offender’s participation in workforce development programs increases the likelihood of successful re-entry and can lead to a reduction in recidivism.^{1, 2, 3, 4}

Because of this compelling data, many agencies and organizations have begun seeking training programs that will provide staff the tools needed to improve employment outcomes for offenders. To meet this need, many corrections administrators, supervisors, and practitioners have completed the Offender Employment Specialist (OES) training developed by the National Institute of Corrections, Offender Workforce Development Division.

The OES training program consists of a 3-day multimedia instruction curriculum and can be used as a self-paced or facilitator-led course. The training identifies tools, strategies, and best-practices for improving offender employment outcomes by featuring a variety of professionals from jails, prisons, probation and parole, community corrections, community based organizations, and faith based organizations. A guide book is also included and covers topics such as: navigating the DVDs; suggested training schedule; improving outcomes through collaboration; addressing pre-employment and job readiness; conducting an effective job search; utilizing assessment tools; developing

interventions; connecting with employers for job development; making good job matches; and implementing effective strategies.

During the 2007 Defendant/Offender Workforce Development Conference (DOWD) in Charlotte, NC, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) facilitated a three-hour OES “train-the-trainer” workshop to 305 registrants from Federal Probation, Federal Bureau of Prisons, and various State Departments of Corrections and Community Corrections agencies. This workshop was the foundation for the delivery of OES training across the country to corrections staff in federal, state, and local jurisdictions.

In support of the OES training, NIC conducted an evaluation of the 3-hour “train-the-trainer” workshop and administered follow-up surveys to facilitators and their participants. This report addresses the results of the evaluation.

III. Evaluation Methods

Evaluation of the initiative occurred in two phases. The Phase I evaluation occurred immediately following the OES workshop, while Phase II began three months afterward.

The Phase I evaluation included an evaluation of the “train-the-trainer” OES workshop held on March 5th, 2007 at the 2007 DOWD Conference. The OES workshop survey measured demographic information, participant satisfaction with the workshop, and the likelihood of workshop participants training others in their own jurisdiction. The workshop was facilitated by four NIC trainers in four separate rooms to accommodate the large number of registrants. The evaluations were completed and collected following the conclusion of the workshop with a response rate of 81%.

The Phase II evaluation included separate online follow-up surveys to workshop participants and participants of their training. The follow-up survey administered to workshop participants measured the amount of OES training they provided, the number of participants trained, and their comfort level with curriculum delivery. The follow-up survey administered to participants measured their knowledge gain by way of a brief test, a self-report of applied OES knowledge and skills, and amount of new collaborative efforts as a result of the training.

A link to the online follow-up survey for workshop participants was emailed approximately three months following the completion of the “train-the-trainer” session. Exactly 280 participants received an email containing a link to the survey which was hosted on the NIC website (20 training participants did not provide an email address and thus did not receive a link to the survey; 5 email addresses were either incorrect or disabled). The email also contained a link to a participant survey which was also hosted on the NIC website. Those that facilitated OES training in their jurisdiction were asked to send this link to their participants in order to collect information as to what was learned and applied as a result of attending OES training. Follow-up data was captured for approximately 6 months.

IV. Summary of Results

Results summary for the March 5th, 2007 OES “Train-the-Trainer” Workshop Evaluation

1. 305 staff from federal, state, local, and non-profit agencies registered for the OES workshop. Of those, 246 responded to the in-class survey (81% response rate).
2. Most of the respondents (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training was relevant to their needs.
3. Many of the respondents (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training prepared them to train others using the OES curriculum.
4. Many of the respondents (82%) agreed or strongly agreed that they are likely to train others using the OES curriculum.
5. Almost all of the respondents were satisfied or highly satisfied with the trainers overall.

Results summary for the OES Online Facilitator Survey

1. The “OES Facilitator Survey” received 27 responses.
2. A majority of the responses were from Federal Probation or the Federal Bureau of Prisons.
3. The 27 respondents provided a total of 43 OES trainings at the time of the survey.
4. The respondents reported that 1620 participants attended the trainings.
5. A majority of the respondents were satisfied or highly satisfied with their ability to facilitate the curriculum.
6. Most of the respondents (93%) agreed or strongly agreed that they will provide OES training in the future.

