

# WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS JAM

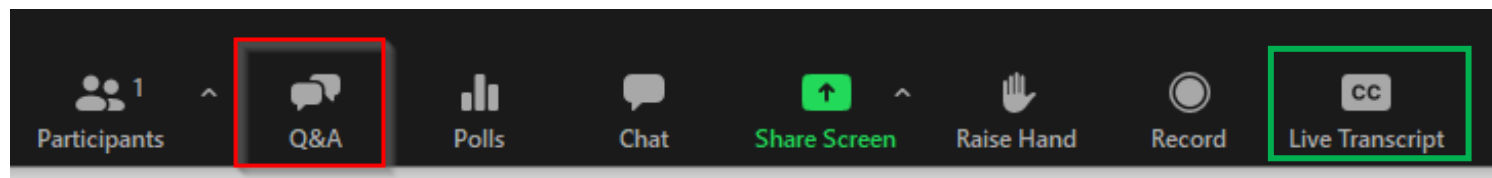
NOVEMBER 18, 2025

**Resilience in Action 2<sup>nd</sup> Session:  
Applied Improvisation and Strengthening  
Relational Responsiveness**



# Housekeeping & Accessibility

- Please introduce yourself in chat: Name, location, organization
- A recording and slides will be emailed to you within the week
- ASL interpretation is being provided at this event - the ASL interpreter will be spotlighted
- **Live captioning** is available – click the "show captions" button to see the transcript
- If you have technical difficulty, please chat "Hosts and Panelists" to try to troubleshoot
- **Q&A** is available – click on the Q&A feature to ask a question or upvote



# Chat Code of Conduct

Welcome! This is a respectful, inclusive space for shared learning.

Engagement is encouraged – please share resources and reflections in chat!

Please keep comments:

- **Relevant** to the topic
- **Respectful** of all identities and perspectives
- **Free of hate speech, spam or promotions**

Inappropriate comments will be removed.

Thanks for contributing to a thoughtful discussion!





NATIONAL COUNCIL  
*for Mental Wellbeing*

HMA


 The College for Behavioral  
Health Leadership

# What is the Workforce Solutions Jam?

## **A monthly webinar to build national momentum and encourage collaboration through The Workforce Solutions Partnership**

- Learn innovative new practices
- Stay informed about ongoing efforts
- Engage with subject matter experts
- Hear about new legislation
- Take action!





today:

