EXCITE - 3 IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT REPORT

Efficacy of Poverty Competency Training

University of Idaho
WWAMI Medical Education

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

II **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**
Summary of the efficacy of the Poverty Competency Training

III **EXCITE - 3 IMPLEMMENTATION**
Brief overview of the Poverty Competency Training as well as the purpose of this report.

1 **DEMOGRAPHICS**
Demographic information of individuals who attended the training

3 **PRE/POST SURVEY**
Includes pre and post results from respondents

9 **OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS**
Additional insights from open ended questions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The share of participants who agreed “welfare makes people lazy” dropped pre to post survey from 31% to 8%
- The share of participants who agreed to the statement “My organization adequately prepares its employees to serve clients who are experiencing poverty” rose from 61% to 78%
- 100% of participants agree that training “improved my confidence in serving clients experiencing poverty” and that “participation was a valuable use of my time”
- 93% of participants plan to change the way they interact with clients experiencing poverty, as a result of the training. Some ways that participants referenced included: hands-on support, nonjudgmental listening and empathy, effective communication, and a utilizing a strengths-based approach.
- Anticipated barriers to incorporating the material learned in the training: time, communication, resources, personal bias, and policy and political factors.

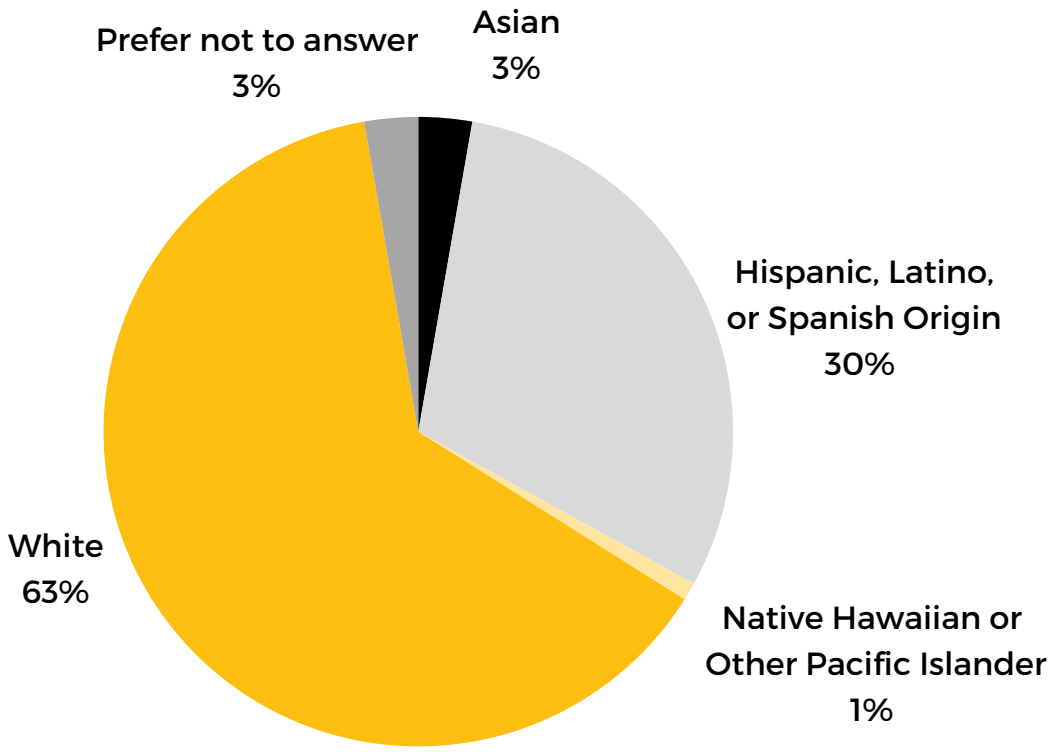
EXCITE - 3 IMPLEMENTATION

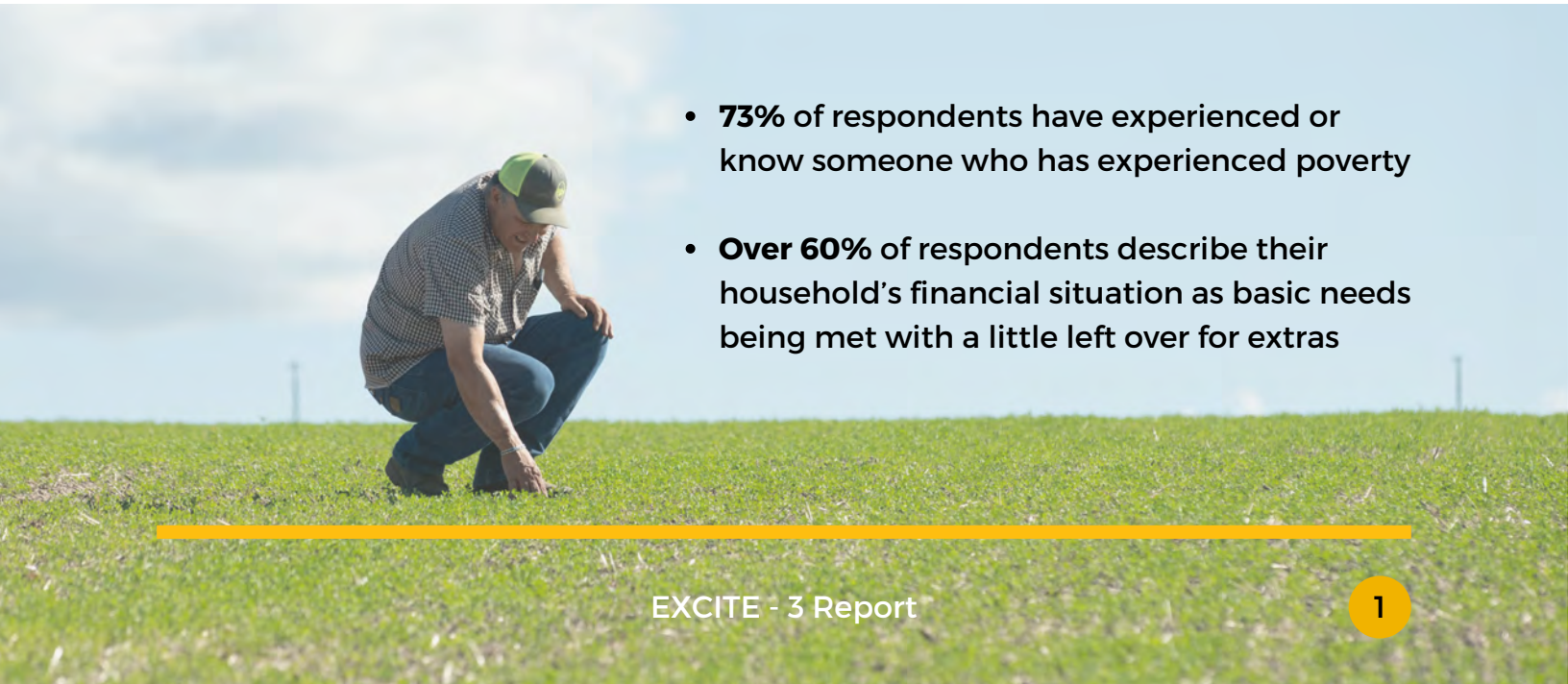
