

Olympic Health Care Alliance

Training Barriers and Healthcare Interest Research
Phase II: Regional Focus Groups

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Prepared for:

Olympic Health Care Alliance
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Introduction/Methodology

This report analyzes the results of a set of four focus groups conducted by Hardwick Research for the Olympic Health Care Alliance.

These focus groups make up the second phase of a two-part research study. The first phase incorporated a qualitative self-administered mail survey, the results of which are available under separate cover.

Research Goals

The Olympic Health Care Alliance commissioned this research study to identify possible education and/or personal barriers that inhibit the unemployed, low income healthcare workers, Temporary Assistance to Need Families (TANF) and WorkSource benefits recipients from seeking training in new occupation skills. Additionally interest in healthcare related careers was also evaluated.

Research Process

In order to gather opinions from residents in the various communities of Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap counties the following locations were chosen: Forks, Port Angeles, Port Townsend and Silverdale. In each location the focus group was held in a conference room at the hospital. Each group discussion lasted 1½ to 2 hours. The discussions were audio taped. Participants received \$50 cash to compensate them for their time and opinions. Nancy Hardwick, President of Hardwick Research, moderated the focus groups. A copy of the discussion guide used by the moderator can be found in the Appendix section of this report.

Participants

Residents from Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap County were recruited to participate in the focus groups. Their names were obtained from the Phase I self-administered mail survey that included a question asking residents who might be interested in future research to provide their name and telephone number. Some of the hospital workers who participated in the Forks and Port Townsend groups responded to a flier posted at the hospital.

All focus group participants, regardless of how they learned about the group were screened to verify they met the desired qualifications. To guarantee a sufficient turnout a total of twelve participants were recruited for each group with hopes for 8-10 to show. The participants could either be employed or unemployed however some must currently work in the healthcare field. Those with higher than an Associates degree were excluded. All must have some interest in returning to school to receive training. The screener used to recruit the participants is included in the Appendix section of this report.

The following is a list of the focus group locations, dates and the number of residents who participated in each town.

Forks

Forks Community Hospital
Tuesday, October 7, 2003 at 6pm
10 residents participated

Port Townsend

Jefferson General
Thursday, October 9, 2003
12 residents participated

Port Angeles

Olympic Medical Center
Wednesday, October 1, 2003
7 residents participated

Silverdale

Harrison Hospital
Thursday, October 2, 2003
11 residents participated

Report Annotations

Throughout the report you will find participant's comments in *Italics*. Participants were guaranteed anonymity, therefore names have been excluded from this report.

Reminder: Focus groups are qualitative research and are therefore considered exploratory. The methods used to recruit participants are not random and the sample size is small, so that the results from this type of research cannot be projected to the population as a whole. Even so, the results can provide valuable insight and direction.

Executive Summary

“Do not have money/need financial aid” was the top barrier preventing focus group participants from returning to school for retraining. Financial aid (subsidizing tuition and books) would help a few residents, but most would need additional money to live (eat and pay rent) while they attended school. Many participants claimed they make too much money to get financial assistance, but don’t make enough to offset their living expenses while attending school.

“Classes are not available in my area of interest” is also a barrier for retraining. Residents in all locations shared that in some cases they would be required to move to Seattle or Tacoma in order to enroll in their desired education program.

“Need help deciding what is the right career for me” was another barrier that surfaced. Residents shared the need for help in deciding what would be a good career to chose. This issue is actually two-fold. Residents want to find a career they would like. But more importantly they want to select one that will be in demand in their local community when they complete their schooling and look for work.

Awareness is a barrier for many. Getting the word out to residents is necessary to inform them about all their choices including jobs, retraining and financial assistance. Job fairs that offer not only available employment opportunities but also individual career counseling and help with obtaining financial assistance would be beneficial.

“Classes are not offered close to home/work” was another barrier for retraining among residents. This is especially key for Forks residents. The variety of classes offered in Forks are extremely limited and the public transportation to Port Angeles does not allow residents to work a standard swing shift (return transportation is too late).

Positions available in Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap counties are limited. According to the participants there is not much beyond retail, foodservice and healthcare.

