
Helping Older, Long-term Unemployed Job Seekers

A Report on the Heldrich Center's New Start Career Network

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Carl Van Horn thanking Phil and Tammy Murphy for the Philip and Tammy Murphy Family Foundation's donation to NSCN.



What we did here with the New Start Career Network represents the best of New Jersey, and is a model for the nation. We have the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, our state university, devoting its expertise and its resources. We have business, government, nonprofits, individual volunteers, and other organizations coming together to solve a problem that affects the livelihood of so many. This is how we make progress as a state, and I am honored to have been a part of this effort. We are incorporating the lessons from NSCN into our ongoing efforts to build a stronger and fairer New Jersey for all our residents."

—New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy



Since NSCN launched in 2015, I have had countless people stop me to express how much the organization has helped them in their job search. Recently, a woman reached out to thank each of the NSCN team, Phil, and me, for the help we provided, which took the form of more than a job. It was incredibly heartwarming to learn that we had helped her transition from a very dark place when she was unemployed for 10 months to a state of confidence and security as NSCN helped her find her new job. I am so proud of what NSCN has been able to do for struggling New Jerseyans."

—First Lady Tammy Murphy

Executive Summary



Celebrating the NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches at the third anniversary.

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey launched the New Start Career Network (NSCN) in October 2015, a first-of-its-kind initiative combining web-based tools, trained volunteers, employer engagement, and community partnerships. Over the next six-and-a-half years, NSCN provided free assistance to over 6,000 older, long-term unemployed and underemployed New Jersey job seekers. This executive summary highlights the program's accomplishments and shares lessons that will help design and deliver programs to assist older, long-term unemployed workers.

With the June 2022 unemployment rate at near historic lows, it can be easy to overlook the fact that there are 1.3 million individuals – nearly one in four job seekers – who are long-term unemployed, or out of work 27 weeks or more.¹ As noted in *The New York Times* by Carl Van Horn, founding director of the Heldrich Center, “The longer you are unemployed, the more stigma is attached.” Older Americans are more likely to find themselves among the long-term unemployed, and there are “very limited remedies in this country to deal with these issues.” Unemployment benefits run out (for those who qualified in the first place – a much smaller number than most Americans realize), and support for retraining and job search assistance is scant.

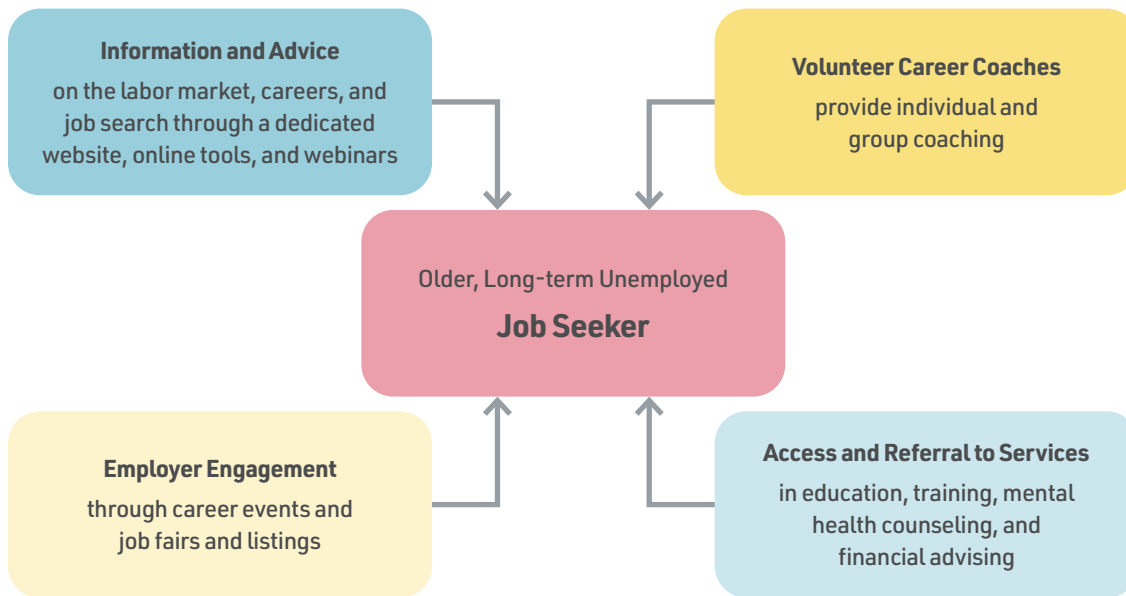
Since its founding in 1997, the Heldrich Center has sought to develop effective and innovative approaches to improve how labor markets work for all job seekers. The Heldrich Center seeks to discover strategies that increase workers' skills and employability, strengthen the ability of companies to compete, promote the creation of family-sustaining jobs, and improve the quality and effectiveness of the public workforce development system.

Through our research and demonstration projects, the Heldrich Center has long studied the challenges of long-term unemployment and sought effective strategies that will enable these individuals to secure good jobs. Long-term unemployment and the lack of sufficient transition assistance can be devastating for individuals, families, and communities. The long-term unemployed typically exhaust their safety net options, face financial and emotional turmoil, and see their professional and personal networks weaken over time.

In 2014, the Heldrich Center recognized the profound problems of long-term unemployment nationally and in New Jersey, where more than 4 in 10 unemployed job seekers – about 125,000 people – were long-term unemployed – one of the nation's highest shares of long-term unemployment.² Seventy percent of those New Jerseyans had been jobless for a year or longer.³ Roughly half were age 45 or older.⁴

The Heldrich Center sought funding to design and implement a statewide program to assist older, long-term unemployed New Jerseyans. The Philip and Tammy Murphy Family Foundation generously provided support for a five-year initiative and the Heldrich Center agreed to raise funds to match the Murphy Family Foundation's contribution. Additional funds were provided by New Jersey Resources, the Fund for New Jersey, the Corporation for National and Community Service/New Jersey Volunteer Generation Fund, Amazon, and other companies. The Heldrich Center also devoted substantial staff time and other in-kind resources to the project.

Figure 1: New Start Career Network Core Services



Mainstream media outlets including *The New York Times*, NBC, and *Newsweek* cited NSCN and Heldrich Center researchers in focusing attention on the crisis of long-term unemployment. The Center adopted several key principles for the design of NSCN. It would be a privately funded, free service for any long-term unemployed or underemployed New Jersey job seeker age 45 or older. The core services included information and advice on the labor market, Volunteer Career Coaches, employer engagement, and access and referral to services. (See Figure 1.)

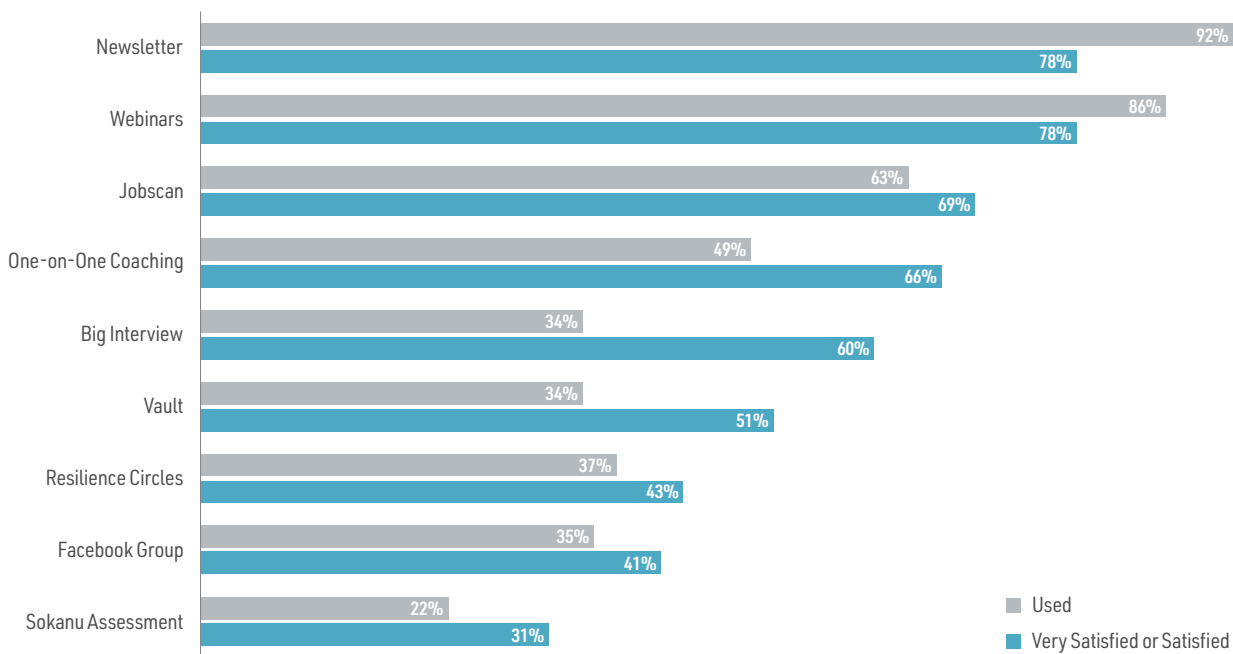
The Heldrich Center partnered with Rutgers Office of Career Exploration and Success as well as nonprofits, libraries, community colleges, and others to connect with older, long-term unemployed job seekers. The Center developed a suite of digital tools to help job seekers conduct research, improve résumés and LinkedIn profiles, and train for job interviews, holding over 100 webinars on developing effective job search plans, succeeding in the gig economy, managing career transitions, maintaining well-being during job search, and navigating potential bias against older job seekers. With assistance from Rutgers Office of Career Exploration and Success, NSCN held members-only job fairs with hundreds of

employers. Most significantly, it developed a volunteer corps of 400 career coaches who provided one-on-one and group coaching for NSCN members.

NSCN was promoted to job seekers via media stories, presentations at job clubs and libraries, and by the program's various partners. Over 6,000 people joined as members, including individuals from all counties in New Jersey and a wide array of industries and occupations. The majority were between ages 55 to 64; three-quarters had a four-year college degree or higher educational levels.

Based on surveys of members conducted in 2018 (N=662) and 2021 (N=272), the long-term unemployed members were very satisfied with the program, with 9 in 10 saying they would recommend NSCN to a friend. As one job seeker told us, "I was unemployed nearly two years, from January 2020 through November 2021. The challenges of a job search during a pandemic were unprecedented. Working with a career coach at the beginning of my job search helped me become grounded and to realize that I needed to pace myself for the long search. I learned how to sell myself, which helped me since I am an introvert."

Figure 2: Percent of Respondents Who Used and Were Satisfied with NSCN Features



Source: 2021 NSCN member survey (N=272)

In fact, a majority of members said that NSCN improved their job search strategies, interview skills, networking, résumés, and social media skills. They also reported improvements in their motivation, confidence, and emotional well-being. More than 8 in 10 respondents said that NSCN helped them understand they were not alone. At the time of the survey, 4 in 10 respondents (38%) reported being employed.

Based on the experience designing and implementing NSCN, the Heldrich Center has found that older, long-term unemployed job seekers need more, and different, services than typically available through the public workforce system. These include:

- ▶ Emotional and mental health support;
- ▶ Coaching to help with motivation and execution of a job search;
- ▶ Unbiased and realistic information about education, training, and specific job prospects; and
- ▶ Opportunities to connect to and provide peer support to one another.



NSCN staff and Volunteer Career Coaches at the New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Awards.

The Volunteer Career Coaches played a critical, cost-effective role in helping job seekers regain confidence and find jobs. NSCN's volunteers helped members navigate the emotional challenges of job search, listened non-judgmentally to their concerns, and encouraged job seekers on the tough days. In 2018, in recognition of their extraordinary efforts to help older, long-term unemployed New Jerseyans, the NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches were honored with a New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Award. The Jefferson Awards, established in 1972 as the official recognition program of the U.S. Senate, are considered America's highest honor for public service and volunteerism.

NCSN relied on strong partnerships to expand access to services. NSCN connected members to a wide array of benefits and incorporated information on partners' and other resources into the NSCN website. For the job seeker, having one website and program that curated and housed myriad resources – information on education and training, mental health services, food pantries, tax assistance, and other topics – was beneficial.

Persuading employers to overcome biases against older workers was difficult. "Many NSCN members face opportunity gaps rather than skills gaps," said NSCN founding director, Maria Heidkamp. "We urge employers to rethink hiring practices that exclude individuals just because they have a résumé gap or are in their 40s, 50s, or 60s." Direct incentives to employers in the form of on-the-job training and wage subsidies, which were not readily available to NSCN, would have been beneficial, allowing employers to assess older workers on the job rather than just on a résumé.

All job seekers need access to a range of supports – available when and how they need them. NSCN accomplished this with virtual tools, webinars, and weekly or daily communications. Flexible funding enabled NSCN to test new ideas and discover effective and less effective tactics (see Figure 2 on page 4). While open-ended programs where individuals choose the level and type of engagement may be preferable to job seekers, measuring and evaluating program impacts is more challenging.

