October 2022 Convening Summary Notes

Overview

Day One

Project Introductions & Team Shield Presentations

- Each team shared their *Realm* (goal of the project), *Knight* (unique superpower that will help them achieve their project goal), *Dragon* (anticipated challenges/barriers to success), and *Quest* (something they'd like to learn from other teams). Brief overviews of each team's presentation are below.
- **Evidence-Based Workforce Spending Cohort**
  - Arizona
    - Realm: Improve workforce outcomes for long-term impact.
    - Knight: There is already strong collaboration across varying governmental levels and offices.
    - Dragon: Getting buy-in from the community and stakeholders, establishing comfortability with standard RFPs.
    - Quest: Recommendations on how to start and what are some lessons learned from others who have conducted similar projects.
  - California
    - Realm: Design and implement a randomized control trial recruiting unemployment insurance applicants to enroll in our local board's services, facilitating estimation of causal impact of programs.
    - Knight: The team has research design and econometrics expertise. The organization is innovative and willing to try something new.
    - Dragon: Access to state data systems is challenging. There is uncertainty about the interest of customers to engage in a project that would require many approvals to implement.
    - Quest: How are others using unemployment insurance data to inform this type of assessment and assessing impact?
  - Colorado
    - Realm: Expand the use of evidence-based practices in the selection of providers, awarding $25M over next 4 years.
    - Knight: Have obtained unanimous support across all levels.
    - Dragon: Determine how available funding can allow for pay for performance practices. It will take significant time to generate a quality pool of providers.
    - Quest: How have others developed procurement language that requires and attracts quality providers?
  - District of Columbia
    - Realm: Design an evidence-based approach for RESEA programs to increase program effectiveness.

- - Knight: The fellowship team members each bring unique skill sets and experiences.
    - Quest: How are others implementing this type of program? What were the success factors, challenges, and lessons learned?
  - Iowa
    - Realm: Align workforce funding and programs to be data-informed and evidence-based.
    - Knight: There are strong pre-existing relationships and diverse perspectives across the team, including lived experience and career pathways.
    - Dragon: There is a widely held fear of change and its impact on programs/offices/etc.
    - Quest: How have others built relationships to inform, equip, and empower people through data? When is infrastructure necessary to support the work? What data has been used to advance alignment and strengthen relationships?
  - Illinois
    - Realm: Identify quality service providers.
    - Knight: There is already collaboration across members/partners who channel unique perspectives to improve approaches.
    - Dragon: It will be a challenge to shift from the current approach of developing ad hoc partnerships to the needed approach of systematic alignment/partnership to maintain momentum beyond the course of the fellowship.
    - Quest: What are some more formal ways to enhance collaboration without losing diversity? Are there recommendations on creative ways to braid funds?
  - Ohio
    - Realm: Currently administering nine results-driven contracts and grants and will be launching a job quality project shortly.
    - Knight: There is a strong, direct relationship between the state, local chamber, and sector partnerships, which makes gathering buy-in, accessing data, and allocating funding much easier.
    - Dragon: Rules on pay for performance are restrictive and difficult to navigate.
    - Quest: How to successfully evaluate existing results-driven grants and/or other approaches to contracting to consider for future opportunities?
  - Pennsylvania
    - Realm: Measure the ROI of workforce programs beyond WIOA common measures.
    - Knight: The team has experience through prior RFA fellowship cycles, which worked to set up third party program evaluations.
    - Dragon: The state has placed limitations on data access and use, and is currently undergoing a change in elected leadership.
    - Quest: What KPIs/metrics are others using? What data sources are available with minimal cost? How to measure the system as a whole (multi-partner) vs. programs (single partner) with an eye toward increasing equity? How do you measure ROI for business services?
  - Texas
    - Realm: Expand the established evidence-based procurement model to other programs/grants across the state.
    - Knight: There is already buy-in from the governor's office and collaboration across a wide range of partners.
    - Dragon: Expansion is a challenge.
    - Quest: How to bring evidence during award and payment points? How have others been doing evidence-based procurement with programs that don't have immediate impact and/or for youth populations to identify final workforce outcomes without a longitudinal study?