Participants appreciate employers providing tuition reimbursement. Although some weren’t pleased with their particular programs requirement (having to sign a 3-year contract) most were or would be grateful to have the option.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- **Advertise available aid and provide location for job seekers to research opportunities**
Promote through local media available funds for those who qualify. Give workshops that explain types of assistance, how to apply, who is eligible and where to go to find out more information. Not everybody was aware that aid is available. Many felt they would not qualify. Consider holding a job fair to announce opportunities and promote available resources.
- **Teach local leaders how to promote their area for new business**
Offer training to community leaders to assist them in drawing new business into their area. Advise local administrators on how to best approach potential businesses and negotiate with them to ensure that the town's interests are addressed and reflected in any decisions made by the incoming business. For example, encouraging businesses to hire local residents. Consider coordinating with community colleges to provide training that matches the needs of current and incoming businesses.
- **Invest in the needs of individuals seeking help**
Not everyone is lazy; there are people who genuinely want to improve their current situation. Typically these people do not know where to go for information and are unfamiliar with available opportunities. Taking time to understand their needs will help counselors identify their barriers and how to address them. Spending time to create realistic responses to these barriers will increase the likelihood that those seeking help will receive an available grant and or other forms of financial assistance.
- **Match career interest with job demand**
Counsel job seekers unsure of a career path to select one where their area of interest intersects with local opportunities. Participants expressed a need for help in determining the right career choice. Potential for employment was a huge factor for participants in choosing what area to pursue. They wanted help in determining which areas have a higher likelihood of employment when their course work is completed.
- **Review local curriculum**
Participants stated that frequently course selection did not reflect their interest or the needs of the community. Many would be required to commute to other areas to take classes. By providing schooling locally, residents would spend less time away, therefore increasing their likelihood of enrollment. It is important to offer classes in areas where there is a local demand for employees. Review community employment needs including any areas with a shortage of workers and be sure they are included in local curriculum.

- **Coordinate with community organizations to improve access to retraining options**
Improving accessibility to a wider range of classes is important throughout Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap Counties. However this need is particularly evident in Forks. Review bus schedules to ensure that those taking classes elsewhere are able to return in time to work a swing shift. In addition to adjusting the public transportation schedule, Forks Community Hospital and Peninsula College should work together to bring an expanded assortment of medical oriented classes and training options to the region.
- **Inform participants of research results**
Participants would like to receive information resulting from any decisions that will be made based on this research. Their interest has practical implications; they want to be informed of opportunities that might personally benefit them.
- **Be open to conducting additional market research as needed**
The objective of this initial research was to uncover barriers for retraining. As this evaluation process moves forward additional market research may be necessary to flush out ideas or pinpoint needs of residents, employers and educators in the region.

Detailed Findings

I. Ideal Job

Summary of Findings:

When describing their ideal job focus group participants shared aspects that most typical employees would be interested in. Things like good pay and benefits, job stability, an area of personal interest or expertise, pleasant work environment/co-workers, rewarding work, tuition reimbursement, work/family balance and the potential for advancement.

All of the focus group participants have considered returning to school for retraining. Participants see the value in retraining – expanded opportunities – however only a few have returned to school. Those who have not enrolled in a retraining program explained that the lack of money, time, opportunity, direction, class availability and motivation have deterred them from enrollment at this time.

Ideal Job

Focus group participants from Forks, Port Angeles, Port Townsend and Silverdale each described their ideal job similarly. Many are looking for a job that they enjoy, that's financially stable and has good benefits. One participant shared, *"For me it's finding a job that I am going to be happy at. I want to wake up in the morning and can't wait to go to work and think to myself they pay me to do this."* Another declared, *"Financial stability is one of the key factors...I am tired of jobs that seem to go nowhere and do nothing. I want a career."*

"Better benefits and better pay" are very important to residents. They are looking for *"medical, dental, etc., something with good stable insurance. I don't mind paying a little into it but it would be worthwhile getting."* Some participants shared their frustration with the lack of job security. *"The reason I wanted to change jobs was because I am getting tired of hearing lay-off. I don't know when it is going to happen."*

A good work environment also plays into creating the ideal job. Residents shared that *"good team work,"* a good supervisor and *"fun"* co-workers are also a part of an ideal job. A few participants shared that ideally they would like to be self-employed. While others felt a job where you are responsible for your decisions, *"where there's honesty, integrity and respect"* and having as little office politics as possible would be ideal.

Some participants felt an ideal job should be one that's rewarding. *"Having the feeling of doing something, making something better or accomplishing something."* Another participant explained, *"You have the feeling like you did something productive. It's the feeling that you made a difference. You feel like you did something good."*

When asked to share other aspects of an ideal job residents shared the following:

"Balance between work and family."

"It needs to be challenging."

"Tuition reimbursement."

"It's nice when they provide training, ongoing education."

"Stable" "One that's going to be here tomorrow."

"Reasonable commute."

"Good hours."

"Something that pays really well A, and B, that includes a few benefits like health insurance maybe even a paid vacation for maybe more than two weeks...that would be ideal. And it would, of course be quite creative."

"Going from the bottom of the ladder to somewhere a little more comfortable."

Interest in Retraining

All of the focus group participants have considered going back to school for retraining at some point. A few are currently attending school. The reasons for returning to school were varied. However, there were a few themes that arose including no longer being able to do physically challenging tasks associated with job function due to age, staying up to date with current technology, tuition reimbursement provided by employer, the possibility for advancement and higher pay.

"I can't physically keep doing what I am doing."

"Keeping up with the times."

"You have to have the schooling to get the job."

"Whether the schooling counts or you use the schooling, you still need to have the qualifications to even be considered for the position."

"More money."

"More education means higher pay, better jobs, better hours, more benefits and more responsibility."