Although getting a career-appropriate, family-sustaining job is the ultimate goal of most long-term unemployed individuals, given the changing nature of work, many NSCN members accepted short-term projects, gigs, or temporary assignments, and rotated in and out of employment. Some NSCN members resisted short-term assignments, but NSCN staff encouraged members to be open-minded about these prospects. For some members, part-time opportunities turned into full-time jobs. For others, temporary jobs generated income, fresh contacts, and an updated résumé. However, job seekers often struggled with whether to accept “survival jobs” that were entirely outside of their primary objectives. Trying to make ends meet through a chaotic mix of gig jobs can be emotionally and financially exhausting. One job seeker said, “I am now doing what is considered a ‘portfolio’ career with four to five jobs – all part time – to try to make ends meet. None of the ‘jobs’ in the

portfolio are stable or of a permanent nature. I am somewhat resigned to scraping by until I can claim Social Security benefits. For tax year 2017, I submitted five W-2s on tax filing day.”

It is essential to assess the program’s impact on people’s confidence and self-esteem, which are as critical to their job search and overall well-being. Surveys of NSCN job seekers found that the members appreciated understanding that they were not alone in their struggle for employment and that the program improved their mental and emotional state. Over two-thirds of NSCN members reported that the program improved motivation and confidence. Stress can impair individuals’ executive functioning – which includes skills such as planning, setting, and achieving goals. NSCN reduced members’ stress and improved their emotional well-being, which in turn often led to better outcomes. As noted by Michele Martin, NSCN’s second director, “For many New Start members, access to the Volunteer Career Coaches was a much-needed lifeline during a challenging time in their lives. Having someone they perceived as ‘in their corner,’ listening to their concerns and validating the difficulty of the search helped members persist in their efforts. When the search seemed overwhelming, coaches helped members break things down into more manageable tasks and provided the ongoing encouragement, structure, and accountability that job seekers needed.”

Policy and Practice Implications

“I have been involved in multiple efforts to help job seekers over the years, notably following the events of 9/11 and now thousands of older, long-term unemployed individuals through the New Start Career Network,” said Kathy Krepcio, Executive Director of the Heldrich Center. “These experiences have reinforced for me the need to keep working to strengthen the offerings of our country’s under-resourced public workforce system, which does not go far enough to help workers cope with dislocation and make successful transitions.”

For project leaders Maria Heidkamp, Michele Martin, Kathy Krepcio, and Carl Van Horn, one lesson learned is that developing and operating a program like NSCN requires an energetic and dedicated staff – with patience, empathy, creativity, and emotional resilience.

Additionally, flexible resources are needed to allow for experimentation and avoiding a “one-size-fits-all” approach. “While host agencies of similar programs could be government agencies, universities, or nonprofits, it’s important to house the program in a widely trusted institution. NSCN’s job seekers, collaborators, employers, and volunteers all valued the connection to Rutgers University,” notes Heidkamp.

Martin adds, “Selecting, training, and supporting volunteers is essential to keeping them engaged and feeling valued. Communications with job seekers must be frequent and provide regular reminders and nudges about available services.”

Next Steps

The Heldrich Center helped the New Jersey Department of Labor and the New Jersey Office of Innovation develop the [New Jersey Career Network](#). This “digital coaching” tool was designed, in part, on the lessons from NSCN. It provides customized advice to job seekers based on their unique background, with a friendly, encouraging tone, practice lessons that help job seekers improve their job search skills, tools to help them track progress and milestones, and tips for managing

stress. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and with support from New Jersey Department of Labor, the Heldrich Center launched a [New Jersey Career Network Job Seeker Community](#). It emphasizes providing a “virtual safe space” for job seekers to meet and support each other during their job search. Both resources are available to New Jersey’s older, long-term unemployed and other job seekers.

Designing the New Start Career Network

Rationale for Action: Long-term Unemployment and Older Workers

The Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University launched the New Start Career Network (NSCN) in October 2015, a first-of-its-kind initiative combining web-based tools, trained volunteers, employer engagement, and community partnerships. Over the next six-and-a-half years, NSCN provided free assistance to over 6,000 older, long-term unemployed and underemployed New Jersey job seekers. This report summarizes the program's accomplishments and shares lessons that will be helpful in the design and delivery of programs to assist long-term jobless workers, especially those age 45 and older. NSCN was a response to high rates of long-term unemployment following the Great Recession. Yet, its lessons remain relevant today as the nation recovers from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which left 1.4 million workers long-term unemployed. Additionally, while the current labor market is strong, the next economic downturn is inevitable. NSCN provides lessons and insights to policymakers considering strategies to enhance public workforce system services for older and dislocated workers.

At the end of 2014, five years after the Great Recession officially ended, 2.8 million workers, nearly a third (32%) of the nation's unemployed job seekers, were long-term unemployed, defined as unemployed 27 or more weeks.⁵ In New Jersey, more than 4 in 10 unemployed job seekers (41%), about 125,000 people, were long-term unemployed in 2014, one of the nation's highest shares of long-term unemployment.⁶ Seventy percent of those long-term unemployed New Jerseyans had been out of work a year or longer.⁷ These figures do not include thousands more who had given up looking for work and dropped out of the workforce. Others were struggling with underemployment – working part time when they sought full-time work or employed in jobs below their educational levels.

The Heldrich Center and other researchers have documented the devastating impacts of long-term unemployment on individuals, families, and communities. As one older job seeker described it, in addition to being financially challenging, “Long-term unemployment is mentally, emotionally, and physically distressing – an emotional roller-coaster.”⁸ Long-term unemployment leads to a wide range of adverse mental and physical health effects,⁹ including stress and depression and higher suicide rates.¹⁰ A 2015 study found that unemployment, especially lengthier stretches of unemployment, adversely changes people's personalities, affecting their agreeableness, openness, contentedness, and other traits.¹¹ According to the Heldrich Center's nationally representative *Work Trends* survey research, more than 6 in 10 long-term unemployed job seekers say they experienced stress in family relationships and close friendships during their time without a job.¹²

When the long-term unemployed do find new jobs, their struggles may not be over. A Heldrich Center 2014 *Work Trends* survey reported that most long-term unemployed workers who found new jobs earned less than in their previous jobs, with close to half indicating their new job was a step down the career ladder.¹³ One reason for these outcomes may be employer reluctance to hire long-term unemployed job seekers: Even when long-term unemployed job seekers had equal or better résumés than those with shorter stretches of unemployment, research by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston found they were far less likely to be interviewed for jobs.¹⁴ The persistent unemployment of older workers, and resulting financial and mental health implications, are a lasting scar of the 2008 crash and similar economic downturns. While many researchers in the United States have identified and studied the issue, few organizations have developed a robust public-private partnership to do something about it.

Older workers face additional challenges during long-term unemployment. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the likelihood of being long-term unemployed rises with age. In 2014, close to 45% of workers age 55+ were long-term unemployed, compared to 22% of those under age 25.¹⁵ In New Jersey at the time, roughly half of the long-term unemployed were age 45 or older.¹⁶ Age discrimination appears to be a factor in these outcomes, and the stigma of long-term unemployment is even more problematic.¹⁷ In addition, many older workers may:

- ▶ be unfamiliar with online job search tools, including the use of social media;
- ▶ underestimate the amount of effort required for a successful search;
- ▶ not be able to obtain unbiased guidance to help them navigate and understand their options for training, education, and employment;¹⁸
- ▶ need help accessing mental health services, financial counseling, and other support services and resources; and
- ▶ have unrealistic expectations about the jobs they are likely to obtain, preferring full-time jobs with benefits and good wages in a labor market where gig-based and alternative work arrangements are on the rise.

Unfortunately, with insufficient staffing levels and a growing reliance on self-service tools at American Job Centers (also known as One-Stop Career Centers), the nation's under-resourced public workforce system has not adapted to serve older job seekers effectively.¹⁹

Unemployed, older workers are no longer in contact with high school or college career counselors who might be able to help, and they typically cannot afford to hire professional career coaches, who charge between \$100 to \$150 per hour.²⁰ At the same time, many job seekers are stressed and overwhelmed by the huge volume of job search information and services (both free and/or for sale).

Given the scope of the problem – especially in New Jersey – in 2014, the Heldrich Center sought funding to support the design and implementation of a statewide program for older, long-term unemployed job seekers. The Center submitted a proposal to the Philip and Tammy Murphy Family Foundation, which had recently established New Start New Jersey, a state-focused nonprofit dedicated to exploring policy initiatives to improve New Jersey's economy and quality of life. The foundation provided generous support to the Heldrich Center for a five-year initiative. The Center agreed to match the foundation's contribution and obtained funding from New Jersey Resources, the Fund for New Jersey, the Corporation for National and Community Service/New Jersey Volunteer Generation Fund, Amazon, PSEG Foundation, EY, PNC Bank, Verizon, and other companies. The Heldrich Center also devoted substantial staff and in-kind resources to the project.

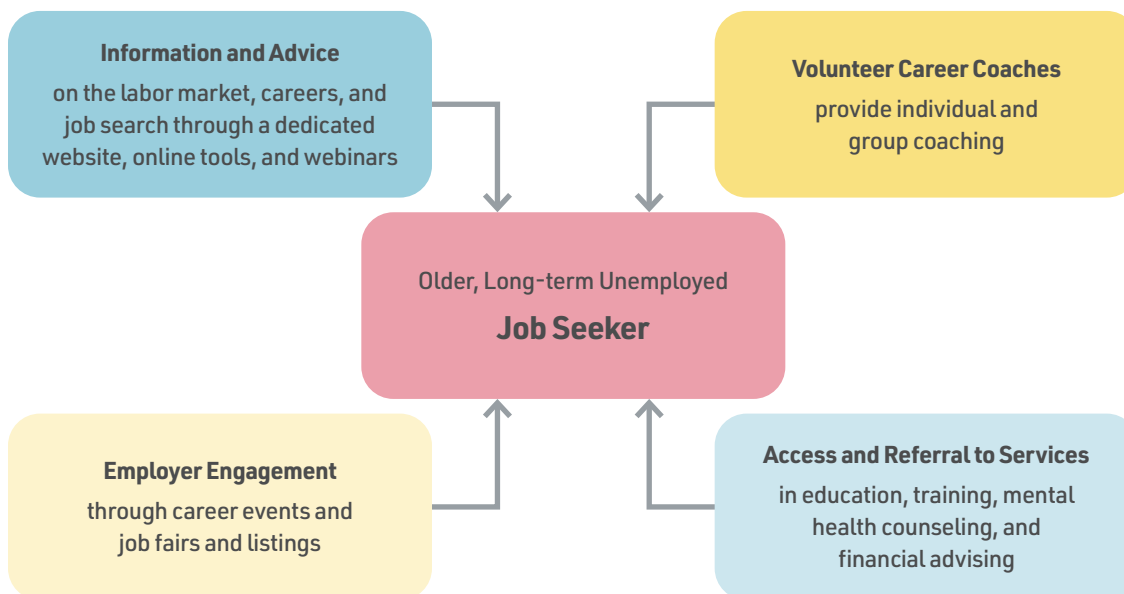
Designing the Model

Only a handful of programs in the United States focus on serving older, long-term unemployed workers. The Heldrich Center examined several models and consulted with workforce practitioners and researchers who were knowledgeable about the needs of older unemployed workers. The Center's staff also obtained input from long-term unemployed workers in focus groups about their experiences and needs and from a range

of community- and faith-based organizations and employer associations. Based on this research, the Center incorporated eight principles into NSCN's design (see sidebar below).

NSCN would be a privately funded, free service available to any long-term unemployed or underemployed New Jersey job seeker age 45 or older. The program concepts are captured in Figure 3.

Figure 3: New Start Career Network Core Services



NSCN Design Principles

- ▶ Offer all services free-of-charge.
- ▶ Serve as a curator or concierge to guide job seekers to a select set of the “best” or most promising resources – and not to duplicate existing resources.
- ▶ Encourage active engagement of job seekers rather than only providing passive lists of resources, with an emphasis on networking and peer support.
- ▶ Refer to job seekers as “members” of the network rather than clients or program participants.
- ▶ Establish an almost-entirely virtual program, integrating a “high tech/high engagement” approach that would offer access to both digital services as well as personalized career coaching provided by trained Volunteer Career Coaches for members who wanted the help.
- ▶ Customize options based on individuals' needs. No services would be required for members, who would be free to engage as much or as often as they wanted.
- ▶ Emphasize the Rutgers “brand” as the state university of New Jersey.
- ▶ Make services available to all job seekers who met basic criteria: age 45+, long-term unemployed or underemployed, and a New Jersey resident. The program would not be set up as a “boot camp” model available to small cohorts, nor would it engage in either “creaming” (selecting only job seekers likely to have good outcomes) or limiting the program to white-collar workers and/or college graduates.

Collaborators

The Heldrich Center recruited a range of strategic collaborators that could provide high-quality services, free of charge, to NSCN members. In some cases, collaborators signed memoranda of understanding with NSCN, typically indicating that the partners, who were not paid, would promote each other's services, and cross-refer job seekers as appropriate. (See sidebar for list of key NSCN collaborators.)

