

## Program Snapshot: Work Success

By Kristen Joyce and Mary Anne Anderson

**Work Success** is a structured, time-intensive coaching program in Utah designed to help job seekers find employment. Work Success serves Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other job seekers who are 18 or older; who are seeking employment; have work appropriate clothing; and have sufficient; child care and transportation to enable them to work.

Utah's Department of Workforce Services has administered Work Success since 2011 and has offered it in about 30 American Job Centers statewide. The program is funded by TANF, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I (Adult and Dislocated Worker) and Title III (Employment Services). Ten of the American Job Centers in Utah that offer Work Success are participating in the Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies (NextGen) Project (see box).



### Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies (NextGen) Project

The goal of the NextGen Project is to identify and study innovative employment programs for people facing complex employment challenges. The study explores how the programs are designed and operated, their cost, and how effective they are at improving participants' employment, health, and other outcomes related to economic self-sufficiency and well-being. The NextGen Project is part of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation's [Innovative Strategies for Addressing Employment Barriers Portfolio](#), which seeks to rigorously evaluate the "next generation" of employment strategies for individuals with low income, and is partnering with the Social Security Administration on select evaluations.

## Five key features of Work Success

**1. Time-intensive and short-term programming designed to help participants quickly find employment.** Work Success requires that participants go to an American Job Center offering Work Success Monday to Thursday each week as a part-time or full-time participant. Those who cannot commit to the program full time (40 hours per week) can attend for half days (20 hours per week). A typical day starts at 8:00 a.m. with a 45-minute group coaching session called "morning motivation." After this session, participants can attend workshops offered at the center or independently search for a job at the center or off-site (for example, by attending job interviews or job fairs). At the end of the day, around 3:30 p.m. for full-time and 12:00 for part-time, participants meet again for a 30-minute "roundtable" group coaching session. Participants are expected to independently job search on Fridays. Programming lasts two to four weeks, by which point participants typically find employment.

**What is employment coaching?** Coaching involves trained staff or coaches working with participants to set personalized goals. Coaches support, motivate, and provide feedback to the participants over time as they pursue those goals. The coaches are not directive but work collaboratively with the participants.

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- 2. Group coaching to promote short-term goal setting and peer support.** Trained coaches facilitate daily coaching sessions with groups of 5 to 10 participants. Group coaching aims to help participants develop supportive peer relationships and be able to informally coach each other. Group coaching is also designed to help participants feel motivated by one another's successes and encouraged that they are not alone in their job search. During the "morning motivation" group coaching session, the Work Success coach sets an agenda for the day, and participants set action-oriented goals to help structure their job search. Participants share their job search progress, receive feedback, engage in a motivational group activity, or attend a workshop led by a coach. During the afternoon "roundtable" group coaching session, participants report on their daily accomplishments and the group celebrates their successes.
  - 3. One-on-one coaching focused on setting and achieving short-term goals (quality employment) and longer-term goals (career planning).** Coaches meet one-on-one with participants at least once a week and more often as needed. During these sessions, coaches help participants define short and longer-term employment goals, work out the steps they will take to achieve those goals, and think through solutions to challenges. Coaches also assess what supports participants might need to achieve their goals, and provide additional resources as needed.
  - 4. Well-defined requirements intended to prepare participants to find jobs.** Work Success requirements aim to instill confidence in participants and encourage the development of soft skills that will serve them well in any workplace. To complete the program, participants must attend Work Success regularly and take workshops covering resume building, job search strategies, interviewing skills, and budgeting and credit. Participants must also develop a career portfolio that includes a resume and cover letter and participate in a mock interview. They are required to dress professionally, be punctual, and report their activities daily in a Work Success record-keeping system. Although Work Success does not offer financial incentives for program participation, limited funds are available for supportive services, such as work-related clothing and transportation.
  - 5. Additional supports to help participants manage work and life.** A licensed clinical therapist delivers a weekly presentation to Work Success participants on stress reduction techniques and balancing work and life. The therapist is available for crisis counseling and referrals to other mental health supports.


**Training for Coaches.** The program's director trains coaches during a one-on-one, full-day training about how to deliver Work Success. After training, new coaches shadow and are mentored by experienced coaches. The program director also observes and gives feedback to the new coaches.

### **The NextGen Project will release findings about Work Success over the next few years.**


The project team will collect and analyze information about how Work Success operates, its successes and challenges, its cost, and its effectiveness compared with other employment services available at Utah's American Job Centers and elsewhere in the community. For more information, visit the NextGen Project's web page <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/next-generation-of-enhanced-employment-strategies-project> or email us at [NextGenProject@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:NextGenProject@mathematica-mpr.com) to receive regular updates on the project.

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