**Resilience in Action**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Session**

*Applied Improvisation and  
Strengthening Relational  
Responsiveness*



# Agenda

Welcome

Topic Introduction

Innovative Insights and Demo

Q&A

Next Steps

# Chat Waterfall – let's hear from you!



*How do you see the need for **resilience** arising in your work?*

1. Type in your answer in chat
2. Wait to hit enter until we say go!

# Topic Introduction



# Meet Our Speakers



**Suzanne Daub, LCSW**

Principal, Health Management Associates



**Gina Lasky** \**Moderator*

Managing Director for Behavioral Health,  
Health Management Associates

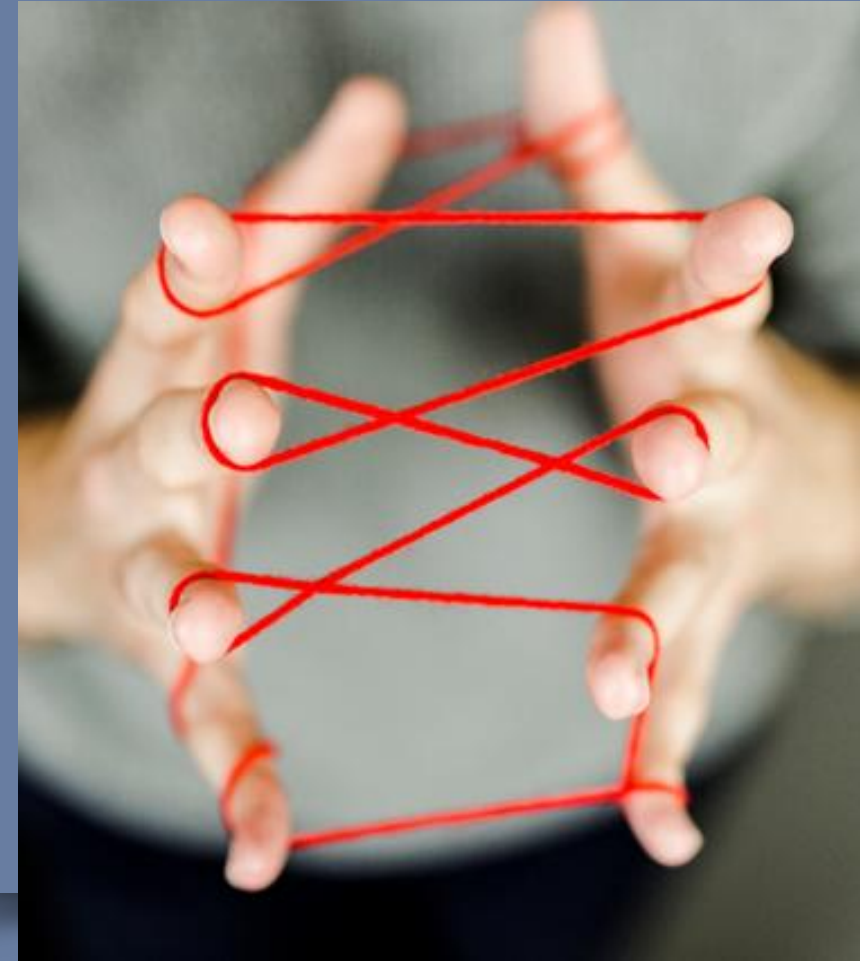


**Marsha Johnson, LCSW**

Coach and Consultant

# Improv in Behavioral Health

STRENGTHENING EMPATHY,  
COLLABORATION AND  
ADAPTABILITY






# WHAT IS APPLIED IMPROV?

The use of improvisation techniques and principles outside of traditional theater or comedy settings.



# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IMPROVISE ALL DAY, EVERY DAY!



BH providers continually face unpredictable, emotionally charged situations

- Strengthens deep listening and presence
- Promotes empathy and non-judgmental response
- Builds collaboration and creative problem-solving
- Supports flexibility in uncertain or changing situations
- Fosters psychological safety and trust within teams



# GROUNDING IMPROV IN EVIDENCE: WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR

## Clinical Training

A 2023 pilot showed a 6-week improv workshop reduced burnout in psychiatry residents.

## Adolescent Anxiety and Uncertainty

A 2023 study found improvisational theater reduced social anxiety and uncertainty intolerance in adolescents.

## Dementia Caregivers

Two small studies found improv training reduced depression and burden among Alzheimer's family caregivers.

## PTSD treatment

A 2021 randomized trial in Japan found that adding one session of Applied Improv (AIM) to a behavioral activation therapy improved treatment motivation in teens with PTSD (post-disaster).

## Autism

Emerging research supports theatre-based improv to enhance social participation in individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

# THE CORE RULES OF IMPROV

## IMPROV ISN'T RANDOM

- Agreement: "Yes"
- Contribution: "And"
- Presence: Embrace the moment.
- Collaboration: Work together to create something new.
- Support: Make your partner(s) look good.

**NO DENIAL**  
**NO QUESTIONS**



# THREE KEY IMPROV STRATEGIES

- **Attune:** Being present in the moment
- **Affirm:** Acknowledge, support, validate
- **Advance:** Move the interaction forward



## AND THIS IS ALL DONE THROUGH “GIFTS”

- You don't have to be amazing (... or quick, funny, smart, clever, original, creative etc.)
- You know everything you need to know.
- You have everything you need.
- You don't have to be funny.
- There are no mistakes, only gifts, and opportunities.