- **Advancing Job Quality Cohort**
  - California
    - Realm: Develop practices to recruit, retain, and advance people into local government to reflect the diversity of Los Angeles.
    - Knight: There is a strong understanding of the recruitment and retention process, with a focus on DEI.
    - Dragon: The civil servant hiring process is difficult (e.g. testing, accessibility, timing).
    - Quest: Are there recommendations on innovative hiring practices?
  - Colorado
    - Realm: Align day-to-day workforce services with job quality and equity standards and create measurements that utilize data to track success.
    - Knight: There is strong local control that has led to creative individualized solutions across the state.
    - Dragon: It is difficult to develop a standardized initiative that is representative of the variety/distinct needs of communities served.
    - Quest: What tools are others using to pull standardized data that are meaningful? How can states interact with local communities that are flexible enough to be responsive to the needs, but standardized enough to extrapolate common measures?
  - Colorado
    - Realm: Elevating job quality within the four driving industries in rural Colorado.
    - Knight: There is leadership support across a wide geographic area, which has allowed access to significant data.
    - Dragon: The geographic reach of rural Colorado is huge (45 counties), each with distinct leadership approaches and challenges with talent attraction and retention.
    - Quest: What are others' approaches to funding and innovative partnerships?
  - Illinois
    - Realm: Create a cohesive ecosystem to maximize equity and job quality within the Good Jobs Challenge, embedding worker empowerment.
    - Knight: There is a solid partnership and expertise to support the project.
    - Dragon: Difficulty defining a long-term project and breaking out of "business as usual" mindset.
    - Quest: How are other teams doing things differently (e.g. RFPs, integrating worker rights training, employer accountability)?
  - Ohio
    - Realm: Interest in understanding the sphere of influence of cities on job quality to increase financial resiliency for Cincinnati residents.
    - Knight: There is already strong utilization of data to make decisions and evidence-based policies.
    - Dragon: Cincinnati faces challenges in sufficient funding, resulting in a limited ability to scale programs/solutions.
    - Quest: How might the team develop an approach to job quality that utilizes creative financing/resourcing from the private sector?
  - Oregon/Washington
    - Realm: Develop methods of measuring the impact of the previously adopted job quality initiative.
    - Knight: There is a long history of strong collaboration across the three participating workforce boards

- Dragon: There are three separate, but overlapping issues: (1) political leadership, (2) impact measurement (i.e. is it the boards' programs creating impact vs. other economic factors), (3) how to get employers to provide data regularly.
- Quest: What tools and techniques have other people had success with that can be replicated? Where are there pitfalls and how might they be avoided?
  - Wisconsin
    - Realm: Reimagining personnel rules for more equitable civil service outcomes.
    - Knight: Support from the mayor and other offices who are flexible and adaptable, with authority to make the change.
    - Dragon: Getting buy-in from employees and employee reps.
    - Quest: What are the innovation and talent pipelines used by others? What data could be used to improve accountability processes to measure impact?
  - Virginia
    - Realm: Creating more quality jobs in Northern Virginia - jobs are plentiful, but quality jobs are not.
    - Knight: There is a strong labor market with employers some open to changing hiring practices to improve recruitment.
    - Dragon: Changing the employer mindset toward improving the quality of jobs offered.
    - Quest: What other job quality initiatives have been implemented? What were the successes/challenges, and how were they overcome and replicated?

Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab (GPL) - Procurement/Grantmaking and Equity
- *Guests:*
  - Elena Hoffnagle, Assistant Director,, GPL
  - Andrea Barnes, Government Innovation Fellow, GPL
- *Key Themes:*
  - By infusing equity as a core component of contracting and grantmaking, funders are better able to meet outcomes at the resident and community level.
  - Procurements should be efficient and fair, results-driven, equitable, and strategic.
  - Equity shows up in procurement through **both** increasing vendor/provider diversity and delivering services equitably.
  - Strategies to improve equity in procurement:
    - Break down barriers, foster equitable delivery of services and outcomes.
    - Increase competition, participation, and preparedness.
      - Remove barriers for smaller or minority-owned vendors. Some ways to accomplish this include: reducing jargon or complicated language, removing redundant or unnecessary requirements, placing all directions on the first page of the RFP, using short answer questions and an interview component to gather detailed information, unbundling large contracts, etc.
    - Build vendor preparedness and capacity.
    - Incorporate client voice into RFPs and grants.
    - Deliver services equitably to improve racially inequitable service outcomes.
    - Track contract awards and procurement spend.
      - Use active contract management to support vendor success through the lifecycle of the procurement.
- *Resources:*
  - [Session Slides](#)

- ○ [Harvard GPL - Resource Library](#)
- ○ [Harvard GPL - RFP Guidebook 2021](#)
- ○ *[Mission Economy: A Moonshot Guide to Changing Capitalism](#)* by Mariana Mazzucato
- ○ Reach out to RFA to sign up for an office hours session with GPL.