As a component of the Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching & Engagement (**EXCITE**) Project, the University of Idaho Extension Team conducted **Poverty Competency Training** for public health staff. The training, based on Dr. Donna Beegle's "If Not Me, Then Who" curriculum, aimed to enhance understanding and awareness of poverty-related issues. Participants were invited to complete pre- and post-surveys.

The purpose of the survey was to examine perceptions, attitudes, and reflections on serving individuals experiencing poverty, as well as the efficacy of poverty competency training. It seeks to identify notable barriers faced by this demographic, effective strategies for engagement, and reflections on prior interactions with a view to implementing newfound knowledge. Additionally, it aims to anticipate and address potential challenges in applying skills acquired from poverty competency training, informing future training initiatives and service provision approaches.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of **110 trainees** responded to the Efficacy of Poverty Competency Training survey. On average, respondents were 41 years old and 87% were female. Additional demographic information is presented below.





- **73%** of respondents have experienced or know someone who has experienced poverty
- **Over 60%** of respondents describe their household's financial situation as basic needs being met with a little left over for extras

REASONS FOR PARTICPATING

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN OR BETTER UNDERSTAND FROM YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE POVERTY COMPETENCY TRAINING?

UNDERSTANDING AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

To better understand poverty, empathize with people experiencing it, and learn how to communicate effectively and respectfully.