Some participants felt additional schooling was necessary to get a job or even an interview. They acknowledged potential employers might dismiss their applications due to certain lapses or gaps. Participants wanted to increase their chances as a viable candidate for a job by receiving additional schooling, therefore, demonstrating their ability to learn and pick up new skills. One focus group participant recounted her reason for returning to school, *"I went because I never worked except for myself. I have to have something to put down on the application. I don't have any employment history so I went back to school so I can write down that I have an education."* Another agreed adding, *"You also don't want to say that you have been a housewife for the last 15 years...They still don't look at that."*

Attending school to expand opportunities with their current employer was also shared as a reason for retraining. Those who felt this way tended to be current healthcare employees whose employer would reimburse them for successfully completed coursework. *"I was taking a Certified Professional Coder course. They make about \$3 or \$4 an hour more than what I make. And the hospital paid for it. Well, they will if I pass the final test. Then they'll reimburse me for it. There's no guarantee that I'll get a job in that department but everything I learned in that course helped me in what I'm doing now, so it wasn't like it was a waste of time."* Another hospital-based employee shared her experience with employer tuition reimbursement. *"Yes they do. If you're an employee here [at the hospital] you can apply...When I pass the big Board test at the end, then I have to sign a contract that I will work for them, stay here for at least a year. Because it was about \$2000 for the course."*

Interestingly this reimbursement program seems to be more successful in areas where programs are more easily accessed. The tuition reimbursement program offered through Forks Community Hospital did not receive high praise. Employees felt the class options were extremely limited and the reimbursement process required signing a three-year employment contract with the hospital.

Interestingly some of the participants who have already enrolled shared that they are approaching their education using a step-by-step process. They are taking the first step (e.g. training for the CNA certificate) then plan to take a break from school and work for a while to save up money before returning to train for the next step (e.g. LPN). *"Mine was a financial thing. I could probably work and squeeze it in quicker and get back to a job; make the money. Then, once I make the money, go part-time and take the next step – do it in stages."* This process is one that many lower income residents agreed is a good approach. It is also an approach that many are forced to take because of their lack of income.

Those who have not yet chosen to return to school for retraining were asked to share why not. The reasons for not going back to school were numerous and varied, including money, time, schedule, opportunity, class availability and nothing of interest offered.

"I need something I can go to after work."

"I can't do that with my job. I need to have night schooling."

"One reason I haven't pursued it is wondering if I could mentally handle it and pass and do the work. It's been so long since I've been out of school."

"Not having the supplies like a computer to do your work on."

"You have to have a job to pay for your roof and if I'm working--I can't go to school and work at the same time. I don't have the energy."

"In the past I've always worked for employers who actually would pay for continuing education; the last three employers I've had just don't offer it. It is a financial concern if I were to go back to school."

"It's hard to go out and try to get more education when you've got to support your family."

Many of those who have not yet returned to school shared that they are interested however availability of desired classes was an issue. Equally as challenging is that some courses require going to Seattle or Tacoma, residents are not given the option to take them locally. *"The classes I want for Diet Technician are not available here."* A participant from a different focus group noted, *"I wanted to do the ER tech just so I could have a job while I go to school to become an x-ray tech, but there's no x-ray tech schooling in this area. I have to go to Seattle or Tacoma. I could commute to Tacoma, but going to school and working...It just seems not to work."*

Some participants were concerned that additional schooling would not necessarily equate to getting a job. They wanted assurance that there would be a demand for their training when they finished. *"The other thing people worry about is that there is still no guarantee once you go through the program that you're even going to get a job."* A participant from another a different focus group pointed out, *"A lot of education is always good, but they don't always relate right away to a job."*

Finally a few of the focus group participants seemed to lack the motivation to go back to school for retraining. A few honest participants shared their dilemma. *"I have actually thought about it a lot. I am the type of person to think it and think it but never actually do it or have it on my to-do list but never call. I have really been thinking of calling. It's just the extra push that I need to get there."* When asked why he hasn't returned to school for retraining a participant in another group honestly admitted he lacks the *"motivation."*

II. Barriers to Receiving Retraining

Summary of Findings:

The biggest barrier to retraining for residents in Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap Counties is money. Many residents do not have enough money to cover basic necessities and attend school at the same time. To take advantage of retraining offerings, participants needed to have help paying for not only their schooling/training but also compensate them for their loss of wages they would incur as a result of working less or not at all.

Another major barrier is the limited choice of classes/retraining programs offered in their community. Not having classes available locally, not offering classes in the residents’ area of interest or offering programs that require residents leave the area for extensive training or employment are all barriers to retraining.

Not knowing what career to chose can be frustrating for potential students. They want to choose something that is of interest to them, yet they need to pick a program that will enable them to find a job upon completion.

Although many residents have cars and childcare is readily available, the lack of transportation and childcare are barriers for some residents.

