

**CECY Monthly Call – February 11, 2016**

**WEBINAR:**

**Supported Employment: City of Seattle**

**PRESENTER:**

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(Captioned by Robert Devon Bell)

Note: The following transcript has been edited slightly for readability. Section titles refer to the chaptered segments of the webinar.

>> Gina, should we get going? It's a few minutes after 11:30. I always want to be respectful of those who made the effort to get here on time, and people sign on. But let's get going.

So the extent of my responsibility this morning, hi, it's Olivia Raynor, is to welcome you and appreciate your cognizance of the call, our monthly telephone call, and to turn this over to Gina, who has been talking to heather about presenting to our group today.

So Gina, let me turn it to you.

>> Good morning, everyone. Right now we have got 18 participants – 19, as people are rapidly joining us. And just wanted to take this minute to introduce Heather Weldon. She is the program manager for supported employment in the city of Seattle. And that is nested under the department of human resources.

And Heather is a tremendous sort. She is doing something that was first in the country, and that is to have an imbedded job developer with a government agency, within government. So she has some really very, very useful tips and techniques and advice on how she has been able to achieve the amazing things that she has done. And I can't wait until you see how many people she – they currently have in the city of Seattle.

And she is a tremendous resource, and really wants to answer any and all questions that we may have with California. So without further ado, I am so happy to be introducing Heather Weldon. Thank you for taking time to talk with us this morning, Heather.

>> Thank you so much, Gina. This is so exciting. Thank you for inviting me to speak with your group today. So I am available to stay on the call longer than one hour if folks have questions. I just want you to know, I am fully committed to being here as long as you need. So why don't we begin. I hope you can all see that first slide there, that shows me and rainy Seattle behind me. And I will begin with the end of the story, by letting you know where we are today, and then I will let you know how we got to where we are today.

So today – and here is just a few statistics – we have 97 employees with intellectual and developmental disabilities. And most of them – let's see, the average working schedule is anywhere between 20 hours a week and 40 hours a week. And 80% of the opportunities are in office settings. That's just because those are the settings that I wanted to target when I started it up.

We do have about 20% doing janitorial and custodial, warehousing work and working in the parks department, doing landscaping and that kind of work. But what I found is really targeting the office jobs set the bar very high in terms of what people with intellectual and developmental disabilities could do and wanted to do.

So these are definitely the types of jobs that I'm finding kids getting right out of high school or wanting to target more than some of the more labor oriented jobs. But we still have a few labor oriented jobs, for those who really that's where their passion is.

So you can see, our average wage is \$15.90 an hour for our supported employment positions within city of Seattle departments. And they all come with great benefits, all the same city benefits that any employee gets. So in addition to the wage, people get paid vacation and paid sick time and a couple of floating holidays every year, as well as the federal holidays that we all take, those are paid as well.

And retirement and deferred compensation, if they choose to participate in that. So it's a great benefits package. And I find that's the case with most of the government jobs in the nation. They have a really nice benefits package. So, I will tell you now how we got here.

It all started with an imbedded job developer. So this position that I'm in right now, initially it was funded by a demonstration grant, by our Washington State Vocational Rehabilitation. And the goal of the grant was – it was just an 18-month grant, 18 months. And the goal of the grant was for the imbedded job developer to develop 30 new jobs for people with IDD in city of Seattle departments by the end of 18 months.

And I'll let you know, I wasn't the first person to take this job. I had heard about this 18-month grant-funded position, and I thought oh my gosh, working in city government, the bureaucracy. I know job development is hard enough in the private sector, what would it be like in the public sector?

And so I actually didn't apply for this job. I heard that someone, a really good job developer had taken the job. And I thought, well that's good. I knew who she was. She is really good.

And then about two or three weeks after she had taken the job, I got a call from the technical assistance agency who had written the grant and said, you know what? That original person quit. The imbedded job developer quit after about two weeks, saying that this really was an impossible job, that there really wasn't a lot of interest within city departments. There was no funding for the position, there were barriers with the unions, and the list went on and on and on. And I thought gosh, it's worse than I thought. It's a really hard job. And so long story short, the folks who wrote the grant said, are you interested in taking it? You only have 17 months now, because we already paid her for a couple of weeks of work.

So I said “yes”. And I decided to say “yes” because I thought if I said “no”, then in a way I’m complicit with making an agreement that “yes” indeed it is impossible, and that these barriers were insurmountable. So at that point I decided that I would specialize in impossible projects and make them possible.