Job Quality: Where to Start?

- ● *Guest:*
  - ○ Andy Hall, President & CEO, Trailhead Strategies
  - ○ Jess Valand, Director of Workforce Development, Results for America
- ● *Key Themes:*
  - ○ It has not been the traditional role of the workforce system to talk with employers about the quality of their jobs. However, there has been a record level of federal investment in job quality, which presents a unique opportunity to create a change.
  - ○ While the foundational tenets of RFA's Job Quality Framework (strategy, equity, measurement & data, leading by example) lay the groundwork for sustainable government action to improve job quality, there are additional job quality levers that offer opportunity for agencies to improve the quality of jobs for workers in their region. These include: procurement, empowerment, policy, HR practices, and monitoring and enforcement.
  - ○ Fellows generally felt drawn to creating shifts in procurement practices to infuse more data on the benefits of job quality, identifying champions in stakeholder pools to uplift job quality initiatives, and creating strategic communication approaches that are individualized to each audience type (e.g. employers, workers, service providers, etc.).
  - ○ Fellows felt that any job quality frameworks developed for their jurisdictions should reflect the needs of distinct populations. A helpful way to accomplish this might be to create a definition of job quality that focuses on/prioritizes access to vs. required receipt of services, resources, etc.
- ● *Resources:*
  - ○ [Session Slides](#)
  - ○ Register for the Families and Workers Fund Webinar - [Reimagining Job Quality Measurement](#) (Nov. 8, 12-1pm EST)
  - ○ Register for RFA's Good Jobs and Equity Project Webinar - Leveraging Federal Funding Streams Webinar (Dec. 5, 3-4:30 pm EST)
    - ■ To sign up, please email highqualityjobs@results4america.org.
    - ■ Results for America will host a webinar with USDOT and the Treasury Department on how state and local governments can leverage federal funding streams to advance job quality and equity and discuss infrastructure funding and ARPA funding, including how to craft competitive infrastructure grant applications.

Team Iteration

- ● Teams connected after a day of content to discuss:
  - ○ How do you see your team's project differently after a day of new information, reflections, and relationships?
  - ○ What would you add to your proposed project?
  - ○ What would you change about your proposed project?
  - ○ What are some initial steps you can take to get your proposed project started?
- ● *Key Themes:*
  - ○ Communicating more effectively about and through RFPs.
  - ○ Understanding a teams' locus of control to influence job quality in their jurisdictions.
  - ○ Providing access for data sources/resources that are in a teams' control.

- ○ Requesting access to data sources that others control.
- ○ Developing champions to create momentum.
- ○ Understanding your audience, identifying gaps in audience representation, and planning to eliminate the gaps through targeted outreach.

Day Two

Racial Equity & the Workforce System
- *Guest:*
  - ○ Dr. Anjali Chainani, Senior Advisor, Results for America & Anavi Strategies
- *Key Themes:*
  - ○ In order to create outcomes in which race does not play a determining factor, consider the following suggestions: assess your current state, name racism, understand root causes, understand what's missing/needed, broaden the circles of engagement, and understand and challenge policy application/implementation.
  - ○ Collaborators may bring different strengths to the table. There may be those who are data driven and use numbers to guide decisions, innovators who rapidly identify potential solutions, and systemizers who create structure to potential solutions. Each role is valuable and offers a unique contribution toward progress.
  - ○ The fellows identified equity challenges within their jurisdictions and noted whether they were actively addressing them, would like to learn more about how to address them, or not addressing them at this time.
    - ■ Equity Challenges - Procurement
      - ● Challenges being addressed
        - ○ Conducting marketing and outreach
        - ○ Removing workforce development jargon and unnecessary requirements from RFPs
        - ○ Improving provision of technical assistance
        - ○ Timely reimbursement/payment to vendors
        - ○ Building best practices
      - ● Challenges fellows would like to learn more about
        - ○ Improving outreach
        - ○ Improving RFP language with an eye toward resolving the disproportionate impact of procurement requirements on small businesses
        - ○ Provision of technical assistance
        - ○ Access to capital
      - ● Challenges not currently addressed
        - ○ Inconsistent regulations and onerous length of federal grants
        - ○ Burden of Federal certification requirements
        - ○ Providing information in languages other than English
        - ○ Incorporating vendor input and experiences
    - ■ Equity Challenges - Workforce
      - ● Challenges being addressed
        - ○ Outreach to populations prioritized for engagement in workforce programming
        - ○ Funding for training and pipeline programs
        - ○ Wraparound, supportive services including resources like: affordable housing, childcare, transportation, language services, and education