Barriers

In order to gather insight into why particular barriers exist and to better understand what issues surround each barrier, participants were asked to complete a written exercise. Each participant was provided a list of potential barriers to retraining. (The list was identical to the one provided in Q6 of the self-administered mail survey – Phase I of the research.) Below are the results from the mail survey and each focus group.

As expected the results from the focus groups are very similar to those obtained through the mail survey. Glancing across each community one main difference is evident. Residents attending the Forks and Port Townsend focus groups were more likely than those in Port Angeles and Silverdale to indicate “classes are not offered close to my home/work” is a barrier for retraining.

Top Barriers	Mail Survey Results (N=791)	Focus Group Results (# of participants)			
		Forks (N=10)	Port Angeles (N=7)	Port Townsend (N=12)	Silverdale (N=11)
Do not have the money/need financial aid	76%	9	5	10	10

Need help deciding what is the right career for me	28%	2	3	3	3
Classes are not offered close to my home/work	28%	4	0	5	0
Classes are not offered when I can take them	24%	1	2	3	0
No classes available in my area of interest	24%	2	3	3	4
Do not have enough time to take classes	15%	4	1	1	2
Need childcare	10%	2	1	0	1
Have transportation problems	10%	0	1	1	0
Have not had enough schooling/do not have GED	6%	0	1	1	1
Language barrier/do not speak English very well	0%	0	1	0	1
Other	3%	0	0	4	2

Lack Money / Need financial Aid

Like those who completed the mail survey the lack of money is a big barrier for focus group participants. *“I looked at Peninsula’s flyer when they sent it out. Money is a factor. I was looking into night classes and that would be fine but the cost per credit is pricey.”* Another explained, *“I support myself and take care of my mom too. I have to work to pay the bills. It is the cost of going to school that stops me.”*

However the lack of money is not as simple as subsidizing the cost of classes or books. In order to attend school, participants need to be available when the classes are offered and able to commute to the location where they are offered. In some cases this may require working different hours, working part-time or changing jobs entirely. Depending on the available retraining program residents may need to commuting long distances, move to a different area and possibly find childcare which they might have not needed it in the past. Many of these adjustments will cause a potential retraining candidate to lower their income and increase their expenses, neither of which encourages them to return to school for retraining.

“I would need a grant to pay for my living expenses and my childcare so I could concentrate on my schooling and not have to worry about pulling an 8 hour shift, 4 hours of classes, 4 hours of homework and then wonder where I am going to spend quality time

with my kids. The Transbus [Forks Transit Bus] doesn't run according to the school schedule and our work schedule (for those of us that work at the hospital)...The shifts and the bus don't coincide enough for people to cram in classes and then make the mad dash home to be at work by 3:00pm. To commute everyday in your own personal car is outrageously expensive.”

“It’s common sense. You have to survive while you are going [to school] so you have to work. Then classes have to be offered around when you can work for you to survive. Meanwhile, you are paying to survive so how are you going to pay for school because you might have to cut back your regular hours in order to go to the classes. Now, you can afford it even less. It’s a vicious cycle.”

“Money. I can’t go to school full-time and put bread on the table and a roof over my head. There is absolutely no way...After putting 8-12 hours in the woods, the last thing I want to do after work is sit behind a book or computer and try to actually get motivated. I am grubby, filthy and sweaty. I am physically exhausted. Maybe on the weekends but there also needs to be a little time for me or I’m not a happy camper.”

“Even if you have a total grant or scholarship and all of your education is free if you have no money coming in except for a scholarship grant that pays for your books and school, what about the rent mortgage, food, and all the other expenses? They are still there.”

Participants in all four focus groups shared their frustration with the financial aid restrictions. Many found that they are on the borderline – making too much to get assistance, but not enough to afford to return to school on their own.

“When I go looking for aid, they look at my income and what my assets are and they say you have too much; we can’t give it to you. If I take those assets and go to school, I can’t pay my bills. I can adjust everything else to accommodate that - it’s just the financial aide.”

“It is expensive. For the normal working person there is no financial aid. You do not qualify.”

“If you are working, a lot of times you don’t qualify even though they don’t take into account the roof over your head, your utilities, your kids. They tell you that you just need to adjust your priorities.”

A few commented that young adults applying for aid sometimes run into trouble because even though they are on their own, their parents' income is also reviewed before awarding assistance.

Many participants believe that additional schooling would increase their chances for a promotion or another job that paid more. For those who were getting additional training being reimbursed

for their courses enabled them the opportunity to do so. They had no problem with having to adhere to certain guidelines, like passing the course exit exam, to receive compensation for their tuition.

“You could make loans, grants or federal funding—even if you might have to pay a percentage back make it to where it is somewhat affordable for the blue collar worker. If it actually sounds reasonable financially, although it might be tight, and actually doable, I would be willing to put

myself in debt if I knew that I was able to get a career where I could turn around and use it towards something.”

Another remarked that paying back a loan after becoming employed was not a problem.