So, I got to the city one month into that 18-month grant, and the City of Seattle, they gave me a cubicle and a desk and a computer and said good luck. And so I quickly had to learn, you know, what is this thing called city government? What is a municipality? You know, what’s the relationship the mayor has with the city council, and kind of go back to my memories of *Schoolhouse Rock!*, if any of you remember those great teaching songs on TV, teaching us kids about government and how a bill becomes a law.

So I studied up real quick and figured out how some of those things worked. And I then I looked at the initial challenges. So from day one, from my perspective, because there was no special funding for these 30 positions, that definitely got my attention really fast. I thought oh my gosh, where are we going to get the money for 30 positions?

And then there was the issue of the unions. Because we were talking about having these positions not be union positions. And the City of Seattle was fairly heavily union represented. However, our managers and executives and folks in the HR department, they are not union represented.

So we were looking at that, and then there was the challenge of building partnerships with our employment providers. We call them

employment vendors or employment providers. Those are the agencies locally here that would be providing us with candidates with disabilities and also providing us with supportive job coaches intermittently to support the jobs on and off.

And then the other initial challenge was finding a job title that we could work with, and then the SPEs, which give us the vacancies to hire people into. And then of course the customization of the jobs and then finding supporters, which are those managers who are going to say “yes”, I’ll hire someone.

And then just marketing the idea. So looking at that within the first few days of me getting my desk and my cubicle and my computer here at the city, it felt pretty daunting. And there didn’t seem to be many answers in sight. So studying the problem, I came up with some ideas about how to tackle those. And I love this slide, Gina helped me with this, thank you Gina. What is the secret to Seattle’s success? So that is Todd on the left, that’s TJ in the middle, and Scott on the right.

And they were actually one of the first, first supported employees we hired when we started out.

But one of the ways we decided to tackle all of those initial challenges that you saw were to think very differently. And I pause when I say this, because it cannot be underlined enough. Thinking differently about the problems, the challenges and really deciding to create a new understanding for every person who worked within a city of Seattle department.

And when I say “creating a new understanding,” I really am talking about how do we change people’s minds. Changing minds by giving them a new understanding.

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So in order to change minds and create a new understanding of what supported employment could mean, I looked at that initial list and quickly reversed my priorities. Even though that number one up there, funding 30 positions, that one I could put 20 exclamation points after, because that one was the one that had the biggest red flag and blinking lights around it for me. Because that’s a lot of money. And actually the supervisor that I had within the city, she quickly pulled out her calculator – I think it was within my first week here – and she said Heather, I don’t know where you are going to find the money. This is about a half a million dollars in wages. We don’t have that.

And I thought yeah, yeah, I hear you. But when I reversed the priorities, and I looked at what it would take to create a new understanding within every mind that I met with, marketing the idea really came to the top. Not focusing on finding the money first, because I knew if I could help people reach a new understanding, I could create a new level of motivation and creating intrinsic motivation within every individual I met with, I knew that they knew how to find the money for things that were high priorities for them personally.

So I decided it really wasn’t my job to try and get the powers that be to come up with half a million dollar promise for something that they didn’t really even have an understanding of what it was.

Because naturally, they would say no. Because they didn't really have an understanding yet.

And so that really was my number one priority, was to market the idea of supported employment to educate people about what is customized employment and what were the benefits for the department? Not what are the benefits for the clients or candidates, because that is how we normally think, is we are very person centered, we are very client focused. But when we are entering into the business arena or the employer arena, it has to be all about the employer. Even though in my mind and my heart I had the candidates completely front and center, but I didn't talk about it to the employer that way.

So I had to come up with, how do I talk to the departments and create a new understanding, like painting a new picture, a new landscape, of something that they hadn't seen before. And then I found my second priority, when I went from reversing my priorities, my second priority quickly became finding supporters. Where do I find these managers who are going to say yes, and then customizing the jobs within those work places?

And priorities four, five, six, and seven started coming together because I started creating an army of support. That's the way I saw it, I was recruiting soldiers into this army of new understanding. Because those managers, as they got on board one by one, each one knew how to find funding in their budget for things that they really believed in and felt strongly about and knew that would bring them value.

So the most common way that managers ended up funding these positions was through what they call “salary savings.” So for those of you who aren’t familiar with that budget term, basically anytime a department has budgeted for a full time or part-time job, but it has gone vacant, that money is still there, even though that engineering position hasn’t been recruited for yet.