Results summary for the OES Online Participant Survey

1. The “OES Participant Survey” received 118 responses.
2. Approximately half of the responses were staff from Federal Probation and the Federal Bureau of Prisons.
3. Many of the respondents (85%) reported receiving the training from a federal agency.
4. A majority of the respondents (72%) were either direct service providers or teachers/instructors.
5. The average amount of prior offender workforce development-based training was 93 hours per person.
6. As a whole, the participants scored very well during the test portion of the survey.
7. On average, participants reported 4.2 new collaborations since attending OES training.
8. Since completing OES training:

- 85% are making sure that offenders have proper documentation for employment.
 - 60% are not doing anything to address offender internet access.
 - 58% are accessing labor market information.
 - 77% are using assessment tools to evaluate offenders.
 - 88% are using strategies (long-term goals, short-term goals, etc.) learned during training with their offender clients.
 - 73% are using marketing strategies (networking with employers, attending job fairs, etc.)
 - 44% plan to implement a community job-fair
 - 21% plan to implement One-Stop resources in a prison setting
9. A majority of the respondents (65%) responded “definitely” or “probably” when asked if they plan to attend Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS) training.
 10. A majority of the respondents (52%) responded “definitely” or “probably” when asked if they plan to develop a Career Resource Center.
 11. A majority of the respondents (63%) responded “definitely” or “probably” when asked if they plan to track outcomes for the offenders on their caseload.
 12. Almost all of the participants (99%) found the training to be useful or very useful.

V. Full Results

Phase I: Offender Employment Specialist “Train the Trainer” Workshop Evaluation

Number of Surveys received: 246
Number of Workshop Registrants: 305
Response Rate: 81%

1. Overall, the training was relevant to my needs.

	Count	Percent
Strongly Agree	147	59.8%
Agree	83	33.7%
Neutral	11	4.5%
Disagree	3	1.2%
(Not Answered)	2	0.8%

2. The training fulfilled course objectives.

Strongly Agree	138	56.1%
Agree	98	39.8%
Neutral	8	3.3%
Disagree	1	0.4%
(Not Answered)	1	0.4%

3. The logic and sequence of topics were appropriate.

Strongly Agree	144	58.5%
Agree	88	35.8%
Neutral	9	3.7%
(Not Answered)	4	1.6%
Disagree	1	0.4%

4. Today's training has prepared me to train others using the OES curriculum.

Strongly Agree	96	39.0%
Agree	102	41.5%
Neutral	42	17.1%
Disagree	5	2.0%
(Not Answered)	1	0.4%

5. I am likely to train others in my jurisdiction using the OES curriculum.

Strongly Agree	96	39.0%
Agree	106	43.1%
Neutral	37	15.0%
Disagree	4	1.63%
(Not Answered)	2	0.8%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.4%

6. The trainers were knowledgeable regarding course content.

	Count	Percent
Strongly Agree	207	84.2%
Agree	38	15.5%
Neutral	1	0.4%

7. The trainers answered questions clearly and completely.

Strongly Agree	177	72.0%
Agree	63	25.6%
Neutral	6	2.4%

8. The trainers gave clear instructions for exercise/activities.

Strongly Agree	175	71.1%
Agree	58	23.6%
Neutral	9	3.7%
Not Applicable	4	1.6%

9. The trainers defined concepts clearly.

Strongly Agree	180	73.2%
Agree	58	23.6%
Neutral	5	2.0%
Disagree	1	0.4%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.4%
(Not Answered)	1	0.4%

10. The trainers were prepared and organized.

Strongly Agree	198	80.5%
Agree	45	18.3%
Neutral	3	1.2%

11. The trainers' use of audio/visual aids was appropriate.

Strongly Agree	180	73.2%
Agree	61	24.8%
Neutral	3	1.2%
Disagree	1	0.4%
(Not Answered)	1	0.4%

