**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**WIOA & Competitively Awarded Grants**

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BRIAN KEATING: But we're going to go ahead and kick things off. Welcome, everyone. Thanks for joining us for today's WIOA and competitively awarded grants. Thanks for everyone who got on early and participated in the content that was on your screen. I'm going to move us over to our main format here so we can really kick things off.

Before I do, though, I just want to remind everyone, if you need anything, we're streaming the audio today so you should be able to listen through your computer. If you need to dial into the teleconference, that information is also available at the top left-hand corner of your screen.

Many of you have already done this, but if you just joined us or you didn't get a chance to earlier, go ahead and let us know where you're joining us from today. You can also let us know your name or the name of your organization or group. And if you happen to be joining us in a group, let us know how many are with you today so we have a better idea of our attendance.

All right. Well, without any further ado, I'm going to turn things over to Chantal Watler. She is a division chief with the Office of Special Initiatives and Demonstrations with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Chantal, take it away.

CHANTAL WATLER: Thanks, Brian. Good morning, everyone. As Brian indicated, I am Chantal Watler, the division chief in the Office of Special Initiatives and Demonstrations here at the Employment and Training Administration in our Philadelphia regional office. And it is my pleasure to welcome you to today's session. I wanted to note a few items.

During today's session you will often hear the presenters refer to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act as WIA or simply the Act. Over the next hour we will be discussing WIOA but more specifically its relationship to competitively awarded or also referred to as discretionary grants. Our primary goal today is to ensure that all the grant-funded organizations in the region are on the same page, are informed, and are involved in this transition in ways that will benefit your programs but most importantly your participants.

Presenting on this webinar today we have three federal project officers, Jake Blanch, Keith Hubert, and Antonio McKoy that work here in the Office of Special Initiatives and Demonstrations in Philadelphia. The names may sound familiar to you, as they serve as FPOs for many of the discretionary competitively awarded grants in the region, and the region comprises of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

In developing this webinar we asked you three questions. One, in what ways have you or your representatives from your organization been involved in the implementation of WIOA? Two, what impact, positive or negative, did you anticipate this legislation having on your organization, participants, or the community? And three, what remaining questions do you have about this legislation and its impact on your organization, participants, or community?

Our goal for today reflect the responses that we received. First, we will recap the legislation in general, including the timeline for implementation. Then we will review the relationship that your grant-funded initiative has had on this new legislation, and then we will identify opportunities in the region for your organization before we look at what's next. We encourage you to ask questions today. Please note that we will be collecting your questions and answering them in a resource document that will provided to you subsequent to today's session. Later on in this session Jake will discuss this further.

Here is the polling question that many of you answered earlier. I'm just going to review it just to take time just to go over it again. How familiar are you with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act? Like the back of my own hand, I've heard of it once or twice, is that the same as WIOA, I have no idea what this is.

MR. KEATING: All right. And we know some of you have already answered this poll before we began. So if you haven't already done that, though, go ahead and vote now by clicking the radio button on your screen next to the choice that you'd like to vote for. So again, we're interested in how familiar you are with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Your choices are, like the back of my own hand, I've heard of it once or twice, is that the same as WIOA, or I have no idea what this is. And again, we'll give you another few seconds to go ahead and choose your choice now so we can see what those results are.

And thanks for everybody's feedback about the audio. I guess we'll just ask our speakers to try and speak up and be as close to the phone as possible. Also just so everybody knows, we are recording today, and that recording and a written transcript will be available in about two business days. So be on the lookout for that, and if it helps, you can definitely dial into the teleconference. That information is at the top left-hand corner of your screen. All right. Back to you, Chantal.

MS. WATLER: Okay. Great. Thanks, Brian. It looks like that many individuals have heard it once or twice, and so that's actually great. We're going to provide you with some more information over the next few minutes, and right now, I'm going to turn over the presentation over to Antonio McKoy who will start us off with the recap of WIOA.