NSCN worked closely with Rutgers University Career Services (now called Career Exploration and Success), which provided:

- ▶ free access for NSCN members to several online tools otherwise only available to current Rutgers students and/or alumni (including Sokanu, a career assessment tool, and Vault, which provides extensive employer and industry information);
- ▶ training in contemporary job search techniques, which was shared at Volunteer Career Coach orientations; and
- ▶ technical assistance to the NSCN team in planning and operating NSCN's members-only job fairs.

Mental Health Association in New Jersey (MHANJ) shared research on depression, anxiety, stress, and other mental health challenges job seekers, especially long-term unemployed job seekers, often experienced, and information about resources for help. Several Center staff and Volunteer Career Coaches completed Mental Health First Aid training from MHANJ. When Volunteer Career Coaches alerted Heldrich Center staff with heightened concerns about a job seeker's well-being, MHANJ made connections to local, in-person mental health resources.

Public libraries were a critical access point for job seekers who did not have home Internet access or lacked basic digital skills. NSCN staff participated in job seeker forums at libraries around the state. Library staff also conducted webinars for job seekers and the Volunteer Career Coaches about free employer and other data resources available through the New Jersey State Library System.

The New Jersey Department of Labor's One-Stop Career Centers often referred older, long-term unemployed job seekers to NSCN, and NSCN referred job seekers to the One-Stops and community colleges for on-the-job or classroom training support.

NSCN Key Collaborators

- ▶ Rutgers University Career Services
- ▶ Rutgers University Alumni Association
- ▶ Mental Health Association in New Jersey
- ▶ New Jersey Library Association
- ▶ New Jersey State Library
- ▶ New Jersey Council of County Colleges
- ▶ AARP New Jersey
- ▶ United Way of Northern New Jersey
- ▶ New Jersey Governor's Office of Volunteerism
- ▶ New Start New Jersey

Several partners shared thoughts about their experience as NSCN collaborators in this video:

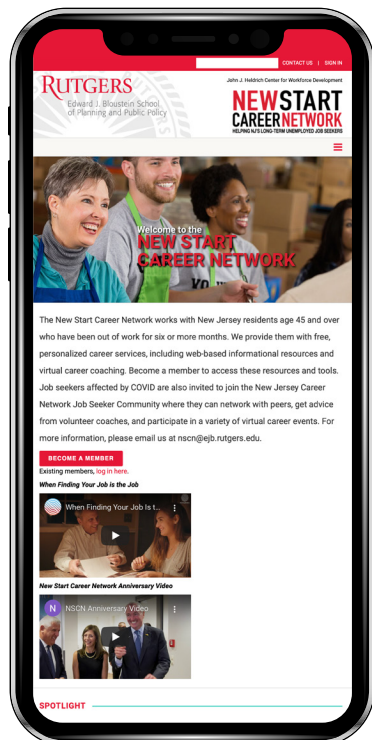
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1dfg9Hyd7g>

Website, Online Tools, and Webinars

Knowing NSCN would be primarily a virtual program, the Heldrich Center developed a website that would be easy for members to navigate. The Center designed it to be welcoming, motivating, and frank. The materials on the site focused on helping older, long-term unemployed job seekers improve their job search and gain a realistic understanding of their prospects in an evolving labor market. The website included information geared to those hoping to stay in the same industry or occupation and those wanting to switch careers. The site provided links to partners' resources, success stories of NSCN members who found new jobs, job postings shared by individual employers, and a calendar of NSCN and other events.

Among the tools available to NSCN members were:

- ▶ Big Interview, which allows job seekers to practice interviews and includes behavioral and competency-based questions, based on level and type of position, from over 140 industries. Job seekers recorded and shared their interviews with coaches or others for feedback. Big Interview also includes a résumé builder, and an in-depth video and written curriculum for job seekers.
- ▶ Jobscan, which lets members compare their résumé against the text of a job description, provides feedback on how closely the two align and suggestions for skills and phrases that would enhance the applicant's chances – critical given the increasingly important role played by applicant tracking systems.



- ▶ Sokanu, a career assessment, and Vault, with detailed employer and industry information (free access to both provided by Rutgers Career Services); and
- ▶ Toucan, which lets users connect one-to-one and anonymously for audio “huddles” to talk about their job search or other life experiences that may be stressful, providing “peer-powered social support.”

Webinars

Throughout the program, NSCN hosted **110 webinars** designed for older, long-term unemployed job seekers. The webinars focused on multiple themes such as:

- ▶ Developing an Effective Job Search Plan
- ▶ Self-assessment
- ▶ Personal Branding
- ▶ Effective Résumés
- ▶ LinkedIn
- ▶ Interviewing
- ▶ Thriving in the Gig Economy
- ▶ Making a Career Transition
- ▶ Relationship-building
- ▶ Well-being in Job Search
- ▶ Navigating Bias
- ▶ Navigating the COVID Economy
- ▶ 2021 Jumpstart Your Career Webinars

Webinars were typically an hour long and conducted on Zoom. Thousands of NSCN members participated in webinars or viewed archived sessions. Based on a 2021 NSCN member survey, 86% of NSCN members participated in webinars, 78% of whom were satisfied with this service.

Tip of the Week Email Newsletter

NSCN also launched a “Tip of the Week” email that included job search strategies, NSCN and partner resources, events, job postings shared directly with NSCN, and job seeker success stories. (During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, when unemployed New Jerseyans sought information about extended and pandemic benefits and other assistance, NSCN increased the Tip's frequency to daily e-mails.) NSCN sent over 400 Tips of the Week/Day. NSCN also offered an email welcome series for new members that described NSCN resources. Based on a 2021 NSCN member survey, 92% of NSCN members used the Tip newsletter, and just over three-quarters of them were satisfied with this service.

NSCN Facebook and LinkedIn Groups

NSCN invited job seekers to join an exclusive Facebook group, which ultimately had 675 members, including both job seekers and Volunteer Career Coaches. Members could share information and resources, and get feedback from and connect with others. NSCN also posted reminders about upcoming events and webinars on these groups. The guidelines encouraged members to be respectful and courteous – with a strict “no politics” rule. While job seekers need to use LinkedIn as part of their job search, NSCN members appeared to prefer Facebook for engaging with each other. Just over a third of respondents to a 2021 NSCN member survey said they used the Facebook group; of those, 41% found it useful.

Volunteer Career Coaches

The Heldrich Center recruited and trained volunteers to serve as career coaches for job seekers requesting individual assistance and to lead group coaching sessions. To recruit Volunteer Career Coaches, the Center reached out through Rutgers University alumni associations, state and local chapters of the Society for Human Resources Management, the New Jersey Governor's Office of Volunteerism, and partners such as United Way of Northern New Jersey, AARP New Jersey, public libraries, and others. Referrals from current coaches were also important sources of new volunteers.

Interested volunteers shared their résumé and completed an application that included questions on why they wanted to help older, long-term unemployed job seekers. (See Appendix A for the Volunteer Career Coach application.) There was no required training or career experiences, though many candidates were professional, aspiring, or retired career coaches.

Others had experience in recruiting, executive search, human resources, education, counseling, and related fields. Many had backgrounds in finance, information technology, marketing, pharma, health care, law, logistics, and other fields. NSCN coaches were diverse in gender, race and ethnicity, age, and educational background, though there were more women than men, and most were college-educated professionals.

Many volunteers had experienced long-term unemployment, and some were still active job seekers. Almost all knew family, friends, or former colleagues who had experienced long-term unemployment. This gave many volunteers an ability to relate to the job seeker members.

The Center asked volunteers to donate two to four hours per week for a six-month period to coach one or more job seekers. They could accept or refuse a potential job seeker match – either because the timing was not good for them, or, after reviewing the job seeker's background, the Volunteer Career Coach did not believe it was a good match. Volunteers could choose to meet job seekers in person, virtually, or by telephone. They were encouraged to use their preferred coaching techniques or NSCN coaching outlines. Volunteer Career Coaches signed a "Coaching Agreement and Code of Ethics," confirming they would respect the confidential information shared with them by NSCN members. (See Appendix B.) Professional coaches agreed that they would not attempt to market any services to members. Coaches also agreed to complete brief online post-coaching session surveys so that NSCN could collect information on their progress.

The Center did not expect NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches to find jobs or develop specific employment opportunities for NSCN job seekers, write or rewrite job seekers' résumés or cover letters, or to serve as therapists or mental health counselors.

"Most individuals I coach feel defeated, undervalued, and angry about being let go. It's important for me, as the coach, to address those issues first and foremost."

–NSCN Volunteer Career Coach

"Working with a coach helped both professionally and personally. It helped me to focus my efforts in the right places and helped to keep me motivated."

–NSCN job seeker member



Newly trained NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches following their orientation session at the Heldrich Center

NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches on Why They Want to Help NSCN Members

- ▶ "I have been long-term unemployed myself and had to return to school to upgrade my skills and forge a new career. I have lived it and can bring compassion and experience to this volunteer position."
- ▶ "I have been unemployed and understand the stress of trying to find a job. As a previous recruiter and hiring manager, I believe I can offer constructive advice when preparing for interviews and enhancing résumés."
- ▶ "I have previously volunteered with Casa de Don Pedro, where I was teaching seniors how to use a computer. I also helped in the creation of résumés and have a lesson about it."
- ▶ "I have experience myself with long-term unemployment and have utilized different methods such as job fairs, New Jersey Department of Labor websites, county office employment supports, career fairs, community colleges, and various volunteer organizations and churches, etc."
- ▶ "I switched careers later in life. I would love to assist people in finding new career pathways and assist those who have been unemployed and are attempting to rejoin the workforce. I know what fear is like and how overwhelming it can be. If I give back to others and assist them in their process, I would be grateful."
- ▶ "I have for a number of years volunteered at Seton Hall University providing students during career events with advice on the job search process, including interviewing skills and résumé preparation. By giving back in this way, I have received a lot of satisfaction. On hearing about this program to assist the long-term unemployed, I immediately thought this is a segment of our population that has a great need, and I feel very strongly that I could add value to the program."

Orientation for NSCN Volunteers

NSCN collaborated with Rutgers Career Services to train the volunteers. Before the pandemic hit in March 2020, day-long orientations (between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.) were held in-person at the Heldrich Center's offices in downtown New Brunswick, NJ, mostly on Saturdays. (During the pandemic, NSCN conducted condensed virtual orientations.) Orientation was the only time volunteers were required to attend an in-person activity.

The orientations covered understanding long-term unemployment and older worker challenges, coaching basics, the process of matching coaches with job seekers, and NSCN's expectations.

NSCN staff described the challenges and rewards of working with older workers who had been unemployed for long stretches – many a year or longer – who were stressed, anxious, angry, and frustrated by their lack of success. NSCN also pointed out that job seekers would be grateful to volunteers who provided free individualized job search assistance and encouragement, since many had nowhere else to turn for help.

Matching Volunteer Career Coaches and Job Seekers

Job seekers interested in individual coaching completed a request form on the NSCN website. (See Appendix C for a copy of the form.) Job seekers provided information on

their employment and unemployment history, current job search methods, preferred salary range, distance they were willing to commute, and whether they preferred virtual or in-person coaching. We asked each to consider whether they were ready for coaching, which would entail a substantial time commitment and willingness to try new job search strategies.

When matching job seekers with coaches, NSCN staff considered the coaches' professional and industry background and location when in-person coaching was requested. Many Volunteer Career Coaches agreed to take on more than one job seeker at a time; others worked with multiple job seekers as they stayed on as NSCN volunteers over the course of several years. Several volunteers, who were professional coaches, assisted multiple job seekers. Some coaches developed specialties, such as LinkedIn profile development, personal branding, résumés, accountability, job search planning, life coaching, and career exploration.

After identifying a potential Volunteer Career Coach, NSCN staff sent the coach the job seeker's application and gave them the option of accepting or declining the engagement. If a coach declined to accept the assignment, NSCN staff found an alternative coach. After matching coaches and job seekers, NSCN introduced them by email and asked the job seeker to indicate their acceptance of a basic agreement outlining expectations for the coaching relationship. (See Appendix D for these materials.) The coach and job seeker then made their own arrangements, deciding their parameters for when and how they would work together. (See sidebar for information on typical coaching sessions.)

Initially, the duration of coaching was open-ended. Some Volunteer Career Coach/job seeker pairs worked together for over a year. Eventually, NSCN set a three-month time limit, with the possibility of extending the engagement

NSCN Members' Comments About Their Coaching Experience

- ▶ My coach was always in my corner. I am so thankful to NSCN for introducing us.
- ▶ There are so many advantages to this website that all the unemployed can benefit from, but foremost, I think the personal attention of the coaches is a real morale booster.
- ▶ Working with a coach helped both professionally and personally. It helped me to focus my efforts in the right places and helped to keep me motivated.
- ▶ I was unemployed nearly two years, from January 2020 through November 2021. The challenges of a job search during a pandemic were unprecedented. Working with a career coach at the beginning of my job search helped me become grounded and to realize that I needed to pace myself for the long search. I learned how to sell myself, which helped me since I am an introvert.

for another three months if both parties agreed. The limits were intended to help the job seeker and coach focus on accomplishing their tasks. For most coach/job seeker pairs, three months was adequate to cover basic coaching strategies, setting goals, and developing job search plans. When NSCN incorporated the three-month limit, NSCN also arranged for experienced Volunteer Career Coaches to manage a virtual open transition group (later called "Job Search Troubleshooting") that was available to NSCN job seekers who had completed one-on-one coaching but needed more help.