Phase II: Offender Employment Specialist Online Follow-up Surveys

Facilitator Survey

Number of Surveys received: 27

1. Which agency provided the OES training?

	Count	Percent
Federal	18	66.7%
Collaboration between two or more agencies	5	18.5%
Non-profit	3	11.1%
State	1	3.7%

2. My primary job responsibility is:

Federal Bureau of Prisons	10	37.0%
Federal Probation	8	29.6%
Department of Corrections	3	11.1%
Community Corrections	2	7.4%
Non-Profit Agency	2	7.4%
One-Stop Center	1	3.7%
Other: Research and Planning	1	3.7%

3. The largest percentage of your time is spent in what role?

Direct service	10	37.03%
Administrator	9	33.33%
Supervisor	5	18.52%
Teacher	3	11.11%

4. How many OES trainings have you provided to date?

Average: 1.59
Total: 43

5: How many total participants have attended OES training(s) that you provided (estimate)?

Average: 60
Total: 1620

6. The instructions on how to provide OES training were easy to follow.

Agree	13	48.1%
Strongly Agree	12	44.4%
Neutral	2	7.4%

7. I experienced few complications when facilitating the OES training.

	Count	Percent
Agree	13	48.1%
Strongly Agree	9	33.3%
Neutral	2	7.4%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.7%
Disagree	1	3.7%
Unknown	1	3.7%

8. I am likely to provide OES training in the future.

Strongly Agree	18	66.7%
Agree	7	25.9%
Neutral	1	3.7%
Unknown	1	3.7%

Additional Comments/Feedback

“I enjoyed the ability to provide information to dedicated individuals and hope I added value to their operations.”

“Information, specifically in chapters 9 and 10, was repetitive. Participants lost focus and it was difficult to keep on track. Overall, great training. It was received well by staff. “

“Some of the sections are repetitive. If you want to skip a piece, it is sometimes difficult to get to the right spot.”

“The curriculum was excellent and it provided an excellent platform for community agencies and government agencies to become motivated about establishing effective partnerships. “

Participant Survey

Number of Surveys received: 118

1. Which agency provided the Offender Employment Specialist (OES) training?

	Count	Percent
Federal	100	84.7%
Collaboration between two or more agencies	7	5.9%
Non-profit	5	4.2%
State	4	3.4%
Local	1	0.8%
No answer	1	0.8%

2. My primary job responsibility is:

	Count	Percent
Federal Bureau of Prisons	36	30.5%
Federal Probation	25	21.2%
Department of Corrections	11	9.3%
Non-Profit Agency	9	7.6%
State Probation/Parole	9	7.6%
One-Stop Center	7	5.9%
Community Corrections	5	4.2%
Federal Pre-trial	4	3.4%
Faith Based Organization	4	3.4%
State Dept. of Rehabilitation	3	2.5%
Jail staff	1	0.8%
Employment Specialist	1	0.8%
Private Service Provider	1	0.8%
Veterans Employment	1	0.8%
State Department of Labor	1	0.8%

3. The largest percentage of your time is spent in what role?

	Count	Percent
Direct service	66	55.9%
Teacher/Instructor	19	16.1%
Supervisor	16	13.6%
Administrator	15	12.7%
Other	2	1.7%

4. Not including OES training, how many hours of offender-based workforce development training (in job seeking skills, job retention skills, resume building, or other similar subjects) have you completed to date (estimate)?

Average: 92.97
Total: 10878

5. In the OES model, who is the key person?

Correct response to this question: 83%
Incorrect response to this question: 17%

6. In the OES model, who enhances capacity?

Correct response to this question: 62%

Incorrect response to this question: 38%

7. In the OES model, who provides opportunity?

Correct response to this question: 83%

Incorrect response to this question: 17%

8. Name one personal barrier offenders may face during the first 90 days following release.

Correct response to this question: 100%

Incorrect response to this question: 0%

9. Name one corrections-related barrier offenders may face during the first 90 days following release.

Correct response to this question: 100%

Incorrect response to this question: 0%

10. Name one legal/societal barrier offenders may face during the first 90 days following release.

Correct response to this question: 100%

Incorrect response to this question: 0%

11. Since completing OES training, how many new collaborations have you formed to leverage resources and improve outcomes for offenders?