ANTONIO MCKOY: Thanks, Chantal, and good morning, everyone. By now, I'm sure that you've been inundated with references to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or WIOA, but what is it exactly?

WIOA represents a major change in the workforce development systems at the federal, state, and local levels. It brings together a strategic coordination to core programs of federal investment and skills development. This includes employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers and youth, as well as Wagner-Peyser employment services administered by the Department of Labor through formula grants to states.

It also included our adult education and literacy programs in vocational rehabilitation state grant programs that assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment administered by the Department of Education. WIOA also requires states to strategically align workforce development programs and foster regional collaboration within your states.

So let's take a look at the process. If we look at the timeline, we see that the WIOA legislation was signed by President Obama in July of 2014. This was followed by the issuance of related Training and Employment Guidance Letters of TEGLs. Most provisions of WIOA actually took effect a year later in July of 2015.

However, shortly prior to those WIOA provisions taking effect, the Notice for Public Rulemaking was published in April of 2015 and made available for public comment. Most recently state plans were submitted on April 1st of 2016 and all state plans have been submitted and those are actually currently under review. Currently, we find ourselves in the process awaiting the final rule, which is expected June of this year 2016.

So why are we talking about this now, and perhaps just as important, why are we the ones talking about it? Well, the Department of Education, HHS, HUD, and USDA are all included in the legislation, but ETA is by far the largest in terms of investment and diversity of programs. Generally speaking, people tend to connect WIOA with government organizations only. Although it is certainly reasonable to consider the influence that WIOA has on government organizations which may not be you, this influence greatly impacts the landscape within – which NGOs or non-governmental organizations like yourselves operate and do their work.

So let's look back at the legislation. WIOA identified six broad goals that we can look to.

Goal number one, increase access to education, training, and employment, particularly for people with barriers to employment.

Goal number two, create a comprehensive, high-quality workforce development system by aligning workforce investment, education, and economic development.

The third goal is to improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts.

Goal number four, promote improvement in the structure and delivery of services.

Goal number five, increase the prosperity of workers and employers.

And the sixth and final goal is to reduce welfare dependency, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet employer needs, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation.

Now that you know the goals of WIOA, can you see your organization fitting into these? I would imagine that everyone on the call today can and does, considering the types of programs we have represented on the call today and here in the region.

Finally, let's look at the vision for WIOA, which certainly extends beyond federal agencies. This vision presents, "an extraordinary opportunity to improve job and career options for our nation's workers and jobseekers through an integrated, job-driven public workforce system that links diverse talent to businesses. It supports the development of strong, vibrant regional economies where businesses thrive and people want to live and work."

Clearly this is not solely a vision for government agencies. In fact, we couldn't realize this vision without you. The question is, has your organization had the opportunity to be a part of this vision yet?

So let's take a moment to check in. Have you or your organization been involved with the planning to reach the WIOA vision in your state? Your options –

MR. KEATING: No. Go ahead.

MR. MCKOY: Your options are, yes, we are very involved, yes, we are somewhat involved, no, we have not been involved, or no, we are not sure how to be involved. And I'll give you some time.

MR. KEATING: Sounds good. Sounds good. All right. And looks like folks are already voting, but go ahead and vote now, if you haven't already done so, by clicking the radio button on your screen next to your choice. So we'll give you another few seconds. Chat amongst yourselves, if you need to, and go ahead and choose one of these options. All right. We'll give you another few seconds. I'll turn it over to the team to comment on what we're seeing.

MR. MCKOY: Okay. And looks like we have quite a bit of involvement amongst the group today. So that's great. For more about the relationship between WIOA and your grant initiative, I would like to hand things over to Keith Hubert.

KEITH HUBERT: Hi, everyone. I'm Keith Hubert, federal project officer here in region two. Thanks for taking time out of your day to talk about how the Act affects your grants. What you see here is kind of a visual list of our competitively awarded discretionary grants. This list should be current and comprehensive as of today. If I left something off, I do apologize. It's nothing personal. It's just an oversight if I left somebody out.