Need Assistance with Choosing a Career

Residents in all four communities indicated the need for assistance in choosing a career. Determining the right career choice not only includes figuring out what the participant would be interested in doing or have the experience to do, it also includes helping them evaluate what is a realistic career within the confines of Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap counties.

Some residents are interested in meeting with a career counselor who would help them decide what career would best. The counselor would learn about the situation, discuss interests, administer tests and *“point you in the right direction on which way you want to go.”* One participant explained, *“I’m not sure what I want to do right now. I need someone to counsel or guide me.”*

Interestingly these same residents pointed out that the counselor should be sure to direct people to choose a career that is in demand in their local community. Participants see the three county area as having a limited variety of jobs. They pointed out that it is important to train for a career that will enable the resident to find employment in the local community when their training is complete. *“If you are going to go to school, you want to be sure that it is something in demand.”*

In one instance a focus group participant mentioned that the WorkSource office provides some assistance with career counseling, however many in the group were not aware of this service. Vocational Rehab at DSHS was also mentioned as a place for career counseling.

Classes are not offered close to home/work

The fact that classes are not offered close to home or work is an issue for residents, especially those located in Forks and Port Townsend. Participants in both areas shared that there is a limited amount of classes/training available to them. For example, a hospital worker in Forks shared how science classes are not available locally, which makes it hard for her to retrain for a better healthcare career.

It is important to note that residents in Silverdale and Port Angeles also commented on the lack of options for retraining. *“I looked through the pamphlet that the college sends and it is pretty limited on the Olympic Peninsula. The area, size and demand for the types of work that I am interested in are not offered. I want a degree that I could use and have a career.”* Another participant explained, *“I thought of being a dental hygienist but my problem is that I wouldn’t want to move. I’m happy here. I’m comfortable. I have things going for me out here.”*

Classes not Available in area of Interest

In many cases participants are interested in going to school but have found there is not much offered locally in their particular area of interest. Classes that are available typically include

those geared toward continuing education (e.g. English) and less toward retraining or certification. One woman in Forks pointed out, *“some of us are at that point where everything that is offered out here we’ve taken and then you sit in a lull.”*

The lack of local access to classes can be a barrier forcing those who need retraining to travel in order to attend classes. Having to add commute time and coordinate school with work means many students run into problems completing their retraining. Additionally some of the courses/certifications require residents to travel as far as Seattle to finish their training. One focus group participant explained, *“Before when I was looking at college, I looked at the idea of lab tech and I was told then that I would have to spend at least a portion of my time in Seattle – at least 3-4 days per week.”* Others had a similar experience. Another participant pointed out *“Although there is a community college at Bremerton and Port Angeles, you cannot graduate from there and be a doctors’ assistant, you have to move from this area, entirely somewhere else, like Seattle.”*

Lack of choices for Jobs in the Area

Several participants commented that it might be easier to find a job if they moved out of the area. Even though there may be more opportunities elsewhere it can be difficult for residents to leave. Many have ties to the area such as family, homeownership, and history and have no interest in leaving. One participant in Silverdale recommended the government agencies get involved in attracting additional employers to the area. *“The employment office needs to push the state and the City of Bremerton to do more than just look to the Naval Yard and the government for jobs. We have nothing here. There is no manufacturing here. You have one place, Nextel.”*

Although most are unwilling to move out of the area, there are some who would jump at the chance. One woman in Forks shared, *“If I had a job to go to next week, I would pack up and go. I wouldn’t even hesitate. If I knew that I would financially be able to support my children and myself I would leave this town.”*

Lack of Transportation

Although not as big a barrier as expected (participants explained that most residents own an automobile) the lack of transportation does deter some residents from pursuing retraining. Transportation is an issue in the more rural areas. In some areas the bus schedules are limited or do not run during the evening.

Need for Childcare

The need for childcare is a barrier for some, however the barrier is not caused by the lack of childcare options. According to the participants there are plenty of daycare facilities in the area, it’s the lack of money to pay for the childcare that is the barrier. *“We are borderline but we can’t afford daycare. I have two kids and they are both under five. They both have to be in daycare at the same time. That is huge for me and my number one reason.”*

When asked to speculate on why many residents who completed the mail survey did not place the need for childcare on their barriers to retraining list, one participant suggested that some might be *“going to school while the kids are in school. That’s how I do it.”* Another pointed out

that some mail survey respondents might have reported “money” as the barrier, meaning the money to pay for childcare, rather than their inability to find childcare.

Other Barriers and Considerations

Grants can be hard to obtain and frustrating to deal with for some. A few of the focus group participants have already had experience applying for and receiving grants. One woman shared some general information about the grant that she received. *“It was mainly for single parents and it paid you to go to school. It paid for your childcare and your transportation. I don’t know if they still have it but it was wonderful. It was called Portland Private Industry Council.”*

Although this particular respondent shared a success story a participant in a different group was having trouble working out the logistics for her newly awarded grant and unemployment benefits. Apparently CAT was providing her some money but ended up requesting it be returned because she admitted that if someone offered her a job she would not take it because she is now going back to school.