Throughout the program, NSCN maintained a sufficient supply of Volunteer Career Coaches to meet the demand from job seekers. Fewer job seekers sought individual coaching than anticipated. Even after NSCN increased efforts to make members more aware of the personal coaching, half of respondents (54%) said they did not know coaching was available; 14% said they were not interested in coaching. Clearly, many job seekers may not be entirely clear on how coaching might be valuable to their job search.

Supporting the Coaches

NSCN hired a part-time "coach of coaches" to support the Volunteer Career Coaches, and, over time, she also managed the development of the Tip of the Week newsletter and webinars. NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches were given access to a "Coaches' Corner" website and opportunities to participate in interactive "Coaches' Conversations" – drop-in virtual sessions for volunteers to ask questions, solve problems, and learn from and support each other. These resources were consolidated into the New Jersey Career Network Coaching Community, led by the Heldrich Center with support from the New Jersey Department of Labor. These services were available to coaches working with all job seekers, rather than just NSCN members, who retained a dedicated working group on the Coaching Community platform. These coaching tools included interactive professional development webinars (such as "Try It Tuesday/Lunch & Learn" sessions) and a library of coaching-related resources.

Member Satisfaction with the Coaching Experience

As of February 2022, 855 job seekers had participated in one-on-one coaching from 430 volunteers. Based on a May 2021 survey completed by 272 NSCN job seekers, two-thirds (66%) of those who had worked with Volunteer Career Coaches for individual coaching were either satisfied or very satisfied with their experience. A survey conducted in 2018, completed by 662 NSCN members, found that 64% of members said the coaching services were helpful or very helpful; 23% found it somewhat helpful. (See sidebar above for NSCN member reflections on their coaching experience.)

Group Coaching and Other Volunteer Activities

Beginning in late 2016, NSCN also offered group coaching as a method for job seekers to support, motivate, and learn from each other. Approximately 200 job seekers participated in group coaching activities offered at different points in time. Moderated by NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches, topics included women's and men's groups, confidence-building, and entrepreneurship skills. Several Volunteer Career Coaches hosted "resilience circles" that emphasized helping job seekers improve their perspective as they search for work. NSCN also provided opportunities to engage in virtual "mastermind groups" – peer-to-peer support groups that encourage members to engage in group problem-solving. (See sidebar for NSCN member feedback on the mastermind groups.)

In response to soaring unemployment due to COVID-19 restrictions and business shutdowns in late spring 2020, the Heldrich Center began offering virtual "Share & Support" groups several times a week, made available under a New Jersey Career Network Job Seeker Community designation and supported by the New Jersey Department of Labor, open to NSCN and any other New Jersey job seekers. A mix of volunteers and Heldrich Center staff facilitated the sessions. During the pandemic, which further increased stress, isolation, and uncertainty for many job seekers, NSCN and the New Jersey Career Network Job Seeker Community expanded efforts to address well-being and mental health, incorporating yoga, meditation, book clubs, and social gatherings. They also added offerings such as "Rate the Room" to help job seekers improve their appearance during video interviews and meetings.

Time Spent by Volunteer Career Coaches on Various Tasks

- ▶ Half hour in preparation.
- ▶ An hour for coaching sessions.
- ▶ 20 minutes in post-session follow-up activities.
- ▶ Met an average of seven (7) times with the job seeker.
- ▶ Met in person 13% of the time, by phone 50%, virtually (typically via Zoom) 35% of the time, and via email exchanges 3%.

Source: Post-coaching session survey of 1,596 sessions

Comments from NSCN Members Who Participated in Mastermind/Peer-to-Peer Support Groups

- ▶ Participants were positive and productive with actionable suggestions and offers of assistance.
- ▶ I got to talk with other job seekers in a focused, results-oriented conversation.
- ▶ Everyone was respectful and prepared, and we learned that we are basically stuck on the same areas of the job search process, so there is a lot of room for collaboration. The people in my group are wonderful.
- ▶ The group dynamics were amazing. We bonded immediately and created a shared safe space.
- ▶ The honest, really good feedback to my "Hot Seat" presentation made me clearer on what I need to do to make the job search more effective. We followed the agenda, and this was very beneficial.

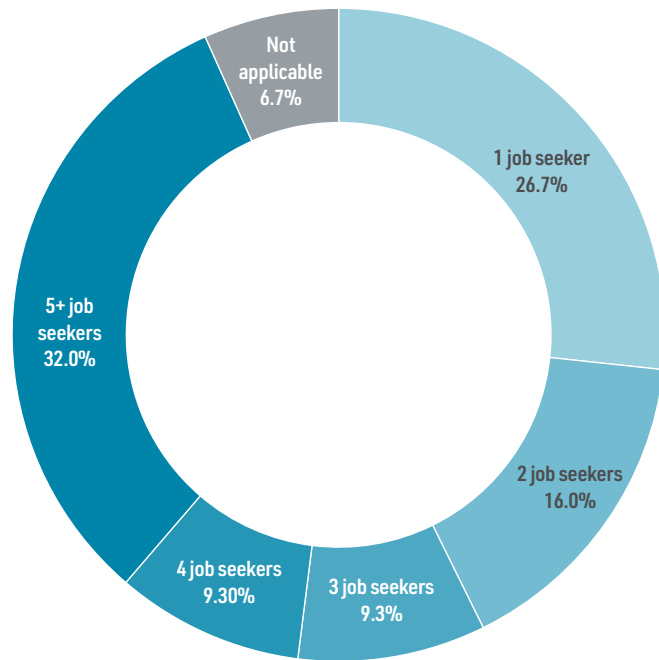
NSCN volunteers also contributed by:

- ▶ Offering one-hour virtual "Laser Coaching" sessions to work out particular challenges.
- ▶ Providing virtual résumé reviews prior to NSCN job fairs.
- ▶ Working at NSCN job fairs checking in employers and job seekers, organizing job seekers for LinkedIn photos (with a professional photographer supplied by NSCN), and helping job seekers "practice their pitches" prior to walking the floor.
- ▶ Serving as NSCN's Employer Engagement Specialist, providing assistance over multiple years.
- ▶ Presenting at webinars, conferences, and occasional in-person "Jump Start Your Job Search" events.

Volunteer Career Coaches' Insights, Feedback, and Experiences

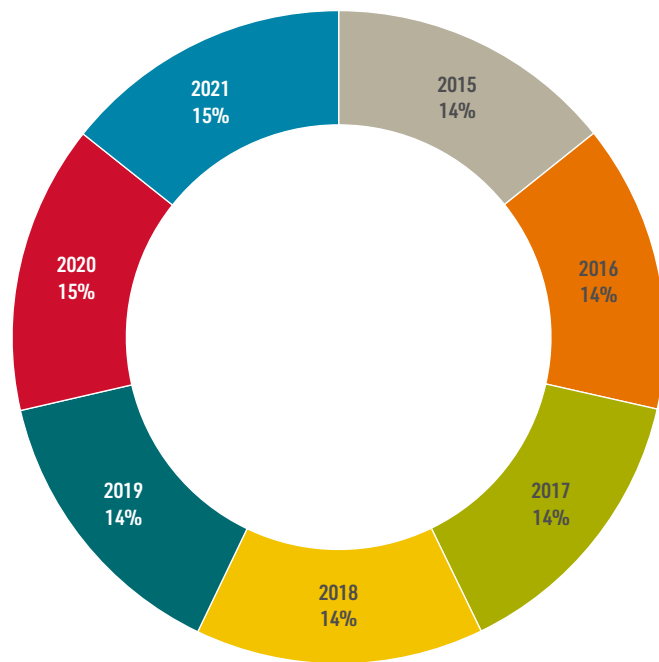
In May 2021, 75 NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches completed a detailed survey reflecting on their volunteer experience. (See Figures 4 and 5 for a profile of coaches who completed the survey.)

Figure 4: Coaches Who Completed the 2021 Survey: How many job seekers have you worked with?



Source: 2021 NSCN member survey

Figure 5: Coaches Who Completed the 2021 Survey: When did you begin coaching with NSCN?



Source: 2021 NSCN member survey



Former New Jersey Governor James Florio, Heldrich Center Director Carl Van Horn, former U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez, and NSCN Director Maria Heidkamp at a 2016 roundtable with NSCN job seekers.



NSCN's Michele Martin with NSCN volunteers and collaborators speaking at the Secretary Perez roundtable.

NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches found their involvement with NSCN satisfying and rewarding. Many were surprised at the depth of the challenges job seekers grappled with and their emotional stress. Some coaches identified the need for additional resources to help these struggling individuals. A majority of volunteers reported that addressing job seekers' self-esteem and helping rebuild their confidence were among the most valuable services for NSCN members.

Volunteer Career Coaches Comment on Their Experiences

- ▶ I have found that having the tools is very important, but lacking confidence is a stumbling block that needs to be overcome to assist in the job search. Working with the individual to build up their confidence by conducting mock interviews and giving positive feedback will assist in the long run.
- ▶ I think job seekers benefit most from the support, encouragement, and accountability that career coaches provide as this is something that cannot be obtained through webinars and other tools.
- ▶ Most individuals I coach feel defeated, undervalued, and angry about being let go. It's important for me, as the coach, to address those issues first and foremost.
- ▶ I enjoy simply the ability to give it forward. It has been extremely rewarding serving as a mentor and listener to someone who definitely needs it.
- ▶ I enjoy seeing the "AHA!" moments of the job seeker. I also enjoy when they revise their search and interview processes and get some results!
- ▶ I especially enjoy when conducting career exploration – the job seeker discovers that they have some wonderful gifts and talents they need to package differently.
- ▶ I enjoy the camaraderie with other coaches.
- ▶ I am so grateful and proud to be volunteering with the program.

Employer Engagement

NSCN's Goals for Engaging with Employers

- ▶ Obtain employer commitments to consider qualified long-term unemployed job seekers.
- ▶ Revise human resource practices that reduce opportunities for long-term unemployed job seekers, such as applicant tracking systems that exclude those with résumé gaps or those with below-average credit scores.
- ▶ Partner with the public workforce system, community colleges, and nonprofits to promote on-the-job training and tax credits for hiring the long-term unemployed.
- ▶ Include mid-career and older workers as part of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Convincing employers to hire long-term older workers proved the most challenging task for NSCN. It is well-documented that this group is less likely to be called for an interview than applicants with shorter unemployment durations. A 2013 audit study based on 3,360 fictitious résumés found evidence that long-term unemployed job seekers are less likely to get called for interviews, even when they are better qualified, than those with shorter durations of unemployment.²¹ In response to the lingering high rates of long-term unemployment across the nation, in 2014, President Obama invited over 300 business leaders to the White House, asking them to sign a pledge to not discriminate against the long-term unemployed.²² The White House also produced a best practices list²³ and a detailed handbook for employers to change their hiring practices to reduce discrimination against the long-term unemployed.²⁴ (See sidebar for NSCN's employer engagement goals.)

NSCN reached out to the employers in New Jersey that signed President Obama's pledge but could not obtain

commitments from them to hire qualified NSCN members. (One pledge signer that claimed on its website that it welcomed long-term unemployed individuals removed that language the day after NSCN contacted the firm.) NSCN tried partnering with the public workforce system to encourage on-the-job training resources to incentivize hiring NSCN job seeker members but had limited success.

NSCN was able to connect job seekers with employers through members-only job fairs. With help from Rutgers Career Services, between November 2016 and December 2019, NSCN held seven job fairs, each attracting between 45 to 50 employers and between 150 to 275 job seekers. As noted, several employers made generous contributions to NSCN – especially New Jersey Resources and Amazon – and others contributed as job fair sponsors. And in 2021, EY established a partnership with NSCN that included a crowdfunding effort as well as recruiting some 40 volunteers from the company's staff.

“Isaac received and accepted a job offer yesterday! He had interviewed with the company on Friday, following his initial discussions with company reps at the job fair on Wednesday. He had done an outstanding job enhancing his résumé's executive summary and accomplishment stories, and he felt that it paid off for him. Hopefully, other NSCN members will achieve similar results.”

–NSCN Volunteer Career Coach



Volunteer Career Coaches and staff at NSCN member job fair

Recruiting NSCN Members

On the day of NSCN's public launch, over 100 job seekers created membership accounts on the NSCN website, many of whom had heard about the program through newspaper, radio, and television stories. Job seekers also learned about NSCN from local New Jersey One-Stop Career Centers, community college programs, word-of-mouth from other job seekers, or from an NSCN partner (see Table 1).

Table 1: How Did You Learn About NSCN?