Average: 4.2

Total: 491

12. Since completing OES training, what resources have your clients used at One-Stop or Career Resource Centers (choose all that apply)?

	Count	Yes %
Job search and job postings	73	61.9%
Resume, application, or interview preparation	52	44.1%
Information on training and education	44	37.3%
Internet access	36	30.5%
Job counseling and assessment	34	28.8%
None	34	28.8%
Computer/word processor access	29	24.6%
Occupational Research	17	14.4%

13: Currently, what are you doing to ensure offenders have proper documentation for employment (choose all that apply)?

	Count	Yes %
Provide Social Security Administration information/application forms	61	51.7%
Provide contact information for the Department of Motor Vehicles	59	50.0%
Provide contact information for Department of Vital Statistics	35	29.7%
Provide regional information for Department of Education	28	23.7%
Conduct a workshop, which focuses on the documentation needed to verify eligibility to work	26	22.0%

I am not doing anything to ensure offenders have proper documentation	18	15.3%
Refer to other agency	6	5.1%
Other	6	5.1%
I do not have contact with offenders	5	4.2%

14. Since OES training, what strategies have you used to address offender internet access (choose all that apply)?

	Count	Yes %
I have not addressed offender internet access	71	60.2%
Staff accesses the internet for offenders	26	22.0%
Internet access is supervised	21	17.8%
Unsupervised access is allowed for some offenders	5	4.2%
Unsupervised access is allowed for all offenders	2	1.7%
Use CDs of websites	1	0.8%

15. Since OES training, what type of labor market analysis have you done (choose all that apply)?

	Count	Yes %
I am not doing anything to access labor market information	50	42.4%
I looked at local trends for jobs and expected growth areas	44	37.3%
I looked at national trends for jobs and expected growth areas	30	25.4%
Ensure training programs are linked to jobs that offenders are eligible for, given their criminal record	27	22.9%
Analyzed whether current training programs correspond to available jobs	21	17.8%
Other	5	4.2%

16. Since completing OES training, what assessment tools have you used to evaluate offenders (choose all that apply)?

	Count	Yes %
informational interviews	63	53.4%
educational/vocational assessments	42	35.6%
interest/aptitude assessments	29	24.6%
I am not using any assessment tools	27	22.9%
obtain copies of assessments offenders have completed elsewhere	16	13.6%
risk assessment instruments (i.e. LSI, COMPAS, etc.)	14	11.9%
Other	1	0.8%

17. Since completing OES training, which of these strategies do you incorporate in your work with offenders (choose all that apply)?

	Count	Yes %
Short term goals	82	69.5%
Long term goals	71	60.2%
Set timelines and benchmarks for addressing barriers	48	40.7
Case management teams	39	33.1%
None	14	11.9%

18. Since completing OES training, which of these marketing strategies have you used (choose all that apply)?

	Count	Yes %
Network with employers	46	39.0%
Attend job fairs	45	38.1%

Match offenders' skills to employers' needs	41	34.7%
Nurture relationships with employers who have previously hired offenders	36	30.5%
Learn employers' needs	35	29.7%
None	32	27.1%
Prepare and deliver concise cold-call presentations and materials	10	8.5%
Create a job developers' roundtable for idea sharing	8	6.8%

19. Which of these needs have you considered when addressing job matching (choose all that apply)?

	Count	Yes %
Offender needs	89	75.4%
Employer needs	83	70.3%
Community needs	54	45.8%
Program needs	39	33.1%
None	17	14.4%

20. After completing OES training, which of these strategies have you implemented or plan to implement (choose all that apply)?