# “YES, AND”: THE FOUNDATIONAL IMPROV SKILL



Accepting  
what others  
offer



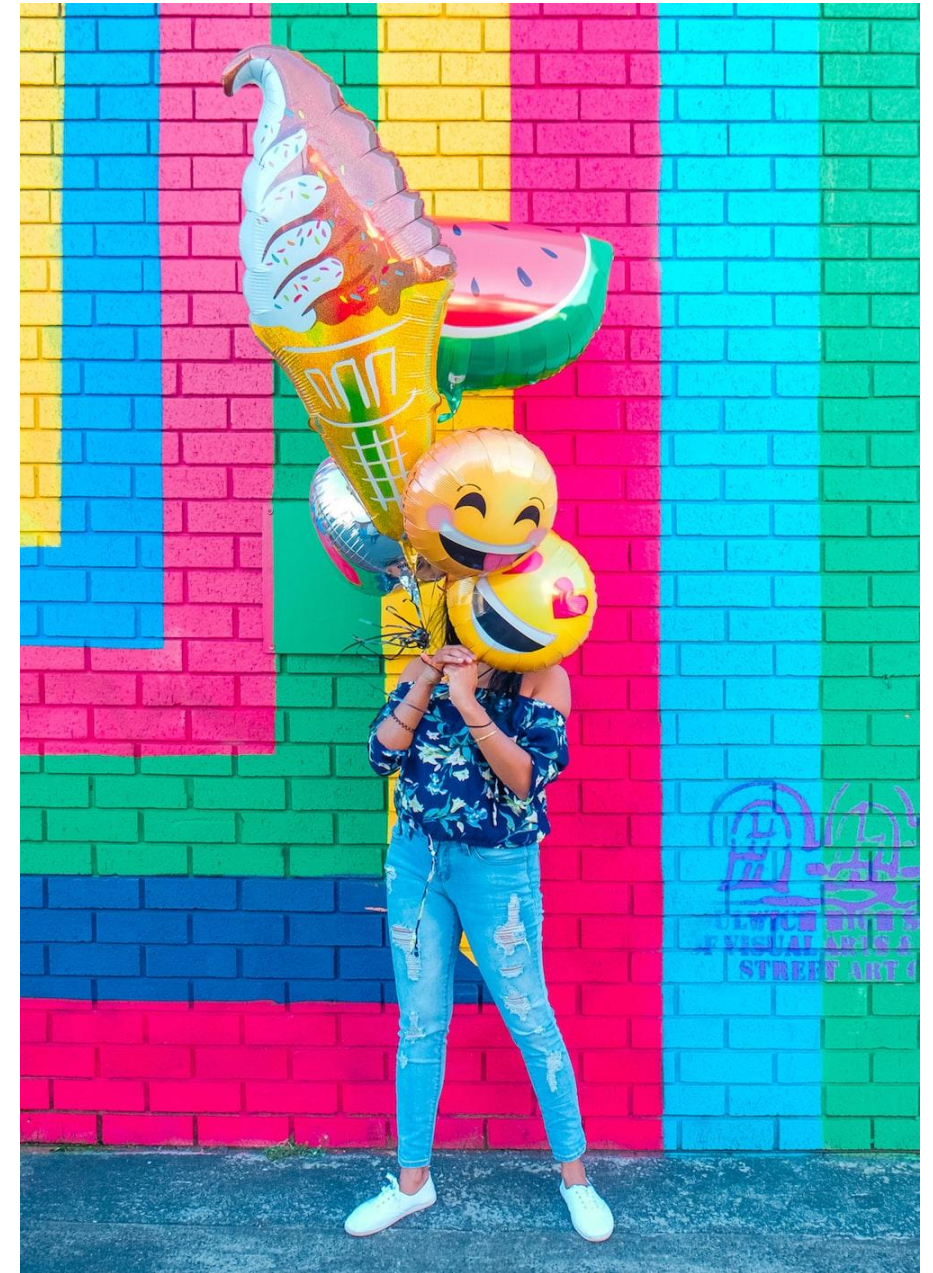
Building on it



Encourages  
collaboration,  
trust and  
innovation

# “YES, AND”

- Let’s go to the movies for my birthday
- *Yes, and let’s buy popcorn*
- *Yes, and let’s bake cookies for the other people in our row*
- *Yes, and let’s get everyone to sing “happy birthday” before the movie starts*



# I CAN'T AGREE!

- *Do I still have to “Yes, And?”*
  - You can accept what they are offering and build on it to move the discussion forward.

**Client:** “I plan to go to a rave tomorrow night. It’ll be the first time seeing my friends since rehab. I’ve been so isolated.”

