



# Enhancing Employee Competitiveness for Quality Jobs

April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025



# Continuing Education Week – April 7<sup>th</sup> to April 10<sup>th</sup>



A large blue outline of a clipboard with a circular clip at the top center. Inside the clipboard frame, the text "SESSION OBJECTIVES:" is centered at the top, followed by a bulleted list of four objectives.

## SESSION OBJECTIVES:

- ☐ Build peer connections
- ☐ Reflect on how your ESE is improving long terms outcomes for its employees
- ☐ Identify an opportunity to increase employee competitiveness
- ☐ Hear from a peer on how they are innovating to support young adults in achieving their dreams.



# What's our roadmap?

- 1) Framework for thinking about increasing employee competitiveness
- 2) Making the case “The Why”
- 3) Conversation with
- 4) Discussion

**MORE**  
**THAN WORDS**

# Introductions



**Galiana Fajardo**  
*Facilitator*  
*Sr. Principal Capacity*  
*Building*  
*REDF*



**Leanne Goff**  
*Guest Speaker*  
*Director of Career Services*  
*More Than Words*



**Adam Paltrineri**  
*Guest Speaker*  
*Senior Career Services*  
*Manager*  
*More Than Words*



**Cy**  
*Guest Speaker*  
*Graduate*  
*More Than Words*



# The What

What do we mean by increasing ESE employee competitiveness?

→ Taking a long-term view by preparing ESE employees while engaged with the ESE to gain the skills, knowledge, and resources to be successful if and/or when an employee leaves the ESE and competes in the traditional labor market while also preventing backtracking

Strategies to improve employee competitiveness are dependent on **intensity of intervention** and **who you're trying to influence**

High  
intensity

401K/B  
Industry recognized credentials,  
certifications, Apprenticeship  
Digital literacy  
Job retention support  
Increasing work hours  
Onsite GED / HISET support  
Rotational Job Experience

Low  
intensity

Audience: Participant employee

High  
intensity

Influencing policy for favorable  
decisions for focus population  
College credits for working at ESE  
Trauma Informed Care training for  
employer partners  
Partnership with community college  
Employer Advisory Committee  
Proactive Job Placement

Low  
intensity

Audience: Outside of ESE

# Reflection & Share out

What has your ESE done  
in the past to increase  
employee  
competitiveness?

Please type in the chat



# The Why





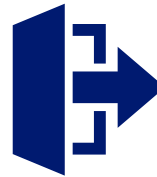
# ...and there is data to support this...



Hours matter



Relationships matter



Positive exits matter



Length of  
employment matters



Skill level impact



# QUALITY JOBS FOR YOUTH

More Than Words Career Services  
Program & Bridge Funding

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# WHO WE ARE

**More Than Words is a nonprofit social enterprise that empowers youth 16-24 who are in the foster care system, court-involved, experiencing homeless, or out of school to take charge of their lives by taking charge of a business.**

**Boston & Waltham  
(& now  
Cambridge!),  
Massachusetts**

**\$4M in earned  
revenues**

**318 youth  
served  
in FY24**





# OUR MODEL

## CORE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PROGRAM



### READINESS

6-12 weeks of front-ended assessment and supportive services to get ready for job training



### BUSINESS JOB

A paid job to build skills and self-efficacy running online and retail businesses selling pre-loved books and clothing



### YOU JOB & SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Youth development and life skills curriculum; case management around complex challenges



### CAREER SERVICES

Long-term support to chart a path to a living wage; education and employment help





EMPLOYMENT

EDUCATION

TRANSPORTATION

HOUSING

HEALTH & WELLNESS

SUPPORT NETWORK

FINANCIAL WELLNESS

COURT NAVIGATION

SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT

PARENTING

# 10 DOMAINS

Stability that all people need to thrive; each domain has progress thresholds at every stage of our model

## EXAMPLE: FINANCIAL WELLNESS

- **Readiness:** Set up accounts in the More Than Words system to schedule job shifts and receive paychecks.
- **Core:** Have an active bank account and an updated budget.
- **Career Services:** Proactively budget, save, and use credit to achieve financial and career goals.