> ...how to be a voice for those living in poverty and educate decision makers on their struggles and needs and the importance of addressing poverty in every community

ACCESSING RESOURCES & MEANINGFUL SUPPORT

To learn about available resources for people living in poverty, as well strategies for offering meaningful support

SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

To become better equipped to advocate for individuals and families in need, with a goal of breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering people to succeed.

> I'm hoping to better understand how to communicate with clients experiencing poverty, how to emphasize with them and how to support them

GENERATE COMMUNITY-LEVEL AND POLICY CHANGE

To drive policy changes to reduce poverty rates, and make outreach efforts more effective in targeting and assisting populations experiencing poverty

PRE VS. POST SURVEY

PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY

Respondents were asked their level of agreement to a variety of statements related to their perception of poverty, excerpted from Yun and Weaver's Attitudes Towards Poverty Scale. Responses were recorded on a 6-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). Pre and post training results are presented below, followed by the difference between means.

Item	Pre	Post	Change
I believe people living in poverty have a different set of values than do other people	2.7	2.9	6.2%
People living in poverty think they deserve to be supported	2.6	2.4	-6.5%
People experience poverty due to circumstances beyond their control	4.1	4.2	3.2%
Welfare makes people lazy	2.7	2.0	-25.5%
There is a lot of fraud among welfare recipients	3.1	2.5	-18.9%
I would support a program that resulted in higher taxes to support social programs for people living in poverty	3.3	3.8	13.7%

Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat disagree, 4 = Somewhat agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly agree

The share of respondents who agreed to the statement "welfare makes people lazy" dropped pre to post survey

31% > 8%

Yun SH, Weaver RD. Development and Validation of A Short Form of the Attitude Toward Poverty Scale. Adv Soc Work. 2010;11(2):174-187. doi:10.18060/437

KNOWLEDGE OF POVERTY

Respondents were asked to respond to a variety of statements related to their knowledge of poverty using a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = not at all knowledgeable; 5 = extremely knowledgeable). Pre and post training results are presented below.

SKILLS IN SERVING CLIENTS

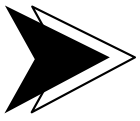
Respondents were asked to rate their skill levels related to serving clients experiencing poverty using a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = no skills; 5 = extremely skilled). Pre and post training results are presented below.

SELF + ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICACY

96% of respondents agreed that their organization could **benefit from training** about how to effectively serve clients who are experiencing poverty

Item	Pre	Post	Change
I am effective in working with clients who are experiencing poverty	4.1	4.5	10%
I am effective in educating clients who are experiencing poverty about health-related concerns	3.9	4.3	9.4%
My organization adequately prepares its employees to serve clients who are experiencing poverty	2.7	3.2	19.6%

Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat disagree, 4 = Somewhat agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly agree

61%  **78%**

The share of participants who agreed to the statement **"My organization adequately prepares its employees to serve clients who are experiencing poverty"** in Pre vs. Post surveys

TRAINING IMPACT

Respondents were asked to respond to a variety of statements related how the training better equiped them to serve clients experiencing poverty using a 6-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree).

