

Bruce Palzkill:

Brian's on the road for us today. I'm happy to join you and talk about our demonstration, and Brian will go over some of these details and then what we're planning. But I want to say that reemployment is going to be one of the key focus of our Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In fact, we're putting additional dollars in on top of the federal dollars we're receiving. We're going to be using a portion of our UI admin dollars and also we had set up a subaccount from our original RES Act dollars in 2002 that we have allocated to reemployment services, so we're going to be using those dollars to augment the Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars, and we are seeing our job service, our Wagner-Peyser staff as the portal for federal referrals to our training systems and to reemployment, and then Brian will talk about some of the details of the assessments and the career guidance and then what we're doing with our job bank and how we're using that effectively.

Key to this is the relationship we've been able to forge with our unemployment insurance division who has been very cooperative with our project. In fact, during the interim where we didn't have reemployment dollars from our demonstration grant, when those dollars went away, we still had about a \$0.5 million per year we were focusing in from penalties and interest money that they were able to allocate to our program, so we were able to kind of keep the demonstration continuing in these interim, during this interim period and then this - - the federal dollars will help us to inflate that and expand it much greater.

So what I'll do now is kick it to Brian and he can talk a little bit about the demo grant and how we were able to show savings both on the UI trust fund side but also on the additional capacity for earnings for the participants, which I think is very key, and then what we're planning on doing with the reinvestment dollars.

Brian Solomon:

Thanks, Jo. Can people hear me?

Several:

Yes.

Brian Solomon:

Oh great. Okay, I'm making sure because I'm on a cell phone in a hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, actually visiting my grandmother. So anyway, thank you, Jo, and thanks to NASWA and to Department of Labor for inviting us to participate and to give our perspective on RES in Wisconsin. We're very excited to be here. So first of all, I'd just like to say, "I'm Brian Solomon, I'm the job service director for Wisconsin, and we have a very strong historical commitment for the RES program and for reemployment services." This is something that's been very important to us for years and years. We've worked very closely with UI, especially over the last probably decade or so, to make sure that our RES and our reemployment services were as strong as possible, and I think it's that sort of historical commitment to RES that really helped us get the demonstration grant from

the U.S. Department of Labor in 2004, which we were really excited and honored to receive. Basically job service worked very closely with UI, but also with the Department of Labor in creating this demonstration grant. We had a proposal but then we worked closely to help sort of flush that out and make it as successful as possible. What we decided was that it was really important to focus on intensive services and focus more on the staff intervention part than we did in traditional RES; and the primary reason we didn't in traditional RES, which I'm sure most of the people on this line can understand, is because of the sheer volume of people that we need to serve and just not having enough staff to be able to serve them at the level we would like. But in the demo grant, we tried to really increase that and we had a very, very strong role for UI. They were involved in the very initial planning. We had an oversight team that included UI reps and job service reps, both at the staff level and the management level, and it was - - they were involved from the beginning both at planning and also sort of oversight and also at the actual claimant level. When we did the RES sessions with claimants, we actually had a UI adjudicator there at the beginning and at the end to meet with claimants with us to give the UI perspective, which is something that we hadn't done in years in Wisconsin. So that strong role for UI was very important.