- - Improving consistency in K-12 experiences and associated career programs
      - Use of technology to improve equity in jobseeker outcomes (i.e. applicants have the skills, equipment, internet to apply)
    - Challenges fellows would like to learn more about
      - Shifting focus from simple job retention to include job quality
      - Pay disparity by gender, race, immigration status, etc.
      - Creating and providing access to wraparound, supportive services
      - Creating alignment through a career pathway
      - Eliminating the digital divide
      - Poverty and its impacts
      - Employer investment in training
      - MOUs for improved data sharing and baseline data
    - Challenges not currently addressed
      - Lack of collaboration/cross-functional coalition
      - In-demand industries offering low wage jobs (tourism/hospitality)
      - Occupational segregation and discrimination in hiring and promotion practices
      - Cliff for services after training, but before work stability
  - Fellows reflected on the equity challenges identified, noting that:
    - In order to effectively replicate policy, and avoid contributing to continued inequity, the specific context of the population, region, etc. must be taken into consideration.
    - Consider how results can be shared up the chain to effectively develop flexible and applicable policy that is extrapolated from solutions developed for a single population, inequality, etc.
    - To advance equity, you can start anywhere. There's room to find allies and build around a specific place. You don't need to have an already-established road map to make progress.
- *Resources:*
  - [Case Study #1](#)
  - [Case Study #2](#)
  - [Case Study #3](#)
  - [Step By Step Guide to the RFP Process](#)
  - [Formal Competitive Process (2-pager)](#)
  - [Racial Equity Assessment Framework](#)
    - *Note*: This framework is not intended to be applied in a linear fashion. The steps can be applied in any order.

CLEAR: Using Evidence for Better Decision-Making
- *Guests:*
  - [Lauren Damme](#), Deputy Director, U.S. DOL Chief Evaluation Office
  - Andrew Clarkwest, CLEAR Contractor Project Director, Abt Associates
  - Eliza Kean, CLEAR Contractor Task Lead, Abt Associates
  - Eleanor Elmudesi, Science & Research Assistant, Abt Associates
  - Ben Holquist, Manager of Strategic Workforce Initiatives and Federal Grants, Texas Workforce Commission
- *Key Themes:*

- ○ [CLEAR](#)'s mission is to make research on labor topics more accessible to practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and the public so that it can inform decisions about labor policies and programs.
    - ○ CLEAR does this by conducting systematic evidence reviews of research and evaluation reports.
    - ○ Studies across 21 topic areas are summarized by:
        - ■ Strength of causal evidence for: Impact studies and [RESEA](#) interventions
        - ■ Effectiveness
        - ■ Evidence Syntheses: Provide an overall look at the state of the evidence in a particular area
        - ■ Rapid Reviews: Identify the most credible existing or emerging evidence on strategies to improve labor-related outcomes in response to COVID-19
    - ○ CLEAR is continuously improving its accessibility, user experience, and the content contained within the site.
    - ○ Panel with Ben Holquist
        - ■ Since 2019, Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has been developing a model for evidence-based grantmaking including a tiered evaluation model using the CLEAR definitions of causal evidence.
            - ● Roll out of this program included two public-facing webinars and publication of the evidence model.
        - ■ TWC started using CLEAR to conduct research on specific topics and now integrates data on new workforce approaches into their grant focus (e.g. apprenticeship, etc.)
        - ■ This framework has been applied to six grants so far, and will be applied to an additional three in 2022. It is currently applied to applicant scoring as bonus points, but will soon be required as a meaningful portion of the grant scoring process.
        - ■ CLEAR is used to reduce intimidation and feelings of evidence being punitive, and increase accessibility.
        - ■ Grantees have found that CLEAR:
            - ● Is easy to learn within a grant application period.
            - ● Helps identify achievements that are demonstrative of program effectiveness.
            - ● Offers so many best practices that are not used by grant applicants that there's often very clear ways to implement/improve quickly.
- ● *Resources:*
    - ○ [Session Slides](#)
    - ○ [Clear.dol.gov](#)
    - ○ Register for upcoming [CLEAR webinars](#)
    - ○ Review Texas Workforce Commission's [evidence-based grantmaking approach](#)