There is always vacancies in larger departments that they have budgeted for those positions, but they have gone vacant for a few months. Well I tell you, three months of an engineering position gone vacant, that’s a supported employment position for the full year. And I didn’t know about how to deal with budgets and some of the creative ways that managers figured out how to fund these positions, because I’m not a budget person. But I am someone who knew how to help them have a new understanding of what supported employment could bring to their workplace.

And so each manager found different ways to fund them. So moving through to the next, making the business case – any questions, anyone want to jump in? Yeah.

>> Heather, this is Gina. I just wanted to review some of the comments we have.

>> Oh, great. Fabulous.

>> Linda O’Neil said very impressive. Richard then said great reverse priority to pay off.

>> And Olivia said liked the framing of the issue, developing a new understanding. We talked a lot about raising expectations. It gets away from the vision, value to knowledge.

>> Oh, yay.

>> Yeah. So this is the feedback you are getting so far.

>> Oh, wonderful. Thank you, thank you for jumping in with that. And if you are seeing any questions, please feel free to jump in. I'll definitely have lots of time at the end, but I'm also happy to take questions along the way, if there's any burning questions or you need to back me up, if something doesn't make sense, please jump in, by all means.

So this is actually a picture of our mayor, with his supported employee within his office, Krista. And I guess I'll just make an aside note here, that being strategic in terms of which offices you target in government is very important. So naturally, I always make sure there is one supported employee in the mayor's office and one supported employee in our legislative department, which is where our city council members are housed.

So having a supported employee in the mayor's office has been some unique challenges because as you know, the mayor's office administration turns over every few years. So the unique challenge with that is that the mayor, the incoming new mayor oftentimes releases and terminates all the employees who used to work for the past mayor. And the new mayor brings in all of their own staff. So that's one of my challenges, is making sure that Krista doesn't get fired with all the old administration staff once the new administration comes in.

But it's a great opportunity to have to go through that struggle and that conversation with the new administration every time one comes in. It's always – I feel like I'm always on the verge of potentially

having Krista lose her job, but you know, those are the risks of having to be strategic and play the political game of making sure that employees with disabilities are visible and then in well placed strategic locations as well.

But Krista has actually survived – gosh, almost four administrations now. So I have a really good feeling. I'm much more confident than I was during the first couple of administration changeovers. Because now that she's got the longevity, I don't anticipate any incoming mayor wanting to let go of Krista, who has been there now for 17 years.

But, let's see. Some of the marketing ideas that I use – and I will say that the making the business case is really important. At the same time, what you see on your screen is by all means not a recipe. So it's not a recipe that if you talk about inclusive work places and give some examples of cost savings and then you go down that list, badda boom, badda bang, you know, you bake that cake, and that cake comes out, and you have got an employment opportunity for someone.

I wish it were that simple, but there really is not a formula. So I definitely want to put that out there, that it's not a recipe. However, I see all of these and more as ingredients. So using these ingredients as needed, and keeping your audience in mind, what will motivate them and what will they find most valuable?

Because in talking to some work places, sometimes that number one inclusive work places, that may be what is most of value to them. So I will really target talking about the benefit of diversity, including someone who has been traditionally excluded from our work places,

and talking about some of the benefits that happen, like team building. I have so many managers who will say gosh, I have sent my teams to team building trainings for years, but nothing seemed to bring the team together like hiring a supported employee.

People seem to rally around someone who needed a little extra help, and it really shifted some of the attitudes that people had about themselves and who they were in their work, workplace. So that might be just what one workplace needs to here. Another might look to the bottom bullet and say, you know what? We have had trouble retaining entry level employees. So I would love to look at how we could bundle some tasks in our workplace that seem to be parts of jobs that turn over more quickly. And having a supported employee may stabilize that.

Other folks will find value in the improved work flow. Oftentimes when I am working with work places and identifying where those entry-level tasks are, we find bottlenecks in work flow, and then we are able to free up other staff by having them let go of some of their entry-level duties. That frees them up to do 100% of their – spend 100% of their time on the more complex and high-level tasks. That's a cost savings right there.

If I'm working with an office who has mostly professional level staff, but 10-15% of each of those staff's time is spent doing entry level work, I can bundle all of those tasks into a job for a supported employee. And now those more expensive tasks are happening 100% by each of those employees. So that's what I think about in terms of increasing – well, it's a more effective division of labor.

And so I will talk about that more efficient division of labor argument with folks that might be very bottom line oriented. And they know they have professional level positions. And 10% of what each of those people are doing are – involve more basic, kind of routine tasks.

And I will pose the question, what if all of your staff no longer had to get their own mail or shred their own documents or refill the coffee machine when it came up empty, or do this or do that? And I put together task lists that have a lot of those kinds of duties in it, and I find that professional folks, about 10-15% of their time is spent doing those kinds of jobs.