We also, as I said, had a stronger intervention by spending more one-on-one with claimants, and what we tried to do is have a triage process where we could basically direct claimants down an appropriate path to make sure people were getting the appropriate level of service that they needed as a result of the RES session. We also included a very strong follow-up process in the demo grant. As part of the grant, DOL funded Berkley Policy Associates to - - as a third party evaluator, and that report was just published actually a month ago and it is available. One of the conclusions that Berkley Policy Associates included in their final evaluation was that the demonstration participants not only drew UI benefits for a shorter period of time and had higher average quarterly earnings, but that also specific services such as assessment, job referral, one-on-one, and follow-up increased and improved claimants' likelihood of entering employment, decreasing the receipt of UI benefits, and increasing their quarterly earnings. The models, they did three models as part of the demonstration and two of those three showed a significant increase in quarterly earnings, two of the three also showed a significant decrease in the average benefit duration. In one of the models, there was a little over a half week decrease. In the other model, there was a full week decrease per claimant and all three models saved UI benefit dollars for each claimant served, anywhere from \$150 to \$250 per claimant served. So it was very significant and we were, again, really thrilled to be part of that demo. That demo, as Joanna stated, we've been able to continue our relationship with UI and continue those types of services through the years, and that has laid the foundation for where we want to go with recovery dollars and so we definitely want to build on both the partnership that we have with UI and the success and the lessons that we learned in our demo grant experience.

So with that, there are a few things that we know we want to build in. One is that we know we want to keep that one-on-one staff intervention piece. We know that was a big part of it and we want to make sure that's in there. We also want to make sure that UI's involved upfront. We've already formed a team, start planning how we're going to

spend our recovery dollars and serve claimants, and UI is an integral member of that team. We're meeting twice weekly as a core team and then we also have subcommittees that include UI, job service, and other participants as well to help plan this whole effort out.

Very quickly, what we want to try to do with this initiative is we want to use our electronic tools as much as possible. So I think it was Byron before, or maybe it was Bob, who had the importance of not just focusing on staffing but also focusing on electronic tools and integrating your software and your applications, that's a key part of what we want to do; and we want to integrate our new Job Center of Wisconsin, which is our new labor exchange system, our UI database, and our WIA case management tracking and reporting system and make sure that all three of those are talking to each other. We also want to make sure that every UI claimant that we provide services for gets their resume onto our electronic system, and then after they put their resume on there, come and show up for RES services. Now we are trying to do this in a way that minimizes the adjudication issues. I'm sure most states are facing the same thing Wisconsin's facing, which is a huge workload for UI, and so as we work through this, we're trying to figure out that sweet spot between getting claimants to particular services, but at the same time minimizing adjudication issues as much as possible, so we're working very hard on that and trying to make sure that we're doing as much follow-up as we can on the job surface side so that we can decrease those adjudication issues.

Basically what we're trying to do, once people get their resume on to our Job Center of Wisconsin system, our electronic system, and then come in for an RES service, we're going to triage people just like we did in the demo grant and we're looking at three paths and one would be a work ready path where we would try to integrate this process into our Wagner-Peyser services and our basic job search functions and so we're not just looking at this as an RES initiative. We're also looking at it as a way of making sure we're integrating these services to claimants with all of our other systems and services that are available through our Job Center system. So path one is that sort of work ready sort of basic labor exchange path. Path two is partner referral path; and of course we already focus very heavily on referring customers to partners, but we want to step that up even more and make sure that we're having a very solid and clear referral process to our partners, especially WIA so that we can get people who need training whether it be short-term training ideally related to recovery jobs or adult basic ed or OJTs or anything like that that might be available through the WIA Title One system, we're going to make sure that that referral process is nailed down and in place. Then the third path of this triage process out of the RES session would be an assessment path, and Wisconsin has a lot of things going on around the state locally with hard skill assessments. I know that many states in the country have statewide assessment processes and statewide work readiness certificates or career readiness certificates. We have not done that in Wisconsin. We have done it at the local level, but we don't have a statewide way of doing that and so we're going to use this initiative as a way of creating a statewide system of providing hard skills assessments and work readiness certificates for as many UI claimants as possible that would come through this process. In the end, our goal is to try to provide 150 reemployment sessions, 30 counseling sessions, (We're trying to integrate our

counselors into this.) and 30 proctored hard skill assessment tests per week throughout the state and right now we serve about 2,500 claimants a quarter through RES and our goal is to start serving about 2,500 claimants a week, so we're trying to really, really ramp this up, make sure the integration is there and also provide a high level service to far more UI claimants than we currently do.