**Case Manager:** “Yes, reconnecting with friends sounds important for you, social support really matters. And I’m also hearing a possible risk; how might you plan to protect your recovery while you’re there?”

**Employee:** “I don’t see the point of attending another team meeting. Nothing ever changes, and it just takes time away from my clients.”

**Supervisor:** “Yes, it can feel discouraging when meetings don’t seem productive. And I’d like to hear your ideas on how we could make them more useful — maybe we can redesign the agenda, so the discussion better supports your client work.”

A photograph of three people jumping joyfully in a snowy field. The person on the left is a woman with glasses and a brown jacket, the person in the middle is a man in a blue jacket and cap, and the person on the right is a man in a black t-shirt. They are all smiling and have their arms raised. The background shows a snowy landscape with trees and a building.

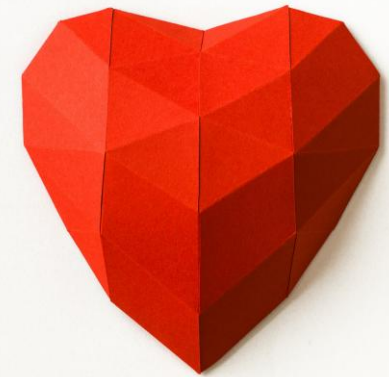
# **“YES, AND” LIVE DEMONSTRATION**

# References

- A Pilot Experience with Improvisational Theater to Reduce Burnout in Psychiatric Residency, Jeff Katzman, Eric Weiss, Cesar J. Ojeda, William Katzman, Peter Felsman, *Creative Education* Vol.14 No.5, May 31, 2023
- Peter Felsman, Colleen M. Seifert, Brandy Sinco, Joseph A. Himle, Reducing social anxiety and intolerance of uncertainty in adolescents with improvisational theater, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, Volume 82, 2023, 101985, ISSN 0197-4556, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2022.101985>.  
(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019745562200106X>)
- Kemp CL, Craft Morgan J, Bender AA, Hill AM, Anglin E, Burgess EO, Epps F, Perkins MM. "Just Join Them": Improv and Dementia Care. *J Appl Gerontol*. 2024 Mar;43(3):302-309. doi: 10.1177/073346482312031
- Sugiyama, C., Koseki, S., Niikawa, Y., Ito, D., Takahashi, F., & Ishikawa, R. (2021). Applied improvisation enhances the effects of behavioral activation on symptoms of depression and PTSD in high school students affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 687906. Epub 2023 Nov 6. PMID: 37933156; PMCID: PMC11267974.
- Maas, C. (2019). Improvisational Theatre and Occupational Therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 68(1), 10–25.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2019.1634793>