So it's a more effective cost, or division of labor. And that's a cost savings right there.

Finding managers who say "yes". What I found was first of all, every single manager that I talked to or presented to – I presented to a lot of teams, a lot of teams of directors and managers. I met with all levels of staff within city government. And I can safely tell you that most of them, most of those "yesses" were "no's" in the beginning. And that's what made me start realizing, what are they saying "no" to? They are saying "no" to their understanding of what they think this experience will be.

And that's when I realized that every "no" could potentially turn into a "yes". But I had to keep the conversation going. So I started expecting each first meeting would probably end with them saying "no thanks, Heather, I don't think we have that kind of work here." Or, I

don't really have the time to supervise someone like that. Or, you know, other kinds of barriers.

But I would say you know, that's fine. I understand, I would love to stay in touch with you. So I would let them have a couple weeks, and then I would follow up with them. Because what I found was, people change their mind over time, but they have to do it on their own terms. And they also have to ask all their questions, that they are oftentimes embarrassed to ask in that first meeting. Because they don't know me. Who am I? So why should they be vulnerable and ask their silly questions, or take the risk that might not know what the right word for this disability is, or that.

People are afraid to be politically incorrect. So, you know, one of the things I oftentimes tell groups that I am working with is, you know what? First of all, there's no such thing as a silly question. And you can use whatever word is comfortable for you. I'm not going to be the ADA police, and I'm not going to correct you. What I find is, if I keep working with them if they are not using the right language, they come around, because we end up modeling the way for them. And we rub off on them.

But, you know, resist the temptation to shame them. Because I can tell you, there's a lot of job developers out that I have talked to who will say oh, I didn't want to work with that employer again, because, you know, they used this word and obviously they are not educated enough, or whatever. And I thought, you're not going to meet with them a second time and give them the chance to, you know, have you rub off on them? You know?

So we have got to keep that relationship going and that conversation going. Because it's through the conversation that that person will begin to have a new understanding. And their mind and heart will begin to change. But you have to establish credibility with them. And I know we hear the term "building relationships" all the time. So, you know, I kind of – I try to not use that phrase, building relationships, very often. Because what I really mean by building relationships is, you becoming a familiar person to that stranger. You becoming someone who is familiar, someone who is trusted, someone who they will eventually follow your lead, because you have established your credibility and trust with them to that deep level, that they are willing to follow you into unknown territory, and that they have become vulnerable and are allowing themselves to see a new possibility where they had not previously.

So in working with unions, what I found was taking advantage of the folks who work with the unions the best, that's the labor relations division within – every government entity has labor relations folks. And those labor relations people are excellent. They have personal relationships with union representatives, with the heads of the unions. So working with the labor relations division, I found that there were misperceptions on the union's part.

There were fears. There was first of all the fear that perhaps I was going to replace union jobs with these unrepresented jobs, or that as I was customizing jobs and bundling tasks, that I might be skimming union work. So the first thing we did was we actually sent out a letter to all the unions, and it came out from our labor relations division, saying this is an initiative we were wanting to move forward on.

We were just looking at 30 possible positions out of the 10,000 employees that we employ. We really wanted to be a more inclusive workplace and find a way to include people with IDD. And as we started that ball rolling, we found that the unions were absolutely willing to engage, especially when we started talking about how we are not looking at 5,000 positions, we are going to start with 30. And even beyond that, one job at a time.

That was another thing. I actually quickly learned the hard way not to talk as much about the 30 positions being a goal. Because the 30 – the number 30 was a lot for a lot of people. And so what I realized was, by being more careful with my language and the words I was choosing to use and put out there, it got me a lot farther. And when I started talking about just one job at a time, and making a presentation to our utilities department and not talking to them about my grant goals, and just simply saying, I'm looking for an opportunity. I'd love to meet with you and see if I can help you identify some unmet needs in your workplace, people really opened up.

So I had to look at, what language am I using that might be pushing that employer to a "no" without even knowing it and that was one of the things, talking about it in terms of 30 positions, completely overwhelming to most of the managers that I spoke to. So I quickly had to shut up and just really talk about it as one job at a time, one job at a time. And really that philosophy carried over to working with our employment vendors in our community, who were referring us candidates.

Because what I found was, they kind of had that similar idea of advocating by the caseload, meaning that if I developed one job, I

would find that our employment providers, they would fill out an application for every single person on their caseload. So I literally, for one supported employment position, I got hundreds and hundreds of applications. So I decided, I need to use that one person at a time, one job at a time philosophy when teaching our community agencies how to advocate and work with employers.