# CAREER SERVICES

Starts in Core Program....

and lasts for 2+ years after graduation

- Career and education planning
- 3-2-1 process
- Resume, cover letter, mock interview
- Site visits & PSE applications
- Job search
- Job & PSE search, retention services
- \$1K Incentive
- Bridge Funding
- Short- & long-term employment at More Than Words

## THRESHOLDS

### EMPLOYMENT

Obtain a job with opportunity for growth into living-wage (\$22+/hr) salary.

### EDUCATION

Complete a post-secondary education program or be active, attending, and on track to graduate high school.

### TRANSPORTATION

Reliably access affordable transportation between work, school, and home.

### HOUSING

Remain safely housed with a 12+ month housing plan; take steps towards longer-term housing.

### HEALTH & WELLNESS

Have insurance; reliably access preventative care, mental health supports (if needed), and personal wellness activities.

### SUPPORT NETWORK

Have a reliable network of people to count on, including with housing, health, and financial support.

### FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Proactively budget, save, and use credit to achieve financial and career goals.

### COURT NAVIGATION

Attend all court dates, understand and meet all parole/diversion obligations, secure an outcome that minimizes future impacts, avoid new court involvement.

### SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT

Complete empowered transitions from foster care; access maximum possible benefits from system involvement.


### PARENTING

Secure childcare (with a back-up plan) for 6+ months; access resources and support to balance parenting and professional advancement.







# BRIDGE FUNDING

- Cash assistance to cover tuition and living expenses as grads pursue PSE and training that will advance them toward a living-wage career.
- Work together to ID relevant programs, develop a budget, and create a contract outlining expectations.
- Refillable PEX Debit Card = autonomy, dignity, and flexibility to manage their own financial needs.



**Since launch, bridge funding participants saw their hourly wage increase by \$5.22/hour, or \$10,850 annually! The average investment by More Than Words was only \$3,108 per contract.**









## WE DO / YOU DO CONTRACTS

More Than Words		Bridge Funding Contract	
Overview of Application Process			
Here you will find an overview of what your expected contributions are during this application process. In other words...		MTW's expected commitments during the application process.	
	<b>You Do</b>	<b>We Do</b>	
<b>Initial Research</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Demonstrate interest in desired program either through an info session, site visit, etc. and discuss with CS team.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Review/discuss career interests and pathways with you.</li></ul>	
<b>Program Details</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Review all program information with CS (name, length, cost, barriers, etc.).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Discuss program fit, requirements, deadlines, barriers/supports, and outcomes upon program completion.</li></ul>	
<b>Financial Details</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Discuss financial needs and responsibilities in/out of the program.</li><li>□ Complete budget form with CS team.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Work with you to understand financial needs and determine proper amount of funding needed.</li><li>□ Assist in budget development.</li></ul>	
<b>Finalize Contract</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Sign Contract</li><li>□ Uphold Contract</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Finalize contract, bridge funding amount, disbursement schedule.</li><li>□ Sign Contract</li><li>□ Uphold Contract</li></ul>	

More Than Words

Bridge Funding Contract

Finalize Contract

Category	You Do	We Do	Our Plan
<div>Education</div> <div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<div>Income</div> <div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<div>Housing</div> <div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<div>Childcare</div> <div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<div>Transportation</div> <div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<div>Technology</div> <div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<div>Support</div> <div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<div>Long-term Planning</div> <div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Your Turn

How might your  
ESE further  
increase employee  
long-term  
competitiveness?



# Design an Experiment - EXAMPLE

**Background:** There are more and more ESE participant employees that have left in recent months who are returning to our ESE because they lost their job.

**Challenge Question:** How might I support retention for alumni who have graduated from our ESE within the last three months?

**Identify the idea:** I'd like to focus on post-ESE employment retention

**Define the test:** I'd like my program lead and business manager to meet regularly to explore if we can do a better job matching ESE employees with prospective jobs. My theory is that people are leaving their job because they don't feel confident they will be successful in it. (Based on feedback I received from alum)

**Design the test:** For the next 10 ESE employees who are 2 months away from graduating, I'd like to offer some employees enhanced employment matching services.

**Define success:** There is an 100% 4 month retention in the 5 employees who received job matching support compared to our current retention rate of 60%







# Small Group Activity:

1. Share your experiments with your group. Explain WHY you decided to focus on this area of ESE employment.
2. Provide feedback and ideas to your peers

**Thank you!**