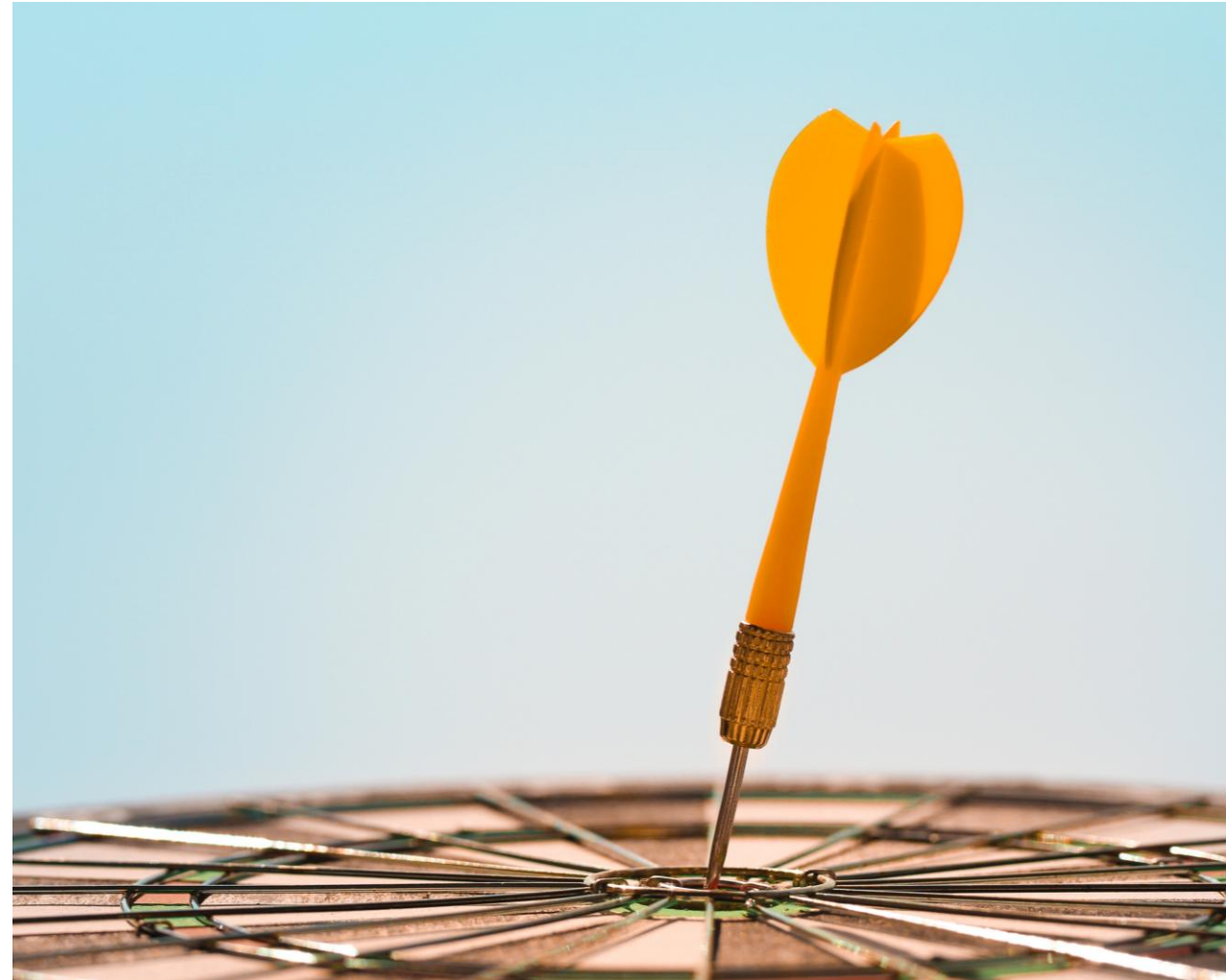
# Cultivating Empathy:

LET HUMAN-CENTERED  
PROCESS DO THE WORK



# INTENTION

- PROCESSES THAT DEMONSTRATE AND ELICIT EMPATHY
- RIGOROUSLY REALISTIC
- GUIDED BY EMPATHY FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH LEADERS



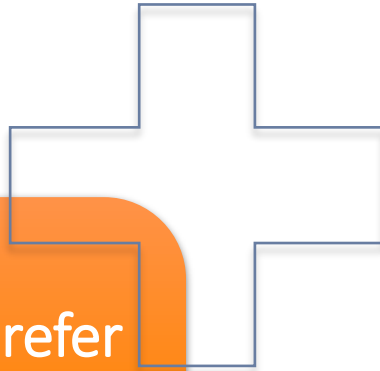


# PRACTICE OF SUBTRACTION

Reducing low- or no- value activities, initiatives, and areas of focus for leadership and teams in an organization to prevent burn-out and cognitive and emotional fatigue.

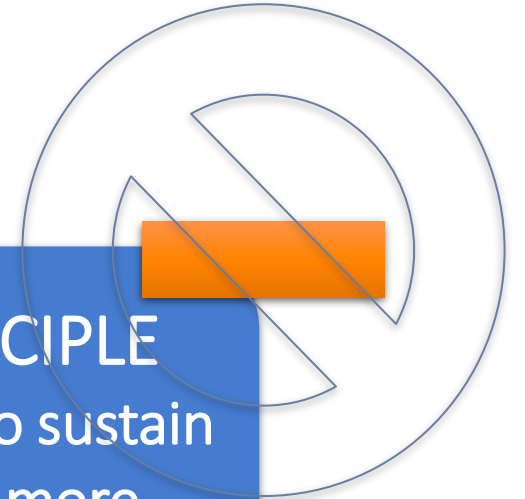
## ADDITION BIAS

is the cognitive tendency to prefer adding elements rather than removing them when solving problems, often leading to less efficient solutions.