So I made phone calls to all of our community agencies and said okay, I just got the big envelope in the mail with a hundred applications that looks like your entire caseload. But I'm going to ask to you do the hard work of doing the sorting and come up with one person you want to advocate for.

And that was really different for our agencies. They were used to dropping off applications with employers for all of their clients they were working with and letting the employer do the hard job of sorting through those applications. And I know that people with IDD oftentimes don't look great on paper. They don't – they are not going to have a great looking application, they're not going to have a great-looking resume, because resumes are marketing tools designed to market all of your vast experience and all of your past credentials and work skills and all of those good things.

So why would we want to drop a hundred resumes or applications on an employer and then hope that they find one of our candidates suitable for one of their jobs? So we started reshaping the way our agencies were advocating for their candidates, and I said to them, you know, you are going to have to advocate for one person at a time, and I'm not saying you need to advocate for the person with the most skills or who you think will be easiest to place.

I said, you can advocate for the person you view on your caseload as having the most complex and significant disability that you choose to put that person forward, and that person is who is going to be in the running for a job. And that was a really different way of advocating. And I realized that our community agencies had been doing that kind of advocacy, dropping off a stack of resumes with employers, for a really long time, and not knowing really how to advocate for one person at a time, and putting one person forward – not necessarily their traditionally best candidate, but who do they choosing to put forward and really, you know, put time into?

So that was a new way of advocating. But I really took that approach with our department as well, taking the one job at a time approach.

There's Steve. So Steve works in our public utilities department, and he has been there a really long time. He's a great example of someone who, when I got down to it and I was talking to agencies, I said you know, you don't have to put your person forward who you think is going to be the easiest to place. You can choose your most – the claim you are most challenged, in terms of finding a job for. And one of the agencies said well, we will put forward someone who we have considered unemployable. And so they put forward Steve.

And that was a really fun experience. Because we together designed a job that we thought Steve could do, and working with one of the departments did a lot of education with them around supported employment. And then when we got Steve in there, to kind of do a working interview and check out some of the tasks that we thought he

could do, like opening up the paper trays on the printers and refilling them and doing some things like that. We realized Steve actually just didn't have the strength.

And so by that time, the workplace, though, was so invested in Steve and the idea of supported employment and including someone who had traditionally been excluded, that they really stepped up and stepped in, and they said well we are just going to have to identify some other tasks that Steve can do.

And that's when I realized wow, this is becoming bigger than me. This is that creating an army of support. And I no longer had to be the one to turn to the supervisor and say gosh, I'm sorry. I thought Steve had more strength. You know, can I find some more tasks here for him.

I know the ones we had found aren't going to work. It was the supervisor and the two co-workers in on the interview who said, we are committed to Steve. We are going to find other tasks. And they did. And they are not tasks that I would have even known about. But they were important tasks that Steve has now been doing for, gosh, 15 years.

So one of the things – I put interview process on boarding up there, is one of the differences in how we do our interview process for supported employees is, that of course job coaches get to be in on the interview. And we don't really sit down and have a panel interview, it's actually more of a, let's walk around the office and show you some of the potential tasks, and the job coach can kind of check out the tasks, too.

And usually when we have a job opening, it's not been fully developed yet. So we've got a loose outline of some of the main tasks. But once the department chooses the candidate they want to hire, then we get to develop the job more fully around the person who ends up in the job. So customizing it even further.

I put this up here, philosophical issues. Because I know this is oftentimes a question, is well, did you guys have a mandate? Did you have a degree? Did the powers that be say that city employment would hire 50 supported employees? Or, you know, how did you deal with the – that piece of it?

So I put – I just put this down here, because it's just from my experience, that it is far quicker and simpler to create impact via mandate. The outcomes are so much more sustainable and meaningful when they are achieved by people actually changing their mind and having a new understanding.

Because then we are not making people do things. And I understand, sometimes you do need a mandate. But I would always say, you are going to go with a mandate, you got to make sure you are educating and creating that new understanding for people along the way. Otherwise, people will agree to comply with mandates or those kinds of initiatives. But in their heart of hearts, they may have not changed their mind. And so over time, it's not as sustainable.