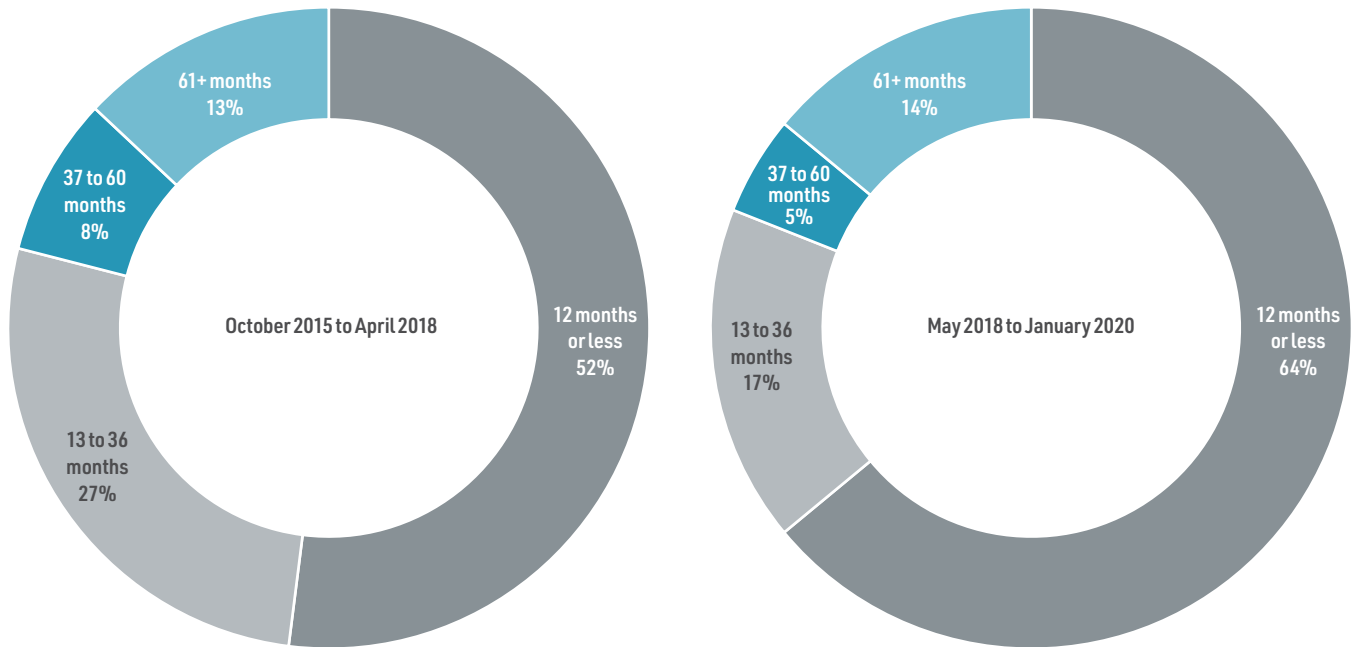
	Percent
One-Stop Career Center	18%
Other	18%
Ready to Work NJ (community college program)	18%
Media (newspaper, radio, social media)	16%
NSCN Member	8%
Job Club or Professional Service Group	7%
AARP	5%
Presentation by NSCN Program Representative	4%
Public Library	3%
NSCN Volunteer Career Coach	2%
United Way	1%

Source: 2018 NSCN member survey (N=662)

A Profile of NSCN Members

In the first two-and-a-half years (through April 2018), roughly half of NSCN members (48%) had been unemployed for a year or longer when they joined (see Figure 6); 48% had exhausted their unemployment benefits and 22% were still collecting Unemployment Insurance. Among those who joined NSCN between May 2018 and January 2020 (pre-pandemic), just over a third (36%) had been unemployed for a year or longer by the time they joined, 29% had exhausted unemployment benefits, and 33% were still collecting benefits. (From both time periods, the remaining members had not received unemployment benefits.)

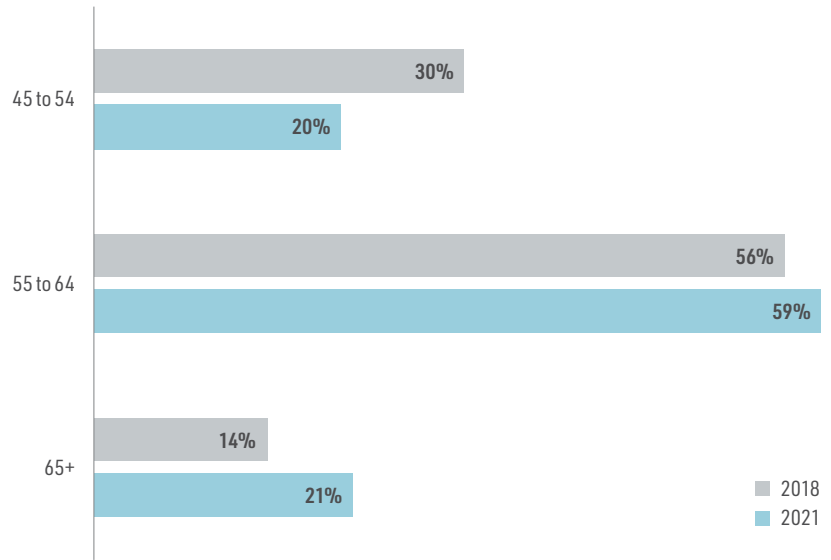
Figure 6: Length of Time Unemployed at Time of Joining NSCN



Source: NSCN member registration data

Throughout NSCN's history, a majority of members were in the 55 to 64 age bracket when they first signed up. Over time, membership trended older (see Figure 7), with members in the younger (age 45 to 54) cohort decreasing from 30% of members in 2018 to 20% of members by 2021. Those age 65+ made up 14% of members in 2018, rising to 21% in 2021.

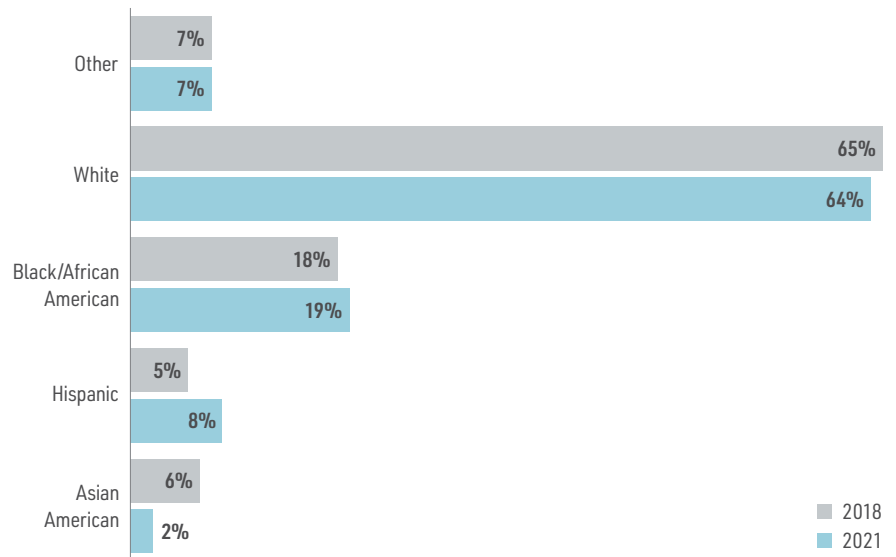
Figure 7: Age Range of NSCN Members at Time of Membership Registration



Source: NSCN member registration data

Based on 2018 and 2021 survey data, the population of NSCN job seekers was diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, with small increases in the shares of Black and Hispanic members and a decrease in the percentage of Asian Americans (see Figure 8).

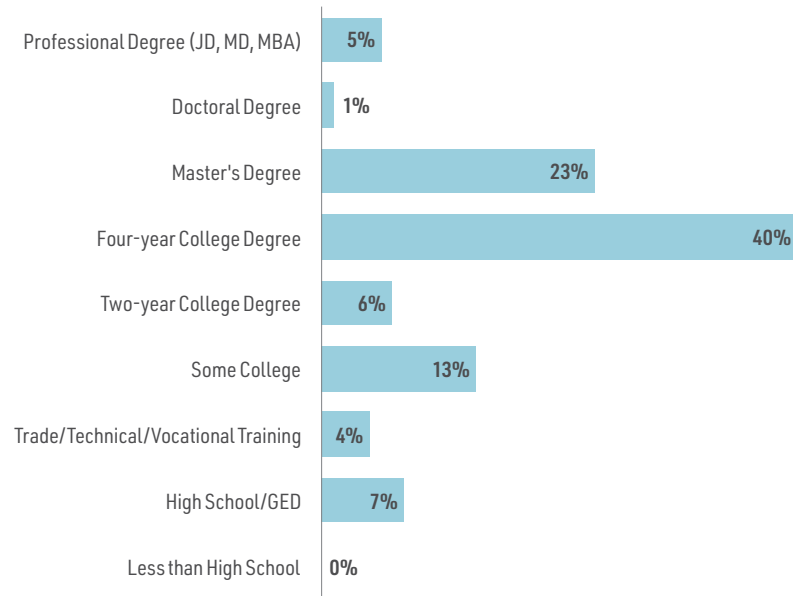
Figure 8: How Would You Describe Your Primary Race Identification?



Source: 2018 NSCN member survey (N=662) and 2021 NSCN member survey (N=272)

Though NSCN was open to all regardless of educational background, the population of job seekers remained fairly consistent throughout the program's history, with 40% of members having a four-year college degree, and close to a quarter (23%) having a Master's degree. Another 6% have a professional degree or a Ph.D. (see Figure 9).

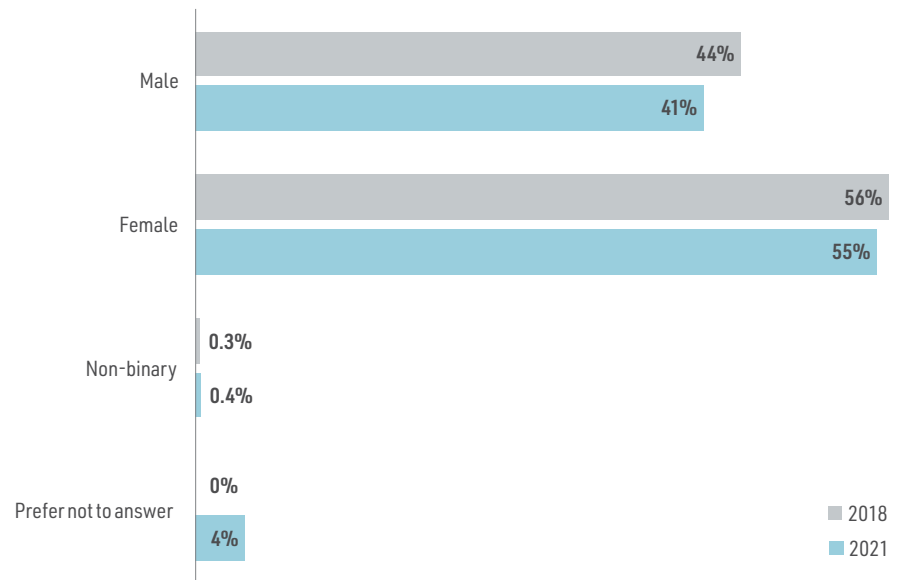
Figure 9: NSCN Members' Highest Level of Education



Source: NSCN member registration data

Based on survey data, over half of NSCN members were female (56% and 55% respectively in 2018 and 2021) (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: NSCN Members, by Gender

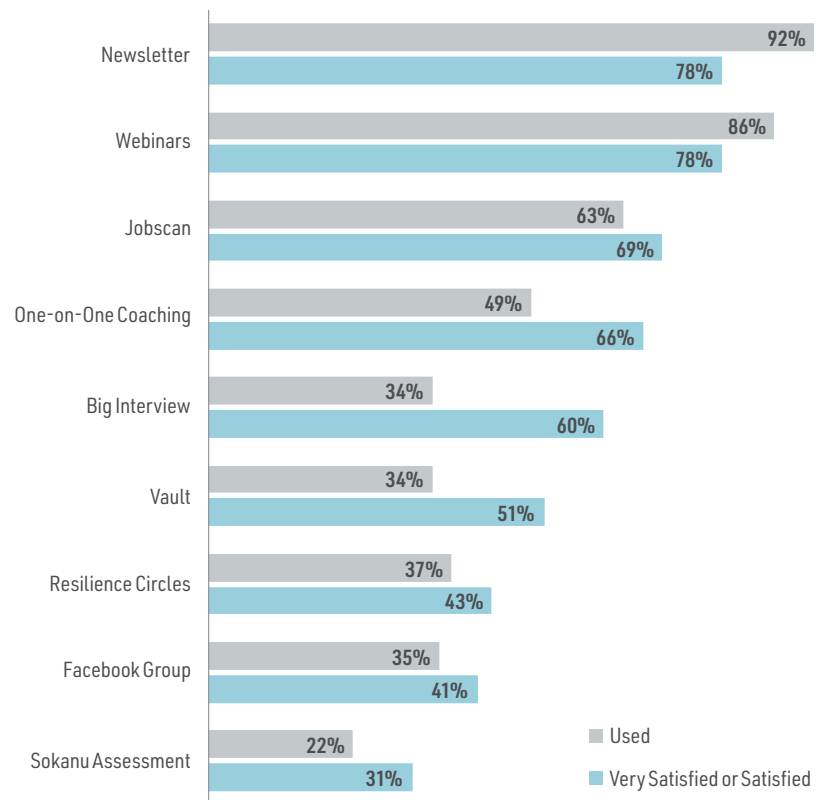


Source: 2018 NSCN member survey (N=662) and 2021 NSCN member survey (N=272)

NSCN Member Feedback

NSCN members who completed surveys in 2018 (N=662) and in 2021 (N=272) were very satisfied with the program: 9 in 10 said they would recommend NSCN to a friend. Based on the 2021 survey, nearly 9 in 10 respondents reported they were very satisfied or satisfied with NSCN overall, and 7 in 10 felt very engaged or engaged. The 2021 survey results show that over 9 in 10 used the Tip of the Week and 86% participated in webinars. Just over three-quarters were satisfied or very satisfied with those resources. The Jobscan tool was the next most used resource, with two-thirds of members using it and 69% of them reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied. Roughly half of the 2021 survey respondents participated in individual coaching, and 66% were satisfied or very satisfied with that experience (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Percent of Respondents Who Used and Were Satisfied with NSCN Features



Source: 2021 NSCN member survey (N=272)

“I think NSCN’s a program that provides a lifeline to older job seekers who have been displaced and lack job-seeking skills.”