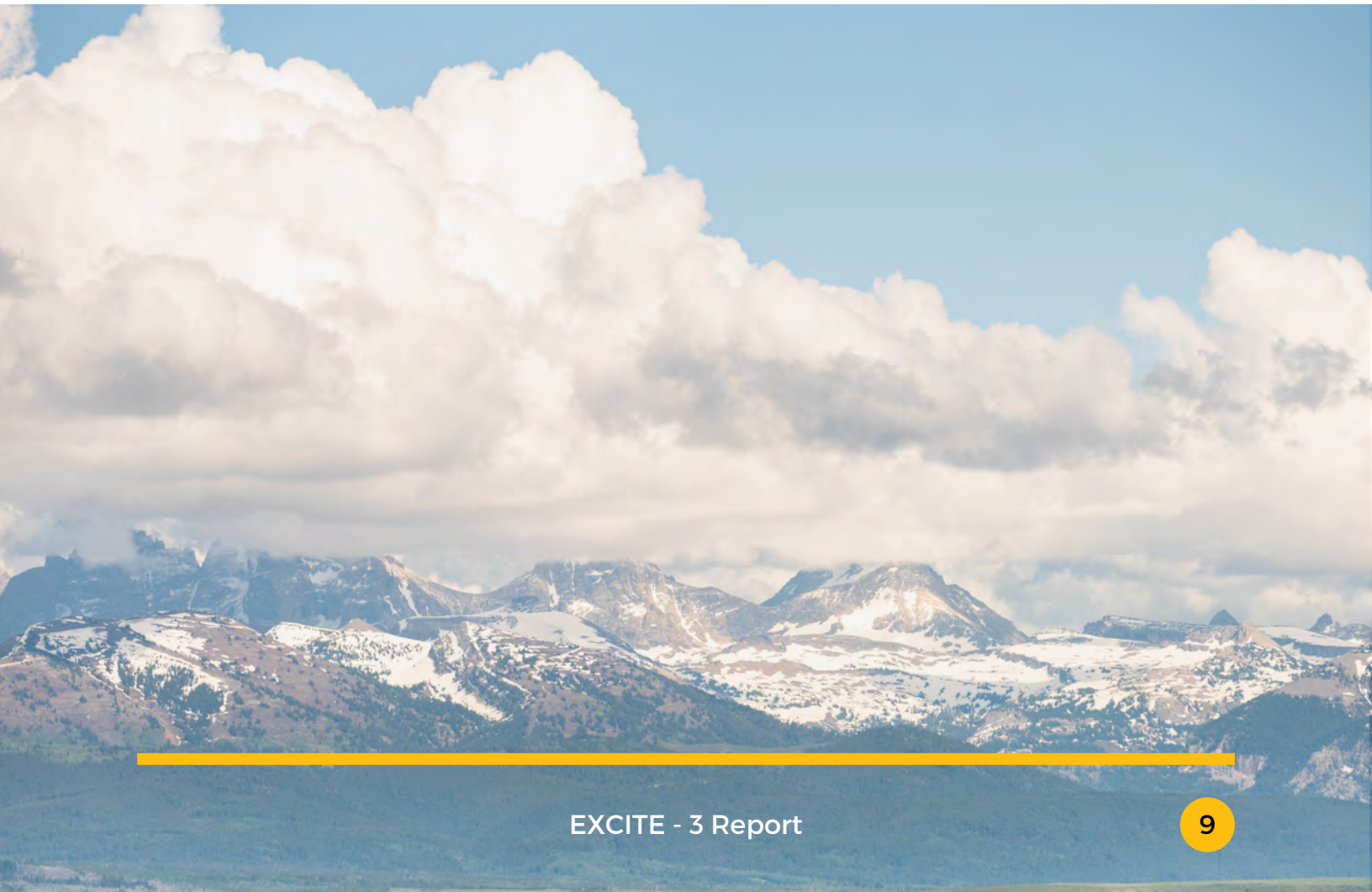
100% of participants agree that training "**improved my confidence** in serving clients experiencing poverty" and that "participation was a valuable use of my time"

Item	Mean
The training improved my confidence in serving clients experiencing poverty	5.1
The training improved my confidence in providing health education to clients who are experiencing poverty	5.0
The leadership of my org is committed to serving community members experiencing poverty	5.5
I feel confident in my ability to apply the strategies I learned during the training	5.0
As a result of what I learned in the training, I plan to change the way I interact with clients experiencing poverty	5.0
Participation was a valuable use of my time	5.5
The training shed light on the challenges that I encounter in my professional role	5.2
I would recommend that a colleague at another organization complete the poverty competency training	5.5

Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat disagree, 4 = Somewhat agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly agree

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

This section provides insight into key inquiries regarding the challenges and effective strategies in serving individuals experiencing poverty, drawing insights from training reflections. It highlights the identification of notable barriers faced by those in poverty, strategies for effective engagement, and reflections on prior interactions with a view to implementing newfound knowledge. Additionally, it addresses anticipated challenges in applying skills acquired from poverty competency training, emphasizing the importance of proactive planning for successful implementation.



1 WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST NOTABLE BARRIERS FACE BY PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY?

Responses from participants fell into the following three themes:

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Lack of education and awareness about available resources combined with bureaucratic barriers.

> People living in poverty don't feel like they have any talents slash skills that can be used to earn a living. They don't know their strengths and potential and they don't have connections with others who can support them

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Limited access to transportation inhibits individuals from accessing employment opportunities, healthcare, and support services. Low-wage work coupled with rising costs (housing, childcare, etc.) adds economic precarity.

STIGMA AND JUDGEMENT

Stigma and judgment from society, including misconceptions about poverty and individuals experiencing it, create psychological barriers that hinder access to support and opportunities.