One thing you've got in common, no matter where you are on this diagram – you see it's a lot of diversity amongst our grantees, but every one of your grants has a notice of obligation, sometimes also called a notice of agreement, which will reference either the Workforce Innovation Act or the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Grants issued after July 1st, 2015 reference the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and those references are important and they're there because, number one, the Act funds directly funds most of your grants and it also provides a regulatory structure to some degree over all of your grants.

So for example, if you're a YouthBuild grantee, your grant is directly funded by the Act, and you are subject to regulatory sections of the Act. On the other hand, if you're an H1-B grantee, you're not directly funded by the Act, but you're still subject to sections of its regulation. So the point that I'm trying to make here is that no matter where you fall on this diagram, no matter what type of grant you have, the Act applies to you and you need to know how.

One way to think of how the Act applies to you is by thinking of in terms of direct and indirect impact. Now, of course ETA formula-funded grantees are directly impacted but the Act also has sections dedicated to four types of discretionary grantees and you can see them listed here, SCSEP, YouthBuild, DEI, and NFJP grantees. And each of those grants, each of those types of grants has a section dedicated to it within the Act itself. And beyond that all discretionary grantees are, quote, unquote, indirectly impacted.

First of all, your notice of award makes you subject to regulatory components of the Act, as I said earlier. Secondly, since our formula-funded grantees are adapting to the Act, your relationships and your partnerships with them must likewise adapt. Thirdly, the Act sets a vision for the greater workforce system. It's a look into the future as to what ETA wants to go and what it wants to fund. And lastly of course, the Act itself shapes the experience of your grant participants and your workforce communities. So let's move on. Let's take a closer look at direct impacts.

So again, for those four grantees who were specifically called out in the grant, you need to know how and that means you need to read and know the sections of the Act dedicated to you and you need to read and understand any follow-up guidance that comes out of ETA about your grant. Now, when you do that, when you read through that, pay particular attention to the changes related to what you see listed here. Changes in definitions, a lot of the terms you work with under your grants have specific stringent meanings, and changing them means changes in what you can and can't do, who you can and can't serve, and so on.

Changes in services, what we're talking about here is what you can and must provide and deliver under the grants and how you do it. And lastly, changes in performance, and again, here we're talking about really the exact outcomes and deliverables you're expected to achieve with the grant. So if you're directly impacted, you need to know the Act. You need to know to follow-up guidance because these things may be changing, and you need to know how.

Let me provide you a few examples of that. If you're a formula-funded grantee and, for example, if you're a workforce development board, an American Job Center, also known as a One-Stop, if you're formula-funded, you need to know that the sequence of services provision has been eliminated under the Act.

If you're an NFJP grantee, you need to know that there will be new performance outcomes in place for project year 2016. If you're a GEI grantee, there are new opportunities to partner with centers for independent living. If you're a state SCSEP grantee, there are changes to the submission process for state plans.

And if you're a YouthBuild grantee, you need to know that the Act eliminates the sequential service strategy provision. Now, there's a lot more to the Act and how it relates to your grants. This is just kind of a teaser, if you will, to show that there's something about the Act, there's something there for you that you need to know. You need to become comfortable with it and familiar with it because it does impact you directly. So let's move on, and let's talk about the indirect impact and kind of how the Act has an effect on the system overall.

And we mentioned formula-funded grantees before, and right now our states and D.C., they're awaiting approval to implement their strategic plans. And once approved, those plans are going to implement a variety of formula-funded workforce services under the Act for the next five funded years. At the same time and concurrent with that, local workforce development board memberships are reconfiguring under the Act to improve alignment with their labor markets, their communities, and their economic regions.

So why is that important? Why do you need to know that? Well, it's important because ETA wants and encourages its discretionary and formula-funded grantees to collaborate and align their efforts. How one changes affects the other, and with the Act it's likely that you will need to realign yourselves to one another. And the goal is to make the most of our limited resources to get the best results for those you serve, the individuals, the families, and the communities that are trying to get ahead and trying to get on a path to the middle class and the American Dream.