I know our county had more of a mandate approach many years ago. And as soon as the county executive left, the supported employment efforts completely fizzled. And now that they are trying to breathe new life into their supported employment efforts, they are

realizing, there's some complexities around some of the bitterness, let's just say, that the managers there felt they had to hire people or meet quotas. They were mandated, there was a decree. And so their supported employers were there, but, you know, they didn't really want them there. They never really understood those people. And so consequently over the years, the tasks have gone away and some of those supported employees aren't as productive any more.

And so the person who is in the equivalent of my role now at our county has to do some clean up, let's just say, and some educating and helping find new tasks for those supported employees, and then go through that process of helping change people's minds and helping them reach a new understanding. But now, see, they have got an understanding that is pretty deeply rooted because of the experience they have had. Because they all had to hire a certain number of people.

So this is just something to keep in mind. But I like to think of this as the changed mind is a very powerful thing. When I leave the city here, this will not all fall apart, because there's an army of support.

And then just wrapping up here, and then I'm happy to take any questions, I thought you know what? I have just thrown a ton of information at you guys. So if I could just leave you with three key elements, three ingredients for success, they would be to always focus on the workplace needs. I know we have our own, in our field, our philosophical values around person-centered planning. People-focused, person-focused, people first, nothing about me without me, all of those – of course, of course those are absolutely important.

And we don't need to – we don't need to use all of that in our first and second meetings with an employer. If we make the employer first when we are talking about the employer, then we will eventually, absolutely meet the needs of the people that we are trying to find jobs for.

And then the second ingredient for success, I would say, is really paying attention to the language we use. So I call it the “art of language.” How we talk about anything defines it. What words are we going to use? And I think back to me deciding, I can't say 30 anymore. I got to talk about this as one job at a time. Not using the word “client,” using the word “candidate.”

Really focusing on how can we turn some of our internal social service language into business language? Because if the employer feels like you are advocating for them, then they will advocate for the ultimate outcome that you are working toward. And three, back to the – making this bigger than you. I'm always looking for, how can I include more people in the workplace and get more people on board. We have all been there, when we – if you have even experience job developing, you have been making progress and making progress working with an employer, and then that supervisor you have been working with goes on maternity leave or takes a different job. And then all of a sudden the job falls apart, and there's no job.

So learning from that lesson, I am always asking managers for our next meeting, who else should we include and meet with and talk with, so that it's always an ever-expanding circle. And that goes for once that person with a disability is employed. I'm always looking at, who else can this person get to know, and looking for those natural

supports, as we call it. But making it more than that. Making it so much bigger than you that it survives without you being a part of it.

And I would like to think of that as instead of building yourself into the job, you are looking to build others in the workplace into the job. So always trying to build others. How can we build others?

And then this is just our final slide. And that is Warren. And he has been here for several years. And this is just some language from a document that I have here. Because I think it's a good way to think about how to present what it is we are doing to employers. So I just say that we offer city departments a creative and cost effective approach to meeting business needs while diversifying and expanding their workforce to include people with IDD.

And I think I'll leave it at that for now. Of course I could continue on, and I have probably a day or two's worth of information. So – but I think is a great place for a pause. And just see where you are and what you are thinking about and anything I can clarify for you.

## **Q&A**

>> So, this is Gina. We have a couple.

Joyce says, music to my ears.

And we have, Olivia is asking a couple questions. She says one, how are candidates referred to you? And two, do all employees have job coaches from transition to natural support? If they are having trouble on the job, do they go to you or to their supervisor?

>> Okay. So the first question was, how are candidates referred to you?

>> Yes.

>> Great. Okay. Candidates are referred so through our– they all have to be eligible for services through our county division of developmental disabilities. So essentially they have to be eligible for support services. So that means eligible for a job coach.

And you know, everyone technically has a job coach, who works through supported employment. But boy, I tell you, those job coaches, many of them are only checking in, maybe every couple of months. The natural supports are firmly in place. And I would say for a good handful or more, they probably don't need their job coaches there anymore. The only reason that the coach still checks in is because I know that co-workers and supervisors turn over. And even though it has been a magical relationship for five years, I know that people change.

And I know the supported employment – the supported employee could be there for 30 years. I really don't doubt that. But I know that even though the natural supports are firmly in place, it could change. And just having the coach who is doing a minimal check in can catch that when those changes happen and then reassemble a new army of support in that workplace and reeducate the new supervisor and then educate the new co-workers, or we both go in there together.

>> Thank you. There is another question from Olivia. She says, can the employees become union members? Would there be an advantage or disadvantage for their job to become union?

>> We do actually have, let's see, about five supported employees are in the union now. It honestly would be a disadvantage, only because the union's rules around last hired, first

fired, when there is layoffs. And any employee who has been here a few years, any supported employee who has been here a few years, entering into a union position, they would lose their service years, their service credits, in terms of the years they have been employed.