The idea of an apprenticeship program was raised as a way to help retrain workers. *“I’ve seen in the paper the Olympic Job Training Center did that for teenagers 16-21. When they rebuilt Lincoln School they could get you into an apprenticeship program...Why can’t they do something like that for adults?...It paid them to work and gave them an opportunity through apprenticeship.”*

A participant in the Port Townsend shared his frustration with a large retailer that came to town. Instead of hiring local residents the retailer brought people in from other areas to work at the store. He felt that local business leaders should be emphasizing the need to hire local residents. Those living in the community are willing to work and eager to receive the necessary training.

III. Dissemination of Job Information

Summary of Findings:

Participants in all four focus groups expressed the need for educating residents. They felt that most people are not aware of the various retraining programs, career counseling and financial aid options available. A central clearinghouse for this information would be ideal.

Communication / Spreading the Word

As noted throughout the report, the lack of funds is a huge issue for most. Connecting those in need with career counseling, training program information and financial opportunities is a way to address part of the problem. Participants in each group were asked to suggest ways for communicating with local residents. *“Advertising on the radio and in the newspaper,” “billboards” and “a paid for public announcement on channel 9”* were suggested. Residents also suggested the production of a flyer and spreading the information through “word of mouth.”

“Spread the word. When the high school teacher is explaining to a student about grants and scholarships, mom and dad may want to go to school too.”

“The hospitals all have websites. I look at the Harrison website and then the Navy hospital website almost everyday.”

Some suggested creating a central location for job hunters to go to, to find out about openings and financial assistance. By putting all the information in one place, participants felt everyone would know where to go and have access. One participant explained, *“Build an office that people can come to and advertise through the paper or radio. Make it something that can reach out and touch a lot of residents.”* Another added, *“then have a meeting place where you could actually talk to people to inform them of their options.”* Interestingly a few participants pointed out that a place somewhat like this already exists. *“I did use the DSHS work source. I utilized the work source a lot. I didn't go into the DSHS office but I know other people that do and I've been in there with them. I see that they do have, on the board there, this and that offered.”*

Participants felt job fairs would be a good place to disseminate information. They also believed that residents would attend if they knew career counseling and financial assistance were available. *“The job fairs would be a good place to promote something like that because they are pretty well attended. People can walk around and look and see. If you had something there that told people there was help, people will stop.”*

One participant in Silverdale pointed out that *“They have one per year but it is more related to the Naval Yard and how to supposedly get in, which happens every January. It runs for a week... You just about have to be in the service, inactive or a veteran to really have an inside.”* Yet another added, *“If we could get the local business community to put on a job fair, exclusive of the shipyard.”*

IV. Participants' Concluding Comments

As each focus group concluded participants were given the opportunity to share some closing thoughts. Each was asked to think back on the evening and come up with one key message that summarizes the discussion.

Participants felt it was very important to get the word out about available financial aid and provide the assistance to help people obtain it. *"People need to be educated on their options."* They reiterated that additional money is necessary, in addition to that received for tuition and books, to pay for living expenses like their mortgage, food and lost wages. *"Having financial assistance to not only pay for schooling but to maintain your household while you are doing it."*

The need for more class choices and additional training opportunities in their local community were noted. Many participants recounted their frustration with the limited choices. Participants added that retraining programs which teach skills needed locally would be ideal. *"Having a place to go or find out the kind of schooling they have in this area that is going to help you stay in this area if that is what you want to do."* The thought was that after a program is completed the skills acquired would enable the resident to obtain without having to move out of the area.

Individualized assistance from a career counselor was also raised. *"If it's available through community service somehow, to receive one on one counseling. One person is focused on you when you tell your goal, your income, your problem and the person who knows various problems that you might encounter and give direction. That would be great."*

It was suggested that involving employers in this process would help connect job hunters to potential careers. A "job fair" or an adult "job corp" with apprenticeships might fill this role. *"If employers are lacking employees, they need to get smart about how to get a hold of them. There are plenty of people who want to work around here and they need to find ways to make them match."*

Appendix

Olympic Consortium Focus Group Screener

HR#1307

Intv name _____
Edited by _____
Date CM _____
Date letter/map sent _____
Hold (why) _____

Recruited for 6pm evening groups

- 1 – Forks, Tuesday, 10/7
 - 2 – Port Angeles, Wednesday, 10/1
 - 3 – Port Townsend, Thursday, 10/9
 - 4 – Silverdale, Thursday, 10/2
- *Recruit 12 for 8-10 to show

Name _____

Address _____

City/Zip _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

Email (if available) _____

Hello, this is _____ with Hardwick Research. Recently you filled out a Career Interest Survey sponsored by the Olympic Workforce Development Council department of employment services. The survey asked about your interest in going back to school for retraining and about potential healthcare careers. On the survey you indicated you would be interested in participating in future research. We are conducting focus groups to further explore various issues surrounding career choices. I'd like to ask you a few questions to see if you qualify to attend.