And the ETA vision for all of this, where we want to go with this is demonstrated here on the slide. And you can read it but I want to focus on the first part here and I'm just going to read it. "Our vision is to promote pathways to economic liberty for individuals and families working to achieve the American Dream." Everyone on the call today has a piece of that in some way. We don't own all of that challenge, but what we do is important to helping meet that challenge.

And one thing to remember with all of this is that it isn't ETA or the Department of Labor driving the changes behind the Act. It's the real world that is driving the changes. The Act itself is nothing more than a response to the real and difficult circumstances people find themselves in, whether they're laid off from a job and can't find comparable work, they dropped out of high school and can't reconnect, or so on.

There's a lot of people in our region that struggle every day to navigate the waters of training and education and employment and so on, and that's where we come in. The Act reflects changes in the workforce systems, and it reflects changes in the work that we're going to need to do. But on the brighter side you can think of it this way. With change comes opportunities, and to talk about those opportunities, let me welcome my colleague Mr. Jake Blanch.

JAKE BLANCH: Thank you very much, Mr. Hubert. As Keith mentioned, my name is Jake Blanch. I'm a federal project officer here in the Philadelphia regional office. I want to speak with you about how we as a workforce development community realize this vision. So we here at ETA, Employment and Training Administration, want to encourage organizations like yours to seize the opportunities that are presented in WIOA and all of the changes that come along with it. Right now, the legislation, guidance, and proposed rules are fairly abstract, using words like should or encourage. While this apparent vagueness may make some a little uneasy or even hesitant, we want to consider how these areas are really allowing for your local creativity and the ability to define local context in ways that work best for your local workforce community.

When we talk about this workforce community in light of WIOA, we're talking about a lot more than government agencies. As some of my colleagues have shared, the intention of this legislation is to align an entire system that includes state workforce agencies, local workforce development boards, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, employers, federal, state, and local partner agencies, many of whom serve the same populations in similar ways to our programs.

And let's not forget the youth, jobseekers, and incumbent workers. This workforce community is defined largely by its common interests but also in an array of complimentary attributes. WIOA is in many ways a call to state and local boards, American Job Centers, and their partners to coordinate to develop a comprehensive workforce system in which your organization is a critical component.

So let's consider a few of those key opportunities associated with WIOA. The emphasis on partnerships and coordination encourages you to consider how to be more strategic in your service delivery. Knowing the players in your area allows you to decide how referring participants for certain services can be critical to the success of your program.

If you can engage a partner to help you with the critical components of your program, you're more able to focus your energy and resources on what your organization does best while relying on what your partner – or excuse me – while relying on your partner to focus on what they do best. This sort of relationship is really at the base of what we're talking about when we talk about this comprehensive workforce system.

With changes to state and local workforce development boards, you'll want to consider how you might be involved to increase the visibility of your work and to seek opportunities for you to take an active role in shaping what this transition will look like in ways that benefit your program, your participants, and the local workforce community.

Although board membership and many of the mandatory committees may dissolve, change – or excuse me – change or even dissolve during this transition, WIOA encourages local boards to establish a more locally appropriate committee structure, a network that includes, for instance, a standing youth committee.

Committees like these will provide information and assist with planning, operational, and other issues relating to the provision of services to youth throughout your region. As local boards begin rolling out their local plans, involvement in these committees can be critical in providing you with vital information and the ability to shape what this looks like in your community.

How this community is defined will offer opportunities when the focus is broadened to a regional level. WIOA encourages strategies to broaden by way of a new approach, calling it regionalism. This expands the notion of what is local such that the community should seek strategic opportunities to align with regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of both local and regional employers.

A regional approach is intended to value local identity while building capacity beyond the typical borders and boundaries in ways that allow organizations to braid and share resources in new ways. For your organization this could mean wider access and more resources and perhaps more importantly, for your participants this could mean more opportunities and more options that will be newly available to them in ways that they have never been before.