Anytime someone switches a title and goes into a new job title, then they are technically in their department considered, you know, the most recently hired person into that job classification. And if it's union and there's an economic downturn or that department is doing some downsizing and layoffs, or a new executive comes in and wants to change things around, they can technically terminate those most recently hired folks.

So we experimented a little bit with turning a couple of the supported employment positions into union positions, and within a year they were at risk, because it was during our economic down time. So I actually – we ended up reclassifying them back into their supported employment title, just so on the books they were still in what we call – it's an office maintenance aide. That's the title we use for these positions.

So it's office-slash-maintenance aide, and it's just a very open, general title. You can see that someone could be doing office work, they could be doing maintenance work, they could be aiding and assisting in some way. So office maintenance aide is the title that we have created for these positions. So yeah, it's just kind of touchy, but we do have five supported employees in union positions. And they have been in those a long time.

So I think those people are fine. It would – they would have to start off in a union position, probably more so than having them

switch over after having been in a supported employment position. In a way they kind of almost have more protection in a supported employment title, just because there is so much education throughout the departments, they know what that means when – when our budget office sees office maintenance aide, they know that’s a supported employee. So they will know, oh wow, they are trying to layoff an office maintenance aide title, versus oh, they are trying to layoff an administrative specialist. They will know.

>> Oh.

>> Yeah, so there’s just such an awareness in the culture now that they know wow, this is a bigger issue. We aren’t just laying off an employee here, we are flushing many years of state dollars that have gone into a job coach, supporting the person, and then learning their job, and then stabilizing.

So there’s that in the consciousness within our department.

>> Great. We have about six-seven minutes left.

>> Okay.

>> To 12:30. And Janice says thank you, this has been amazing and very helpful.

Mark asks, who funds your position? And why were the jobs non-union? I think maybe you answered that. You have union concerns, that the jobs you create are within the bargaining unit. What funds your position?

>> Yeah. So my position for the first 18 months, I was funded by the division of vocational rehabilitation. So that was the demonstration grant, through our state. And then actually two years after that grant ended, or after 18 months, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> month

and then for two years, our division of developmental disabilities – actually through some millage money, I believe – picked me up and paid for me to stay within the city. And then after that in 2002, the city decided wow, we need to just hire, hire this position and not keep dilly-dallying around with hoping there is going to be some kind of external funding.

So I'm actually a full-fledged city employee now, and employed by the city. So the city pays for me.

Now the reason we didn't go with union is for one reason, there's so many rules around how you hire and the need for competitive hiring and competitive recruitment, and then the positions would need to be posted and recruited from the general public and all of that.

And that doesn't have to be the case every time, but this was the fastest way for us to get some wins really quickly. And so actually these positions are considered exempt. And so typically that exempt status is hire at will, which is usually reserved for management positions and executive positions, just because you can appoint someone into a position like this.

So we chose to go with an exempt status, because that meant that we could almost appoint these employees, and therefore not have to go through the competitive hiring and recruitment, posting it on our website and then, you know, opening it up for the world to apply for each one of these positions. We could create more of a special process around this and really open it up for just people with IDD.

And at first I was worried that departments would take advantage of that hire at will. No one has taken advantage of it. They are – they treat them just like they are civil service classified union positions. So

I can safely say the exempt status has worked out great to give us that flexibility in hiring. And then also if it doesn't work, if it's really not a good job match, the supervisor knows that they can work with the employment vendor to find a better candidate. They don't abuse that, either. But it's kind of a nice – it makes it easier for the departments to say “yes”.

Because with our civil service process, it could take years to fire a bad employee, unfortunately. And so when they hear that these positions are exempt, they say oh, that's great. So, you know, if it's really not working out, we can just get a different employee. I'm like, yeah.

>> Great. So we have a couple more comments.

>> Sure.

>> Richard says great call. Thank you.

Linda says great program, should serve as a model for all cities all over the country.

Mark says this is a different paradigm for job development in the public sector. Usually we have the thought of development of jobs through leadership from the top. This is more organic and easier to get going.

And that's what we have in the chat box. We have three more minutes –

>> Great.

>> Until 12:30. Open it up on the line if anybody on the phone has any questions you would like to ask.

>> Hi. This is Olivia again. And another tough question, so you can interrupt me. I have them written down here, so I won't get to all of them.