Q1 Are you currently employed?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No -- SKIP TO QUESTION 3 (WANT MOST UNEMPLOYED)
- 3 (DON'T READ) Don't know/Refused -- TERMINATE

Q2 Do you work in the health care field?

- 1 Yes (MAXIMUM OF FOUR RESPONDENTS)
- 2 No
- 3 (DON'T READ) Don't know/Refused-- TERMINATE

Q3 Using a scale of one to five, with 1 being not at all interested and 5 being very interested, how interested are you in returning to school to receive additional training?

- 1 Not at all interested -- TERMINATE
- 2 -- TERMINATE
- 3
- 4
- 5 Very Interested
- 6 (DON'T READ) Don't know/Refused -- TERMINATE

Q4 In what career are you interested in receiving training?

Q5 (READ SLOWLY) Take a moment and think about your ideal job. What kind of job would it be and what would make it ideal? (PROBE AND CLARIFY. LOOKING FOR RECRUITS WHO CAN ARTICULATE THOUGHTS.)

Q6 Finally, what is the highest level of education you have had the opportunity to complete? (READ IF NEEDED)

- 1 Less than 9th grade
- 2 9th through 12th grade, no diploma
- 3 High school graduate/GED
- 4 Some college (no degree)
- 5 Associates degree
- 6 Bachelors degree -- TERMINATE
- 7 Graduate or professional degree -- TERMINATE
- 8 (DO NOT READ) Don't know/Refused -- TERMINATE

INVITE:

I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group discussion. The discussion will center on your experiences exploring a new career and looking for work. This group discussion will be made up of 10 other area citizens like you and will last approximately two hours. At the end of the discussion, you will receive \$50 cash to compensate you for your time and opinions. Dinner will be served and at no time will we attempt to sell you anything.

The group will be held at:

- 1 - Forks Community Hospital in Forks on Tuesday, October 7 at 6:00pm.
- 2 - Olympic Medical Center in Port Angeles on Wednesday, October 1 at 6:00pm.
- 3 - Jefferson General Hospital in Port Townsend on Thursday, October 9 at 6:00pm.
- 4 - Harrison Hospital, Silverdale campus in Silverdale on Thursday October 2 at 6:00pm.

Are you interested in attending?

IF NO, THANK AND TALLY

IF YES: In order to send you a confirmation letter with directions, may I have your full name, address and if available, email?

(FILL IN INFORMATION ON FIRST PAGE OF SCREENER.)

(RETURN TO READ STATEMENT BELOW.)

Because of the nature of our study, your participation is valuable to us. If for any reason you are not able to attend, please give us a call at 206-232-9400. This will enable us to find a replacement for you. Please do not send anyone in your place.

Screening Note:

Recruiting using phase one survey interested respondents. Removed 50K+ income, removed Bachelors degree+ education, removed work in healthcare and satisfied with career.

Olympic Workforce Development Council
Serving Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap Counties
Focus Group Discussion Guide
#1307

INTRODUCTION & WARM UP (15 min.)

MAKE NAME TAGS using choice of scented markers, printing clearly

WELCOME guests and introduce moderator

EXPLANATION of what will be happening (our meeting today is the second step to understanding what can be done to improve access to information and training opportunities for unemployed and low income people in Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap counties. Tonight we are going to be talking about what affects peoples' decision to go to school for training, what might encourage someone to do so and what things might get in their way. After the information is gathered from these focus groups a report will be written to determine what action needs to be taken.)

GROUND RULES

Taping the session for later analysis

**All comments shared are confidential - name will not be attached to them.

Speak one at a time, speak up

Like to hear from everyone

Relax - no right or wrong answers - OK to have differing opinions

INTRODUCE PARTICIPANTS

First name, whether or not you are currently working and what you like to do in your spare time?

A. CURRENT JOB/OCCUPATION (25 min.)

I'd like to start out by learning about your current or most recent job. How did you choose that job? What was it about your current job that interested you? After you decided on your job was additional schooling necessary? Did you receive specific training in this job? How long have you been in this job? Do you see yourself looking for another job in the near future? Why? Why not?

Ideal Job

Next, I'd like you to think about your ideal job. What we are going to do is write down--Don't share aloud just yet--a description of your current job. Then you will move onto the second column and describe your ideal job. *[Blanks to fill in include but are not limited to: job choice, job function, hours worked, location (city, suburbs, country), commute, pay, benefits, manage others, attire/dress code, take work home, other _____.]*

Before we discuss how your current job differs from your ideal one is there any aspect that I left off the list? What is it? Why is it important to you when choosing a job?

As you look at the list you have created you will see your current job on the left and your ideal job on the right. Take a look at those two columns. What do you see as the differences between them? In what way is your ideal job different from your current one? (*On easel report group differences*) What makes up a good job? Why do you consider ___ (*x attribute*) a quality of a good job?

How important are benefits when choosing a job? What are the must have benefits?