	Count	Yes %
Community job-fair	52	44.1%
Prison job-fair	39	33.1%
None	27	22.9%
One-Stop resources in a prison setting	25	21.2%
Resource backpack	24	20.3%

21. Do you plan to host a career fair?

	Count	Percent
Definitely	37	31.4%
Probably	35	29.7%
N/A	22	18.6%
Probably not	19	16.1%
Definitely not	4	3.4%
No Answer	1	0.8%

22. Do you plan to attend Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS) training?

	Count	Percent
Probably	42	35.6%
Definitely	35	29.7%
N/A	21	17.8%
Probably not	18	15.3%
Definitely not	1	0.8%
No Answer	1	0.8%

23. Do you plan to develop a Career Resource Center?

	Count	Percent
Definitely	31	26.3%
Probably	30	25.4%
Probably not	26	22.0%
N/A	26	22.0%
Definitely not	4	3.4%
No Answer	1	0.8%

24: Do you plan to track outcomes for the offenders on your caseload?

	Count	Percent
Definitely	43	36.4%
Probably	31	26.3%
N/A	21	17.8%
Probably not	17	14.4%
Definitely not	5	4.2%
No Answer	1	0.8%

25. Please check the agencies with whom you plan to partner with:

	Count	Yes %
Faith based Organizations	86	72.9%
Federal Probation	68	57.6%
Residential Reentry	66	55.9%
Federal Bureau of Prisons	52	44.1%
U.S. Department of Labor	44	37.3%
State Department of Labor	42	35.6%
State Correctional agencies	40	33.9%
Jails	17	14.4%
None of these	8	6.8%

26: In summary, have you found OES training to be:

	Count	Percent
Very useful	78	66.1%
Useful	39	33.1%
No Answer	1	0.8%

27. Additional Comments?

“Appreciated the networking among the group of folks attending. Great Resources.”

“Excellent training. Potential to be life changing for offenders, families and the community.”

“Good teaching model to get people from different agencies and groups to work towards solving common problems”

“Good training to clarify the role of the employment specialist. Helped identify barriers and identify partners to address the barriers.”

“I found the training innovative and informative.”

“I really appreciated the training provided. I feel as though this information would be very helpful to all agencies servicing the community.”

“I really enjoyed the training and can not wait to get the actual program rolling. I believe that every Case Manager should attend the training as well as the Counselors.”

“I thought the training was very valuable. The instructors were very knowledgeable and professional. I honestly have a better understanding of the workforce offender’s initiative.”

“It is more difficult to utilize these skills since Project Rio does most of this work for us.”

"It was very informative and interesting. I like the ideas but there are other job positions that are involved with making this kind of program happen. I work face to face w/ the offenders and not with the employers. I could use all the help I can get to help these folks gain employment at a life-supporting wage."

"It was very refreshing to be in attendance and hear the needs of all of the organizations. The main thing that all agreed on was that communication had not been happening between the different organizations, but will not be an issue now. Can't wait for the next one."

"Keep up the good work. Conduct more OES training programs statewide."

"Some answers were difficult for me as I am a supervisor. I finished the survey with actions I know my office is taking."

"The OES workshop was down-to-earth-where-we-work useful. We have the information and want to implement it into community partnerships. It will take us some time to put the changes in place-especially since we must continue with other responsibilities. This partnership workshop was one of the best trainings that I have attended in my 30 years of business experience."

"The training has opened the lines of communication locally here in the Central District Of California between probation and the prisons regarding offender workforce development."

"The training presented by FCI Greenville and the U.S Federal Probation Officers were phenomenal. Very useful and look forward to the next training sessions..."

"The training received was very informational and a great model to duplicate. The amount of networking that resulted from attendees 'priceless.' "

"This training was excellent. Our agency is already doing a lot of the recommended activities but we were shown how we could improve our focus to improve our outcomes for the least served offenders."

"This was a great training event. I would very much enjoy more training in the future of this nature. Thanks for allowing me the opportunity to attend this event."

"This was the best training I have had. It has provided me with an insight on how to better assist my consumers to start a new life in a positive direction."

Endnotes

¹ Council of State Governments, Re-Entry Policy Council. 2004. *Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council: Charting the Safe and Successful Return of Prisoners to the Community*. New York, NY: Council of State Governments. Retrieved from http://www.reentrypolicy.org/documents/rpc_report.pdf

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