## LOSS AVERSION PRINCIPLE

is the cognitive tendency to sustain processes that produce more disadvantages than advantages—fearing the loss of advantages.





# IDEAS FOR SUBTRACTION

## Paring/Pruning

- Formalize in strategic planning or annual planning process
- Often called Zombie killing in the literature

## Harnessing planning

- Reducing timeframe for strategic planning
- Cyclical scopes for strategic planning

## Data Discipline

- Collecting data that is required
- Collecting data that is actionable

# PROCESS/QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS THAT ELICIT EMPATHIC CONCERN OR COMPASSION

Empathy consists of three essential features: affective matching, **other-oriented perspective-taking**, and self-other differentiation. For empathy to occur, all three must be present to meet the criteria for empathy.

- Reverse shadowing
- Cross-functional process improvement
- Root cause analysis (Fishbone diagram or Five Whys)
- Focused, time-limited suggestion boxes



**BEST  
PRACTICE**

To eliminate languishing in cross-function process and quality improvement assign a sponsor (temporary accountability) or assign someone as the Directly Responsible Individual (enduring part of job scope).

# LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO CULTIVATE EMPATHY WITH AND ACROSS TEAMS

- Leadership rounding AND follow-up
- One small thing—reducing frustration
- My Why

**SIMPLIFY!**

Pick one or two questions

## Leadership Rounding Questions

- What is working well in your area?
- What are some things that make it difficult for you to do your job? What are your suggestions for fixing it?
- What safety concerns do you have?
- Are there any individuals or groups you think I should be recognizing for doing exceptional work?
- What feedback are you hearing from our clients or their family members that I should know about?

# References

- Crow, B., Gaulton, J.S., Mintor, N., Asch, D.A., Eyt, J., Rainosek, E., Flint, K., Joo, J., Chambers, C., Bright, S., Yang, J.J., Beyt, G., Pierce, R., & Moses, J.M. (2022). To improve quality, leverage design. *BMJ quality & safety*, 31(1), 70-74. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjqs-2021-013605>.
- Konrath, S.H. (2017, Jan 24). What's the matter with empathy, Konrath, S. H., Greater Good Magazine. [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/whats\\_the\\_matter\\_with\\_empathy](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/whats_the_matter_with_empathy).
- Kumah, A., Nwogu, C.N., Issah, A.R., Obot, E., Kanamitie, D.T., Sife, J.S., & Aidoo, L.A. (2024). Cause-and-Effect (Fishbone) Diagram: A Tool for Generating and Organization Quality Improvement Ideas. *Global journal on quality and safety in healthcare*, 7(2), 85-87. <https://doi.org/10.36401/JQSH-23-42>.
- Safe Care for Seniors. (2019). *Leadership Rounding: Listening and leading with purpose*. Leading Age Minnesota. [https://www.leadingagemn.org/assets/docs/SCFS-LeadershipRounding-Oct19\(1\).pdf](https://www.leadingagemn.org/assets/docs/SCFS-LeadershipRounding-Oct19(1).pdf).
- Sutton, R. & Rao, H. (2024). *The Friction Project: How Smart Leaders Make the Right Things Easier and the Wrong Things Harder*. St. Martin's Press.
- Swift, M. (2023). *Work Here Now: Think like a human and build a powerhouse workplace*. John Wiley & Sons. Inc.



A red circular arrow graphic that starts at the top, curves down the left side, then curves up the right side, and finally curves back down to the top, forming a continuous loop.

**TAKEAWAYS &  
REFLECTION**

# We want your feedback!



*Scan the QR code, or type this link into your browser:*

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Nov18JamEval>

Have a suggestion for a future presentation?



*Scan the QR code, or type this link into your browser:*

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/workforcesolutionsjam>

**JOIN US AT THE NEXT  
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS JAM!**

***December 15, 2025***

***at 10:00am PT / 1:00pm ET***