Retraining

How many of you have thought about going back to school to further your job or receive training in a new job? Why would you consider going back to school? What would make you do it?

Who currently is going back to school? Why did you decided to go back to school? What helped you decide? What factors made it possible for you to go back to school? Why did you choose the current retraining program that you are in now?

For those of you who have considered going back to school, what has kept you from doing so?

B. BARRIERS FOR RETRAINING (30 min.)

Coming around is a sheet of paper with a question on it. I'd like you to answer the question. The question is, "*Which of the following reasons, if any, would keep you from taking classes to train for a new job?*" I'll give you a minute to answer this question based on your own situation. For now, keep your answer to yourself. Now I'd like you to flip over the page and complete the information on the back. Please complete this for each of your top three barriers.

I circled reason number _____ as a barrier for me to return to school. The reason why it's a barrier is (please explain): _____

This would no longer be a barrier if: _____

Now that you have completed that I'd like you to take three stickers from the center of the table. I have a list here of the barriers on your sheet. I'd like you to come up with you three stickers and place one sticker next to each of your top three barriers.

Look at this. As you can see ____, ____, and ____ are the three biggest barriers among this group for retraining. Lets talk about each of these. Why is ____ a barrier? What makes it a barrier? What could be changed so it would no longer be a barrier? (*Ask these questions for the top three barriers of the group. GOAL is to understand what the issues truly are.*)

Now I'd like to show you the top barriers among those who completed the survey. Residents of Kitsap, Clallam and Jefferson County completed this survey. The surveys were distributed to

citizens receiving unemployment, residents seeking assistance in a WorkSource office, TANF assistance recipients and lower income health care workers. We received a total of 719 completed surveys.

(Show easel page listing top barriers with percents from survey.) Take a look at this. As you can see your responses are _____ *(similar/different)* than those who completed the survey. Why do you think that is? What do you think these people were thinking as they completed the survey? Why do you think they chose these items as barriers? There are quite a few who chose “do not have the money/need financial aid/no money” what do you think they meant by that? What is the issue?

(Compare and contrast as appropriate. Work to draw out what true reasons are for barriers chosen. Bring in other issue including transportation and childcare if not brought up. Discuss why those are low on the survey.)

C. INTEREST IN HEALTHCARE JOBS (10 min.)

With a show of hands, how many of you have considered a job in health care before you filled out the survey? How many of you considered a healthcare job after the survey? What about the survey made you consider a healthcare job?

How many of you currently work in the healthcare field? For those of you currently in health care, if you were to go back to school for training would you train for a new healthcare position or something different? Why?

For all of you, if you were to go back to school for training would you choose a job in healthcare? Why? Why not? Why are you interested in healthcare? *(If needed: is it helping people or the money)*

D. REASONS FOR TRAINING CHOICES (20 min.)

How do you decide what training program you would go back to school for? What influences which training program you sign up for? When you choose a job what criteria are important to you when deciding what to receive training in?

(If needed: is it the projected salary range of the new job, the availability of jobs in that field, your interest in a job, your personal limitations, the length of time it takes to complete the course, the cost of schooling, availability of classes in your area)

Training Choice Scenarios

Do you have concerns regarding the amount of training required for a new job? What are they? When selecting a new job does the length of time required to receive the new training affect your decision? Why? Why not?

Do you think people are more likely to pick the lower paying job that enables them to complete the training quickly rather than a higher paying job that requires additional training? Why? Why not?

How would financial assistance affect your decision about which job to choose? How would it affect that decision? Would you be likely to select a job that requires longer training but pays more? Why? Why not?

What other factors besides potential increase in pay factor into your decision to look into additional training within your field or going into another job? How quickly one can get back into the work force? Do you consider job availability, that is current or projected openings? What about opportunity for job advancement?

Past research has shown that when job-training choices are made available to people they tend to choose some of the lower paying jobs on the list rather than some of the higher paying. Why do you think that is? Why do they make that choice? What influences their decision?

E. DISSEMINATION OF JOB INFORMATION (10 min.)

Where would you go if you wanted to get answers regarding job choices or to explore different job opportunities? Is there a particular office or person that you contact to find out about job openings? Has anyone ever been to a job fair? Where was that? What was it like? Did you find the information you receive beneficial? Would you go to another job fair or recommend it to someone looking for a job? Would the rest of you go to something like this? Why? Why not?

What are good ways to inform you about jobs (*Probe issues surrounding getting a job: openings, information, training, job fair, etc*)? What would be the best way to reach you or let you know where to get help or if a special job fair were going on?

How many of you have access to the Internet? Where do you access it (home, work, library)?

F. CONCLUSION (10 min.)

We are just about done. I have one last question for you. (*Have them write response on paper. If time have them share with group.*) What's the one message that you want to be sure the Olympic Workforce Development Council--the group that will receive the information gathered from this focus group--takes away from our discussion? What's the key message you want them to have? Think about it for a minute and then let's go around the table so I can hear from each of you.