> For some it's all they've known, so figuring out how to start making steps to get out is beyond their reach. For others, it's a significant or multiple significant events out of their control that throw them into poverty.... Hopelessness is a huge barrier.

2 CAN YOU DESCRIBE A STRATEGY (OR STRATEGIES) THAT IS EFFECTIVE FOR CONNECTING WITH AND/OR SERVING A CLIENT WHO IS EXPERIENCING POVERTY?

Responses from participants fell into the following three themes:

EMPATHY AND ACTIVE LISTENING

"Sympathize and be there to listen. Don't assume you know the answers to their life or make assumptions about who they are and how they got to the place they are in currently."

SUPPORT HOW THEY NEED IT

"Approaching with curiosity and genuine interest, do not assume you know what will "fix" their problem." | "Meet them at their level. Don't try to force things on them."

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

"Making a connection personally with them, standing in awe of the person you are talking with, and doing your best to reframe." | "Point out the good that they have done or the good qualities that they have."

PERSONALLY CONNECT TO RESOURCES

"To not just provide information of organizations that can help them. Give them guidance and help with a phone call or paper work."

3 CAN YOU REFLECT ON A PRIOR INTERACTION WITH SOMEONE EXPERIENCING POVERTY THAT YOU MIGHT HANDLE DIFFERENTLY, AS A RESULT OF KNOWLEDGE OR UNDERSTANDING YOU GAINED DURING THE TRAINING?

Three illustrative responses:

- I interact with a patient of mine (who is experiencing generational poverty) on a weekly basis and have noticed that we seemed to have very different communication styles. Instead of feeling as though the patient is angry with me, unfocused, or very emotional during our visits, I can now understand that she is trying to communicate with me in a very authentic way and working to form a bond with me. Simply knowing that she adheres more to the "oral culture" traditions whereas I operate in the "print culture" mindset has allowed me to reframe my perception of our time together. I am excited to see her next with a better understanding.

- I didn't recognize that anger is a manifestation of fear. This helped me immediately after the training during a staff training on upcoming policy changes. We discussed how the changes might be received and how to say things to reduce fear.

- I had a client that had answered yes to the "Have you run out of money to buy food" question. I handed her a list of local resources and checked her out. I could have spent 5 more minutes to share my knowledge on food banks and soup kitchens. I could have also offered information on other programs rather than just handing her a piece of paper with phone numbers.

4 IF YOU PLAN TO CHANGE THE WAY YOU INTERACT WITH CLIENTS EXPERIENCING POVERTY, PLEASE EXPLAIN THE CHANGE(S) YOU PLAN TO MAKE:

"As a result of what I learned in the training, I plan to change the way I interact with clients experiencing poverty"

93%
AGREE

HANDS-ON SUPPORT AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

Provide direct assistance instead of just offering information or referrals; follow through with resources personally.

NONJUDGMENTAL LISTENING AND EMPATHY

Listen without judgment, understand their values and needs, and offer empathetic support

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Communicate for understanding, meet individuals where they are, prioritize their needs, and make services more accessible.

STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH AND PERSONALIZATION

Focus on strengths, personalize support based on individual needs and preferences.

5 DO YOU ANTICIPATE ENCOUNTERING ANY CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING THE SKILLS YOU LEARNED IN THE POVERTY COMPETENCY TRAINING? IF YES: PLEASE DESCRIBE THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS YOU BELIEVE YOU MAY ENCOUNTER.

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Being too busy, not having enough time to devote to individual clients

> Some days it may be hard to empathize with someone, especially if emotion comes into play and they are angry at me. I need to remember that it is not about me

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Effective communication was identified as a hurdle, including difficulties in communicating with clients, forgetting how to communicate due to being overwhelmed, and the need for intentional efforts to communicate effectively.

RESOURCE ACCESS AND KNOWLEDGE

Limited access to resources and knowledge of community resources were highlighted as obstacles, along with concerns about not having enough strategies or resources to handle different client situations.

> not being willing or brave enough to follow through

PERSONAL BIAS AND JUDGEMENT

Overcoming personal biases and beliefs about poverty; dealing with clients who may not be receptive to assistance.

POLICY AND POLITICAL FACTORS

Politics, policies determining time and funding allocation, and challenges in implementing policy changes as significant barriers to change implementation

> Politics/policies in place determining what we can do with our time and funding

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