–NSCN job seeker member

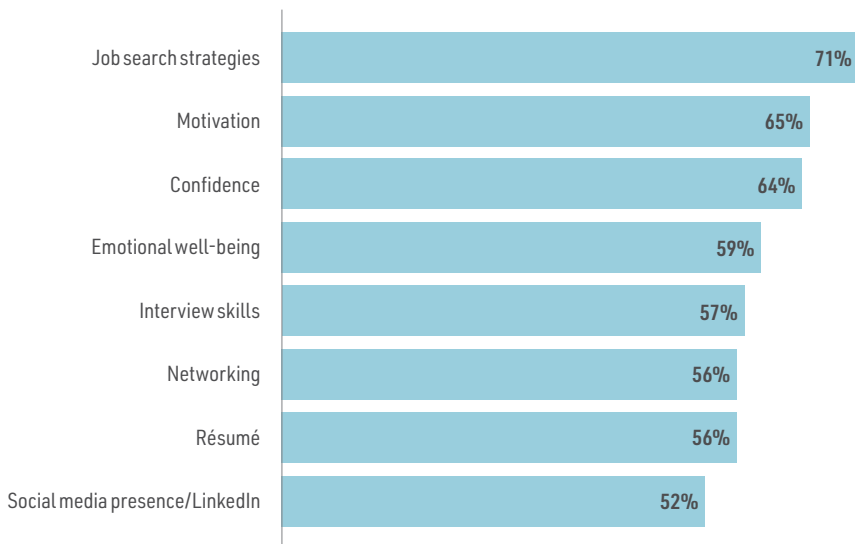
“Before I joined NSCN, I was questioning my self-worth, career(s), and overall well-being. After I participated in a handful of webinars, clicked on links to articles/additional resources, and listened to key speakers such as the folks of LSNJLAW.org, a weight has been lifted from my shoulders. Specifically you, Maria, and Michele, did not just ‘talk to talk’ instead, you provided us with the situation, the facts, and many options all in a timely manner. I cannot thank you and NSCN enough.”

–NSCN job seeker member

A majority of members said that NSCN improved their job search strategies, interview skills, networking, résumés, and social media (see Figure 12). They also reported experiencing improvements in their motivation, confidence, and emotional well-being. More than 8 in 10 respondents said that NSCN helped them realize they were not alone as mid-career or older, long-term unemployed job seekers (see Figure 13).

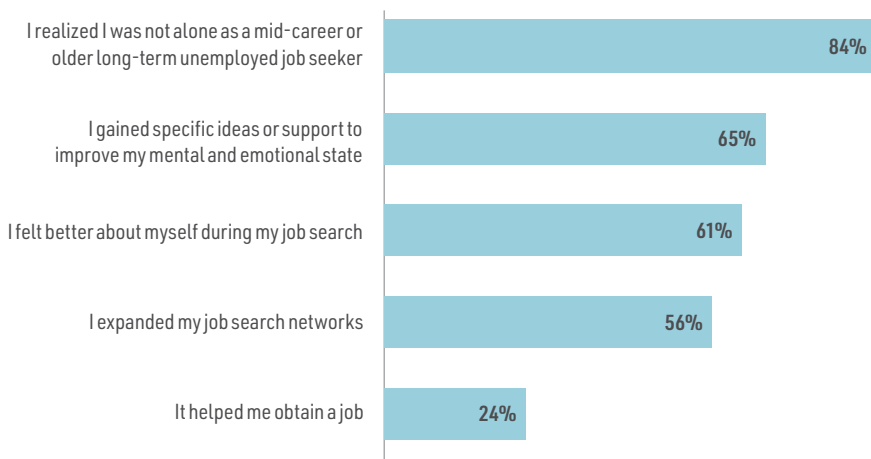
Overall satisfaction with NSCN was somewhat higher for younger members: among those ages 45 to 54, 95% were satisfied with NSCN, compared to 89% of those ages 55 to 64 and 78% of those age 65+. Satisfaction rates were also slightly higher for the 38% of respondents who were employed at the time of completing the survey, at 91% compared to 86% of those who were still unemployed. Among the employed, there were some differences: 82% of those who said they accepted a job below their experience or educational levels were satisfied with NSCN, compared to 93% of those who had not.

Figure 12: Percent of Respondents that Agree or Strongly Agree that NSCN Improved their...



Source: 2021 NSCN member survey (N=272)

Figure 13: Percent of Respondents that Agree or Strongly Agree that...



Source: 2021 NSCN member survey (N=272)

“This is not the first time that I have been unemployed, but it’s the first time that I haven’t felt alone, that I haven’t felt isolated, that I haven’t felt there was something wrong or broken with me. NSCN gets it.”

–NSCN job seeker member

Event and Media Highlights

The Heldrich Center shared lessons learned about serving older long-term unemployed workers in a variety of forums, including:

- ▶ [Clinton Global Initiative](#)
- ▶ [TedX Conference](#), Cape May, NJ
- ▶ Center for American Progress with U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Commissioner Erica Groshen, Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, and New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy
- ▶ White House conference on employer strategies for assisting long-term unemployed (with the Ready to Work Business Collaborative)
- ▶ Princeton University's School of Public and International Affairs [Forum on Breaking the Cycle of Long-Term Unemployment](#)
- ▶ [Town Hall on Mid-career Job Seekers](#) in collaboration with WorkingNation hosted by PBS NewsHour's Hari Sreenivasan and a [mini-documentary on NSCN](#), both of which were broadcast on NJTV
- ▶ Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health Age Boom Academy
- ▶ [IBM International Social Sector Forum](#), Berlin, Germany
- ▶ Urban Institute's Next50 Changemaker Forum/Older Workers Knowledge Lab
- ▶ National Governors Association Good Jobs for All Americans Summits
- ▶ MIT Sloan School of Management
- ▶ Boston College Sloan Center on Aging and Work
- ▶ Center on Aging, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine
- ▶ AARP Public Policy Institute
- ▶ U.S. Department of Labor
- ▶ National Association of Workforce Boards
- ▶ National Association of State Workforce Agencies

NSCN Featured in Major Media Outlets

- ▶ [The New York Times](#)
 - ▷ [Millions of workers without jobs are going uncounted in the unemployment rate](#)
 - ▷ [Your Uber driver is retired? You shouldn't be surprised](#)
 - ▷ [Lots of job hunting, but no job despite low unemployment](#)
 - ▷ [Uncounted in the unemployment rate, but they want to work](#)
- ▶ [NBC News](#)
 - ▷ [From theater director to cheese expert: Displaced workers in some industries switch careers to stay afloat](#)
 - ▷ [Latest jobs report shows long-term unemployment still on the rise, worrying economists](#)
- ▶ [Newsweek](#)
- ▶ [AARP Magazine](#)
- ▶ [MSNBC](#)
- ▶ [The Guardian](#)

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The Heldrich Center designed and implemented NSCN to assist older, long-term unemployed New Jerseyans and to test a model that relied heavily on web-based resources and Volunteer Career Coaches. Throughout its NSCN journey, the Center shared what it was learning with practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and the public in a wide array of forums.

Based on its experience with NSCN, the Heldrich Center offers the following lessons:

- 1.** Older long-term unemployed job seekers clearly need more, and different services than typically available through the public workforce system, including:
 - ▶ emotional and mental health support;
 - ▶ coaching to help with motivation and execution of a job search;
 - ▶ unbiased and realistic information about education, training, and specific job prospects; and
 - ▶ opportunities to connect to and provide peer support to each other.

Long-term unemployment is devastating for all individuals and is especially traumatic for older individuals. NSCN members described the loss of identity, confidence, and self-esteem in addition to income. Those who had been in a job for many years faced additional challenges, such as limited exposure to networks beyond their former employer and little knowledge of contemporary job search techniques. Members often had unrealistic expectations about the effort required for a successful job search or their qualifications for a particular position. A number of them had not adjusted to the fact that many employers now hire for short-term, project-based contracts and that "permanent" full-time jobs with benefits are hard to obtain in some sectors such as information technology. NSCN addressed these challenges by providing content through the website, webinars, and Tips of the Week; by making individual and group coaching available; and by encouraging members to interact in small groups or on Facebook. To help with motivation, NSCN divided its content into manageable steps, encouraging members to celebrate their progress along the way.

- 2.** Volunteers can play a critical, cost-effective role in delivering assistance to older, long-term unemployed job seekers. NSCN's volunteers joined the project with a wide variety of backgrounds and skills. As a pilot program, NSCN opted to give the Volunteer Career Coaches flexibility to determine how they would support members. NSCN staff developed an extensive online coaches' guide and other resources to provide volunteers with support to address the specific concerns of members, particularly related to helping members navigate the emotional and mental challenges of the job search. Using volunteers as coaches may have some advantages because many members simply needed empathy – a person who would listen nonjudgmentally to the job seekers' concerns and encourage them when they were discouraged. Ultimately, NSCN learned that the human connection was often more important to the members than specific job search advice. While professional coaches might be better prepared to provide personal coaching, it is too costly for most job seekers. In fact, many of the most effective NSCN coaches had no prior training. That said, relying on volunteers presents challenges because their skills and commitment to the program vary widely, and it is difficult to closely monitor the quality and quantity of the service they provide.

3. Strong partnerships are a cost-effective way to expand access to services and avoid duplication of efforts. NSCN connected its members to a wide array of services and incorporated information on partners' and other resources into the NSCN website. NSCN members often were unaware of free resources available to help them with their mortgages, health care, or utility bills. For the job seeker, having one website and program that curated and housed myriad resources was beneficial. For example, NSCN encouraged older, long-term unemployed job seekers to consider seeking work in the nonprofit sector through the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits, which shared relevant job listings. NSCN also apprised its members about AARP resources on digital skills training and job fairs for those age 50+. During tax season, NSCN shared information about free resources to help low-income and older tax filers.

4. NSCN members, coaches, partners, and program staff agreed that serving older, long-term unemployed job seekers would be more effective in getting members a job if partnerships with employers would lead to hiring of qualified job seekers. This could include forming partnerships tied to on-the-job training opportunities or developing "returnships" for older workers. Older workers should also be among the populations considered for apprenticeships and sector-focused employment and training programs. Without the resources to provide direct incentives to employers in the form of tax reductions or wage subsidies, NSCN found it challenging to expand employer engagement.

5. All job seekers need access to a range of supports – available when and how they need them. NSCN accomplished this with virtual tools, webinars, and weekly or daily communications to its members. Flexible funding enabled NSCN to test new ideas; some worked (such as the welcome email series) and others did not (virtual open office hours). Open-ended programs where individuals choose the level and type of engagement may be preferable to job seekers; however, it is challenging to measure and evaluate program impacts.

6. While a job is the ultimate goal of most long-term unemployed individuals, given the changing nature of work, many accepted short-term projects, gigs, or temporary assignments, and rotated in and out of employment. NSCN offered many webinars that encouraged job seekers to consider strategies for generating streams of income while they continued to seek full-time work. Some NSCN members were reluctant to accept short-term assignments, but NSCN staff encouraged them to be open-minded about these prospects. For some members, part-time job opportunities turned into full-time jobs. For others, temporary jobs generated income, fresh contacts, and an updated résumé. However, job seekers often struggled with whether to accept (and/or include on their résumé) "survival jobs" that were completely outside of their primary target jobs.

7. Knowing how difficult long-term unemployment can be emotionally, NSCN concluded it was important to measure the program's impact on people's confidence and self-esteem, which are as critical to their job search as well as their overall well-being. Survey feedback from NSCN job seekers found evidence that they appreciated learning they were not alone in their struggle for employment, and that the program improved their mental and emotional state. Over two-thirds of NSCN members reported that the program contributed to improved motivation and confidence. Stress can impair individuals' executive functioning, which includes skills such as planning, setting, and achieving goals. Insofar as NSCN helped job seekers reduce their stress and improve their emotional well-being, it should lead to better outcomes for them in the long run.