I'm wondering, it sounds like your work really has led to some policy changes, everything from the – you know, the invention, in essence, or the creation of your position. Have there been any other changes in operation – operational policies within the government or anything that is – sort of falls within the policy realm in terms of hiring and job practice, that came as a result of your work?

>> Definitely hiring practices and definitely how we do performance evaluations is a little modified. But it's similar, how we do – yeah, interviewing and recruitment has changed. How we do training on the job has definitely changed. You know, the whole idea of allowing a job coach in to really kind of be on hand to help with training in the beginning of the job. That – we also – I did write an ordinance that created the initial – there were 50 FTEs, so those are basically the vacancies, the full time equivalencies, FTEs. Those created the vacancies for departments to hire so they didn't have to wait for a secretary position to open up and then kind of chisel it down to be a supported employment position.

So that, I have written two of those ordinances now. So we have used the initial 50 vacancies, and now we are, you know, well on our way to using up the next 50. So I'll probably have to do another ordinance asking for another 50 vacancies, essentially.

I'd say everything changed around how the city hires and includes people, because this is such a customized approach now that the city is looking at other populations that they can use this customized

approach with. And our mayor's office has talked to me about potentially working with people who are formerly incarcerated, as well as immigrant and refugee populations and others. And basically not making them supported employees, but using some of these principles and practices to better support those populations in coming into the workplace and being successful on a long-term basis.

>> Great. Thank you.

That brings us to 12:30. Are there any last questions for Heather?

>> Well, this is Mark. I just wanted to underline sort of the different perspective that she gave. Because 10 years ago, coming out of Washington State, one of the big lessons was we need leadership from the top. You know, both for the Multnomah County and within state employment. But what Heather has done is reversed this, built things organically from within, and made the strong case that, you know, that is more sustainable.

And so I think in California, we should really think about that and think of how to implement that. It's really quite dramatic.

>> Yeah, yeah. It doesn't have to come from the top. This is definitely more of a grassroots approach. Although I did definitely connect with department heads within the city. I also worked a lot with front line staff and everyone in between.

>> Thank you for that.

>> It's important who gets hired as the job coach to do that work, because it has to be somebody like Heather.

>> Well, and I'll tell you, that's a great question. Because the county to the north of us, Snohomish County, just hired a position just like mine. And like I said, King county, our major seat of our state

that Seattle resides within, just hired a job developer, as well as Microsoft is now doing this, and Starbucks is considering this.

And so as they are doing that, the people they have hired are – they are very different than the person I am. And I'm working with them, and I'm seeing that their results are different, and they are doing some things differently. And it does depend on how the leadership influences them. In some ways, in a way I now realize I had it really good. Because nobody here cared or wanted to do it. And I thought that was a barrier initially, but I have realized I was able to actually create something really unique. Because no one was really looking or cared. But there's a lot of people looking now at the counties nearby who are doing this, and Microsoft.

And so there's a lot more input than that job developer is having to take in, and a lot more hands in the pie and in the kitchen, so to speak. So it's interesting watching how those different programs are now evolving and getting off the ground. But they are definitely going to have some different outcomes and different structures than we have created here at the city.

>> Yeah, because –

>> Because they have like –

>> Thank you for that, Mark. There's been a request for a copy of this presentation. There is also other materials we will make available to you and have Rachel send out. We have copies of questions, Heather Weldon interview questions and other resources. Richard is asking for a copy of the job description in your city.

>> Yeah, okay. How about I send all of that to Gina, and then Gina forward it out. I'm also happy to take e-mails from anyone who

wants to e-mail me, or phone call. I really am very an accessible person. So please, take me up on that if I can help you in any way. I will tell you, every single job description is different than the next. So we don't have all of those written down, because they are all customized. But I can give you a task list that I oftentimes use as a conversation starter with work places to help them start getting their creative juices bubbling around where those tasks might be.

So I can send that to Gina.

>> Great.

>> Wondering in terms of these jobs, what is the size of the departments you are working with? How small and how large?

>> Our smallest department has like 15 people. They are generally called offices. You know, office of economic development, office of this, office of that. So there will be – you know, there could be 10-15 people in one of those smaller departments. And then up to 2000 in a larger utilities.

>> Wow. Okay. Thank you.

>> And that's why we can have so many employees. People hear the number, nearly 100 supported employees, and they think oh my gosh, is this a sheltered workshop? And I'm like, no. And in fact many of the supported employees don't even know each other, because, you know, they are spread out in different buildings and different floors, and, you know, offices north of downtown and south of downtown. So, you know, we have got a pretty big operation.

>> Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Thank you. Yeah.