Key Ingredients for Nonprofit Programs Serving Long-term Unemployed, Older Workers

- 1.** Developing and operating a program like NSCN requires an energetic and dedicated staff – with patience, empathy, creativity, and emotional resilience. Fielding calls from stressed, frustrated, and/or angry job seekers (and the volunteers trying to help them) can be demanding. However, celebrating job seekers' victories is deeply rewarding. Care must be taken to hire individuals who have deep understanding of and empathy for the emotional impacts of long-term unemployment and who will provide the care and support that both job seekers and volunteers need. Staff should be trained not only in specific job search strategies (résumés, LinkedIn, interviewing, etc.) but also in coaching and mental and emotional wellness. It is also essential to have regular opportunities for staff to share their experiences and provide support to each other.
- 2.** Flexible resources allow for experimentation and iteration, avoiding a "one-size-fits-all" approach. This enables staff to test ideas and develop tools and processes that resonate with individuals and that reflect the local labor market and economic circumstances. Staff should be encouraged to engage with job seekers closely, to listen carefully to their needs (both expressed and implicit), and to experiment with strategies that not only support job seekers in educating themselves about the job search but also help them execute effective strategies.
- 3.** Host agencies for these types of programs could be government agencies, universities, or nonprofits, but it's important to place the program in a trusted institution. NSCN's job seekers, collaborators, employers, and volunteers all valued the connection to Rutgers University.
- 4.** Strategies to select, train, support, and keep volunteers engaged and feeling valued are critical. NSCN staff created written guides, coaching forms and templates, and other resources to support volunteers' coaching tasks. These guidelines were regularly updated to respond to emerging issues and challenges. The "coach of coaches" was available via email and phone to help coaches discuss any issues they were having with members and to provide support and direction as needed. "Coaches' Conversations" via Zoom and periodic in-person training sessions gave coaches an opportunity to discuss challenges with peers and to upgrade coaching skills after the initial orientation session. Coaches were also regularly acknowledged and thanked for their support, encouragement, and engagement with members.
- 5.** Communications with job seekers must be frequent and provide regular reminders about available services. Job seekers are overwhelmed and typically feel isolated. Emails and other communications that are very formal, full of jargon, and that don't convey compassion and understanding for their predicament will be off-putting. NSCN made special efforts to use a warm, welcoming tone in communications, connecting to job seeker concerns and minimizing jargon. Recognizing that job seekers were often overwhelmed by emails as part of their search, the program also provided ongoing reminders to job seekers about available services, such as Jobscan, Big Interview, and coaching.

Next Steps

In anticipation of the eventual phaseout of NSCN, starting in 2018, the Heldrich Center helped the New Jersey Department of Labor and the New Jersey Office of Innovation develop the [New Jersey Career Network](#). This digital coaching tool built, in part, on the lessons from NSCN. It provides customized advice to job seekers based on their unique background, with a friendly, encouraging tone, practice lessons that help job seekers improve their job search skills, tools to help them track progress and milestones, and tips for how to manage stress. As noted, in response to COVID-19 and with support from the New Jersey Department of Labor, the Heldrich Center also launched a [New Jersey Career Network Job Seeker Community](#), which emphasizes providing a “safe space” for job seekers to meet and support each other virtually during their job search.

“A job is not just a job – a job conveys dignity, and the New Start Career Network gets that. We know when people are empowered, success follows for job seekers and employers alike. The concepts born here through NSCN have greatly contributed to improving the services of the Department of Labor. In collaboration with New Jersey Office of Innovation, we improved our web-based customer services, in-person and virtual coaching opportunities, and other strategies that address the realities of our state’s labor market for all job seekers.”

–New Jersey Commissioner of Labor Robert Asaro-Angelo

“NSCN gave us new ways of thinking about how to motivate and support long-term unemployed job seekers, responding to individuals’ unique needs. Building on that foundation, and using human centered design, user experience, and new technology tools, the Office of Innovation partnered with the Heldrich Center and the Department of Labor to build the New Jersey Career Network, the nation’s first high-quality public “digital coaching” platform for the unemployed and underemployed.”

–New Jersey Chief Innovation Officer Beth Noveck

Elements of NSCN that Public Workforce Agencies or Nonprofits Can Adopt to Help Older, Long-term Unemployed Job Seekers

- ▶ Helping frontline workforce staff better understand the needs of older, long-term unemployed job seekers
- ▶ Increasing the emphasis on coaching (including trauma-informed coaching) to help job seekers find their motivation
- ▶ Sending regular emails or text messages to job seekers, thereby pushing information that they may be overlooking or need nudges or reminders to use
- ▶ Incorporating volunteers as coaches and mentors for struggling job seekers

Acknowledgments

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About the Heldrich Center

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University is devoted to transforming the workforce development system at the local, state, and federal levels. The Center, located within the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, provides an independent source of analysis for reform and innovation in policymaking and employs cutting-edge research and evaluation methods to identify best practices in workforce development, education, and employment policy. It is also engaged in significant partnerships with the private sector, workforce organizations, and educational institutions to design effective education and training programs. It is deeply committed to assisting job seekers and workers attain the information, education, and skills training they need to move up the economic ladder.

As captured in its slogan, "Solutions at Work," the Heldrich Center is guided by a commitment to translate the strongest research and analysis into practices and programs that companies, community-based organizations, philanthropy, and government officials can use to strengthen their workforce and workforce readiness programs, create jobs, and remain competitive. The Center's work strives to build an efficient labor market that matches workers' skills and knowledge with the evolving demands of employers. The Center's projects are grounded in a core set of research priorities:

- ▶ Career and Technical Education
- ▶ Data Collection and Analysis
- ▶ Disability Employment
- ▶ Job Seekers in Transition
- ▶ Program Evaluation
- ▶ Trend Analysis

Learn more: www.heldrich.rutgers.edu

Appendices

Appendix A: NSCN Volunteer Career Coach Questionnaire

*Required

*First Name: _____

*Last Name: _____

*Address 1: _____

Address 2: _____

*City: _____

*State: _____

*Zip Code: _____

*Home NJ County:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Atlantic | <input type="radio"/> Hudson | <input type="radio"/> Salem |
| <input type="radio"/> Bergen | <input type="radio"/> Hunterdon | <input type="radio"/> Somerset |
| <input type="radio"/> Burlington | <input type="radio"/> Mercer | <input type="radio"/> Sussex |
| <input type="radio"/> Camden | <input type="radio"/> Middlesex | <input type="radio"/> Union |
| <input type="radio"/> Cape May | <input type="radio"/> Monmouth | <input type="radio"/> Warren |
| <input type="radio"/> Cumberland | <input type="radio"/> Morris | <input type="radio"/> Not Applicable |
| <input type="radio"/> Essex | <input type="radio"/> Ocean | |
| <input type="radio"/> Gloucester | <input type="radio"/> Passaic | |

*Email: _____

*Phone: _____

*Currently Employed: Yes No

*Occupation (current or former if retired/not working): _____

Company/Organization: _____

Title: _____

Organizational Affiliations:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Rutgers Alum | <input type="radio"/> NJ Career Development Association | <input type="radio"/> Ernst & Young (EY) |
| <input type="radio"/> GSC-SHRM | <input type="radio"/> NJBIA | <input type="radio"/> Other Industry Group |
| <input type="radio"/> SHRM Chapter | <input type="radio"/> NJ Chamber of Commerce | |

Related Education or Credentials: _____

*Please upload your resume (PDF or Microsoft Word)

Please describe the range of career support services, if any, that you provide:

*Please briefly describe whether you have had experience working with long-term unemployed job seekers:

Please briefly describe your interest in joining the NSCN Volunteer Job Coaching Team:

*Please indicate approximate number of hours per week you believe you could make available as a NSCN Volunteer Job Coach:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 hour per week | <input type="radio"/> 3 hours per week | <input type="radio"/> 5 or more hours per week |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 hours per week | <input type="radio"/> 4 hours per week | |

Please indicate if you are interested in volunteering with NSCN in other ways:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> NSCN recruiting for job seekers or job coaches | <input type="radio"/> Marketing including social media promotion |
| <input type="radio"/> Fundraising to support NSCN | <input type="radio"/> Contacting employers to engage them with NSCN |

SUBMIT

Appendix B: New Start Career Network Volunteer Career Coach Agreement and Code of Ethics²⁵

Introduction

This Agreement and Code of Ethics helps to define expectations for the New Start Career Network (NSCN) Volunteer Career Coaches (VCCs) and serves to protect both our volunteers and our NSCN member job seekers (hereafter members).

The goal of the NSCN Agreement and Code of Ethics is to establish principles that define ethical behaviors and practices of NSCN VCCs as they interact with NSCN members. The NSCN Agreement and Code of Ethics serves as a guide for those providing career coaching services so that they may understand what to expect from volunteering as career coaches and to understand their responsibilities. (A similar agreement will be provided to NSCN members who seek coaching assistance.)

The NSCN Volunteer Career Coaches' Core Principles

NSCN VCCs' principal responsibility is to help NSCN members obtain jobs by helping them navigate the labor market and to help them make the best uses of services that have been made available through NSCN.

Developing and maintaining trust are cornerstones of the relationship between VCCs and NSCN members. Career coaches respect NSCN members' rights to privacy. Career coaches solicit private information from participants only when it is beneficial to the working relationship. Career coaches protect the confidential information of prospective and current NSCN members. VCCs agree to take reasonable precautions to ensure the confidentiality of information transmitted through any electronic means. Career coaches do not share confidential information with anyone other than the director and senior associate of NSCN without NSCN member consent.

NSCN VCCs commit to the following principles:

- ▶ safeguarding the privacy of their interactions with members,
- ▶ promoting the welfare of members by helping them achieve their personal career goals,
- ▶ communicating accurate information to the best of their ability,
- ▶ avoiding imposing their personal values on members, and
- ▶ respecting the diversity of members.

Career Coaches' Responsibilities

VCCs are responsible for providing information designed to help a client with his or her specific needs, including such services as:

- ▶ reviewing résumés;
- ▶ developing networking and other effective job search strategies; and
- ▶ identifying potential careers/jobs based on values, interests, skills, and/or prior work experience of members.

VCCs are expected to provide only the services that are within the scope of their competence and qualifications. When the VCC concludes that the NSCN member would benefit from additional services outside the scope of the VCC's professional competences, he or she should consult with the NSCN director or senior associate.

Conflicts of Interest and Fees for Services

NSCN VCCs who are employed in organizations, such as consulting firms or in private practice, that provide career services agree that they will not refer NSCN members for any fee-based services in those organizations. NSCN VCCs also agree that they will not accept fees or gratuities from any NSCN member.

NSCN VCCs and members are entitled to choose whether to enter into or remain in a volunteer coaching relationship. If VCCs determine they are unable or unwilling to assist a given NSCN member, they should contact the NSCN director or senior associate so that the NSCN member may be reassigned to another VCC.

Records and Documentation

VCCs agree to collect and maintain records necessary for NSCN to track the progress of NSCN members. NSCN will provide uniform templates to assist VCCs in carrying out these responsibilities.

Virtual Career Services

NSCN VCCs and members are encouraged to choose to coach the member(s) assigned to them either by using telephone or video conferencing or face-to-face meetings.

NSCN Ongoing Support, Training, and Recognition for Volunteer Career Coaches

NSCN staff will be available for consultations with VCCs by phone, email, or in person and will arrange for periodic VCC virtual or in-person gatherings. This will enable coaches to learn from each other's experiences and help NSCN document and improve its services.

NSCN will arrange for the Mental Health Association in New Jersey to provide multiple opportunities for VCCs to attend, without charge, a nationally recognized Mental Health First Aid training course. NSCN believes this training will enhance the ability of VCCs to provide assistance to long-term unemployed job seekers.

NSCN will invite VCCs to NSCN meetings so that they may be acknowledged for their services to New Jersey's long-term unemployed job seekers. With the permission of VCCs and members, NSCN may highlight successful coaching examples on the NSCN website.

As a NSCN Volunteer Career Coach, I agree to the terms of the NSCN Agreement and Code of Ethics.

Name (print) _____

Signature & Date _____

Appendix C: Career Coach Request Form

If you are over age 45 and out of work for at least 6 months, you can use this application to apply to work with a New Start volunteer career coach. Our coaches come from many different industries and occupations and they are volunteering their time to support your job search. Coaching isn't for everyone. You should request a coach if you are ready and willing to: (1) Get honest, open feedback on your job search process. (2) Take action to make changes in your job search approach, which means you may have to step outside of your comfort zone! (3) Commit to and keep scheduled meeting dates and times with your coach. (4) Do the follow-up "homework" assignments that come up in your conversations with your coach. If you are ready to change things up and take some action, fill out the application below! Please note that if you have difficulty submitting your form, it's likely that you have exceeded the character limit on one of your answers. Please double check to ensure that no answer exceeds 500 characters, including spaces. Finally, if you receive an error message when attempting to submit your application, please review the form carefully to see what information needs to be corrected. Take note of any error messages, which will appear in bold red text. Note that an error message pertains to the question that appears BEFORE the error message.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

City: _____

County:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Atlantic | <input type="radio"/> Hudson | <input type="radio"/> Salem |
| <input type="radio"/> Bergen | <input type="radio"/> Hunterdon | <input type="radio"/> Somerset |
| <input type="radio"/> Burlington | <input type="radio"/> Mercer | <input type="radio"/> Sussex |
| <input type="radio"/> Camden | <input type="radio"/> Middlesex | <input type="radio"/> Union |
| <input type="radio"/> Cape May | <input type="radio"/> Monmouth | <input type="radio"/> Warren |
| <input type="radio"/> Cumberland | <input type="radio"/> Morris | <input type="radio"/> Other |
| <input type="radio"/> Essex | <input type="radio"/> Ocean | |
| <input type="radio"/> Gloucester | <input type="radio"/> Passaic | |

State/Province (US/Canada): _____

Postal Code: _____

What is your unemployment benefit status?

- Currently Collecting Exhausted My Benefits Have Not Received Benefits

How long have you been unemployed?

- 7-12 months 19-24 months 30-36 months More than 48 months
 13-18 months 25-29 months 37-48 months

Are you a Veteran? Yes No

What is your target job title/position? _____

What was your last job title? _____

How many hours did you work at this position per week? _____

Tell us briefly about your separation from this employer. _____

How long were you employed in your last position? _____

What was your primary occupation?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Architecture and Engineering Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Healthcare Support Occupations |
| <input type="radio"/> Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations |
| <input type="radio"/> Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Legal Occupations |
| <input type="radio"/> Business and Financial Operations Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Management Occupations |
| <input type="radio"/> Community and Social Services Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Office and Administrative Support Occupations |
| <input type="radio"/> Computer and Mathematical Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Personal Care and Service Occupations |
| <input type="radio"/> Construction and Extraction Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Production Occupations |
| <input type="radio"/> Education, Training, and Library Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Protective Service Occupations |
| <input type="radio"/> Food Preparations and Serving Related Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Sales and Related Occupations |
| <input type="radio"/> Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations | <input type="radio"/> Transportation and Material Moving Occupations |
| | <input type="radio"/> Other |

What is the highest level of education you completed?

- Did not complete high school Associate Degree Masters State Recognized Apprenticeship Program
 High School Diploma/GED Bachelor Doctorate

If you have a professional license, please describe type. _____

Do you have a current résumé? Yes No

How many job offers have you turned down since becoming unemployed?

- 0 2 4 More than 5
 1 3 5

Please explain why any offers of employment were declined. _____

How many hours a week do you spend seeking full-time employment?

- Less than 8 17-24 hours 33-40 hours
 9-16 hours 25-32 hours 40+ hours

Approximately how many jobs have you applied for in the past 3 months? _____

What job titles are you applying for? _____

What industries do you want to work in? _____

How many phone/screening interviews have you had in the past 3 months? _____

How many in person interviews have you had in the past 3 months? _____

What sources are you using at least weekly to find out about job leads?

- Indeed Careerbuilder Occupation-specific job boards Recruiters
 Monster ZipRecruiter (e.g. Dice) (e.g. Robert Half, Manpower)
 Company websites

How often do you use Job Search Websites during your job search?

- Never Not Often Sometimes Regularly

How often do you use Placement Agencies during your job search?

- Never Not Often Sometimes Regularly

How often do you use Cold Calling during your job search?

- Never Not Often Sometimes Regularly

How often do you use Professional Network during your job search?

- Never Not Often Sometimes Regularly

How often do you use Personal/Social Network during your job search?

- Never Not Often Sometimes Regularly

How often do you use Employee Referrals during your job search?

- Never Not Often Sometimes Regularly

How often do you use School Alumni Groups during your job search?

- Never Not Often Sometimes Regularly

If you were offered a full-time position, what starting salary would be acceptable?

- Less than \$20,000 \$30,001 to \$40,000 \$50,001 to \$60,000 \$70,001 to \$80,000+
 \$20,001 to \$30,000 \$40,001 to \$50,000 \$60,001 to \$70,000

How far are you willing to travel for work (one-way)?

- 0-20 miles 21-30 miles 31-60 miles

What is your primary means of transportation?

- Bus Car (relative/friend) Walk
 Car (own) Train Other

Have you ever received services at a New Jersey One-Stop Career Center? If so, what type of service(s). Select all that apply

- Occupational Skills Training Community Program Workshop
 Job Search Assistance Computer Lab Have Not Received Services

During this period of unemployment, have you returned to school or taken further training? If the answer is yes, please explain the academic program or training.

Yes No

Explain: _____

Please describe any volunteer service, unpaid internships and/or other activities you have been engaged in during this period of unemployment.

Do you have a computer and access to the Internet at home? Yes No

Are you currently registered with LinkedIn to assist in your job search? Yes No

If you have a LinkedIn Profile, please share the link to your profile below.

Do you have experience using Zoom.us, Skype or other videoconference software? Yes No

I am interested in coaching to help me...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Clarify target jobs and companies | <input type="radio"/> Set goals and stay on track in my job search |
| <input type="radio"/> Write/revise/customize my résumé | <input type="radio"/> Practice/improve my interviewing skills |
| <input type="radio"/> Write/revise/customize my cover letters | <input type="radio"/> Deal with negative emotions in the job search (anger, loss of self-confidence, feeling "down") |
| <input type="radio"/> Develop/revise my LinkedIn profile | <input type="radio"/> Deal with age bias and/or bias against long-term unemployment |
| <input type="radio"/> Develop an effective job search plan that focuses on high impact activities | <input type="radio"/> Research other career options |
| <input type="radio"/> Improve my networking/relationship-building skills | |

Tell us briefly why you think you would benefit from working with a volunteer career coach.

Briefly tell us about yourself. Think of us as an employer...what would you want us to know about you?

Are you willing to consider small group coaching (4-6 job seekers)? Yes No

SUBMIT

Appendix D: Introductory Email for Volunteer Career Coach and Job Seeker Member

Dear (MEMBER)

Please allow me to introduce you to (COACH NAME), copied on this email, who is serving as one of our New Start Career Network (NSCN) Volunteer Career Coaches and who we have assigned to work with you.

Please carefully review this email, which outlines what you can expect from your coach and what your coach can expect from you. If you are in agreement with these terms, please do a "REPLY ALL" to respond to both me and your coach to let us know that you are ready to begin working together.

Once you have confirmed your agreement, (COACH NAME) will contact you to set up your first session.

What is Coaching?

Coaching is not consulting or counseling. Consulting involves telling clients what to do. Counseling involves focusing on past issues. Career coaching is a solution-focused approach with concrete action steps to help you meet your goals. Career coaching may also involve looking at past job history, values, assessing skills, strengths and weaknesses, brainstorming, 360-feedback, and assessing if any behavioral issues could be hindering you in achieving your goals. Note: Career coaching is NOT a substitute for any mental health service. Only a qualified doctor or psychotherapist is legally allowed to diagnose a patient.

Career coaching may address specific personal projects such as taking assessments, working on cover letters, résumés, and references. Additionally, homework such as setting up or revising LinkedIn accounts, joining networking groups, and getting a professional picture may be given. Other tasks may include applying for jobs, using resources provided, tracking jobs you have applied for, and mock interviews. By entering this agreement, the coach and New Start member acknowledge that the member wants to make significant progress and change in his/her job search and that the member is committed to taking action to meet their goals.

What to Expect from NSCN Coaches

NSCN has recruited volunteers with backgrounds that include human resources, recruiting, education, coaching, and counseling to work with job seekers. Please keep in mind that they are volunteers, not paid staff of the New Start Career Network. While some are retired or have flexible schedules, many of them have full-time jobs, which will limit the times during which they are available to help you.

The NSCN Volunteer Coaches have agreed to provide support to your job search by:

- ▶ helping you use the resources on the NSCN website;
- ▶ reviewing your résumé and providing you with feedback;
- ▶ helping you prepare for interviews;
- ▶ helping you develop networking and other effective job search strategies; and
- ▶ identifying potential careers or jobs based on your values, interests, skills, and prior work experience.

All coaches have agreed to:

- ▶ safeguard the privacy of their interactions with NSCN job seeker members;
- ▶ promote the welfare of NSCN job seeker members by helping them achieve their personal career goals;
- ▶ communicate accurate information to the best of their ability; and
- ▶ avoid imposing their personal values on members.

NSCN volunteer coaches who are employed in organizations such as consulting firms or in private practice that provide career services have agreed that they will not refer NSCN members to any fee-based services in those organizations. NSCN volunteer coaches also agree that they will not accept fees or gratuities from any NSCN member.

Duration of Coaching

You will have the opportunity to work with your coach until _____.

Meeting Policy

All NSCN coaches are volunteers and are giving their time and attention to helping you in your job search. With this in mind, we expect that members will keep all scheduled appointments, only canceling or rescheduling for emergencies. We also expect that if a meeting must be canceled, members will notify their coaches via email or phone PRIOR TO THE MEETING that they will need to reschedule.

If you miss 2 meetings without contacting your coach (you are a "no-show" with no communication), we will assume that you are no longer interested in coaching and will re-assign your coach to another member.

What Your NSCN Coach can Expect from You

We ask you as a NSCN job seeker member to commit to the following:

- ▶ Attending scheduled meetings and notifying your coach ahead of time if you are going to be late or need to miss an appointment.
- ▶ Responding to phone calls and emails from your coach in a timely fashion (within 24 hours).
- ▶ Completing between-meeting assignments agreed to with your coach. Do not agree to any assignments or actions that you don't intend to complete.
- ▶ Taking responsibility for your own job search activities, recognizing that the coach is there to provide feedback and support but that he/she is not responsible for setting your goals or conducting your job search.
- ▶ Being willing to step out of your "comfort zone" and try approaches that may feel uncomfortable, but that may bring better results than your previous efforts.
- ▶ Communicating with your coach or reaching out to me if you have concerns about the coaching relationship.
- ▶ Understanding that your NSCN volunteer coach will be available to you on average 1 hour per week for a 3-month period. The period can be extended beyond 3 months if both you and your coach agree.
- ▶ Providing feedback to NSCN such as completing brief surveys about your experience as a job seeker working with a coach and informing NSCN if you have accepted a new job.

We recommend you view this NSCN video on How to Get the Most From Working with Your NSCN Volunteer Coach:

<https://vimeo.com/168798504/fe3b3073aa>

The Coach/Job Seeker Relationship

During the coach/member matching process, we do our best to match members and coaches based on member goals, preferred communication styles, background, and experience. Both the volunteer coaches and NSCN job seeker members can choose whether to enter into or remain in a volunteer coaching relationship. If you or the coach feels you are unable to work effectively together, you should contact me and you may be reassigned to another coach if one is currently available.

We urge NSCN job seekers to respect the time and effort of the volunteer coaches, as well as their own job search efforts, by fully committing to the process. We have found that you will be most successful in working with a coach if you are clear about your goals and work on a regular basis with your coach to achieve those goals.

Again, please respond to this email with a "REPLY ALL" to indicate your agreement.

Thank you very much.

Notes

- ¹ <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/1-4-million-unemployed-for-27-weeks-or-longer-in-may-2022.htm>
- ² Bureau of Labor Statistics. States: Unemployed people by duration of unemployment, 1990–2020p annual averages. Unpublished data shared by Susan Campolongo by email, March 4, 2021.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Estimates from the New Jersey Department of Labor based on Unemployment Insurance exhaustee data.
- ⁵ <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2015/long-term-unemployment/home.htm>
- ⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics. States: Unemployed people by duration of unemployment, 1990–2020p annual averages. Unpublished data shared by Susan Campolongo by email, March 4, 2021.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ NSCN member survey, 2018.
- ⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3702026/>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3547020/>
- ¹¹ <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2015/02/personality-unemployment#>
- ¹² https://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/2020-10/Work_Trends_September_2014_0.pdf
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ R. Ghayad. 2013. *Escaping the unemployment trap: Does industry-specific human capital matter? Evidence from a field experiment*. Northeastern University and Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.
- ¹⁵ <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2015/long-term-unemployment/home.htm>
- ¹⁶ Estimates from the New Jersey Department of Labor based on Unemployment Insurance exhaustee data.
- ¹⁷ <https://blog.aarp.org/thinking-policy/many-jobseekers-long-term-unemployed>
- ¹⁸ <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2015/improving-education-training-older-workers-AARP-ppi.pdf>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6144510/>
- ²⁰ <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-much-does-career-coaching-cost>
- ²¹ <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.692.6736&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- ²² <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/31/fact-sheet-opportunity-all-president-s-call-action-give-long-term-unempl>
- ²³ https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/best_practices_recruiting_longterm_unemployed.pdf
- ²⁴ <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/about-deloitte/us-employer-handbook-recruiting-and-hiring-the-long-term-unemployed.pdf>
- ²⁵ Adapted from the National Career Development Association 2015 NCDA Code of Ethics.