Keith mentioned the American Job Centers or what you may know as One-Stops, career links, career centers, or workforce centers, and a little bit about the ways in which they will also be adjusting to the changes inherent in WIOA. Let's talk a little bit more about what that means for your organization.

As many of you are aware, these centers work primarily with what are called eligible providers of training services. During this transition the job centers will be reassessing their eligible training provider lists, which could be an opportunity for you to link and access participants and those complimentary services we talked about earlier in support of those participants. Note that these lists will now be approved at the state level rather than the local level.

Apprenticeship programs should be automatically included and previous providers should be grandfathered in but it certainly won't do any harm to double check now to ensure your organization is able to access this resource. Those eligible training providers include most, if not all of those of you on this webinar. We're talking about postsecondary educational institutions, registered apprenticeship programs, other public and private providers of training.

These may include joint labor management organizations and eligible training providers or adult education so long as they meet basic criteria that we will provide to you later after this webinar, local boards that similarly meet associated conditions to those other public and private providers and community-based organizations or non-profit organizations and private organizations that hold contracts with that local board.

Now, a lot of what we're hearing from you is that these opportunities are already in the works. We can't begin to tell you how encouraging this has been. In response to the questionnaire that Chantal mentioned at the top of the discussion, we heard from organizations that were deeply involved with the development of the state plans that are now being reviewed here in our office.

We heard from many of you that have already begun the process to ensure you're among those approved eligible providers of training with the American Job Centers. Others have reached out to local development boards, state agencies, and other providers in the workforce community to initiate productive dialogue around this legislation and what it means to their local workforce community in ways that are strategic and proactive.

Many organizations have engaged staff to regulate, train, and review WIOA and related assistance as it is released, including the NPRM or the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, the Training and Employment Guidance Letters or TEGLs, and Training and Employment Notices or TENs. These regularly are issued, and so they will continue to be issued as we move forward and are a great resource for not only administration in a lot of your organizations but also the program staff just to understand the context within their working.

And others have regularly attended WIOA convenings either in the District of Columbia, with their state, or with local workforce development boards. Again, it is encouraging to hear that these things are already happening, and we're looking forward to hearing updates resulting from this conversation today. After all, this thing we call WIOA is going to keep on moving, and we want to be sure that you take full advantage.

From our end we want to ensure that you have the information and the opportunities necessary to be a full partner in realizing the vision we are talking about here with WIOA. You can expect to hear from our office in the coming months with regard to ongoing technical assistance announcements which will be shared with you from our central e-mail address r2osidta@DOL.gov and from your FPO. It's very – (inaudible) – that you all may not know all of our crazy acronyms.

So I just want to be clear here. When we talk about OSID, we're talking about the office that works directly with you on your grant initiative – or excuse me – your discretionary grant initiatives. OSID is the Office of Special Initiatives and Demonstrations. If you're on this webinar, that's the office that your FPO works in and from where you're competitively awarding grants come.

The Innovation and Opportunity Network or ION is a community of practice now hosted on this site, Workforcegps.org. Workforcegps.org has now officially replaced what many of you will likely remember as Workforce3One. WorkforceGPS is a central hub for a lot of information and training, and we'll continue to release and host some of these trainings here. Next month we'll be hosting an opportunity youth convening in conjunction with the YouthBuild peer-to-peer event where we will focus our efforts on this particular population.

We'll bring together our YouthBuild grantees along with our state and local workforce development boards and federal partners to work on bridging some of the perceived gaps between federal, state, local, and any of the non-governmental organizations in order to serve this population in the best ways possible.

Finally, communication with your FPO. Please remember that your federal project officer is a resource for you. If we do not know the answer to your question, we'll make sure we find out who does and get it to you as soon as we can.

Throughout this presentation we've been collecting your remaining questions and concerns as you plug them into that chat box, and please continue to do so. Keep them coming. Shortly after this presentation we'll take this information and do some additional research of our own. We'll gather all of this up to create a comprehensive resource for you which will answer each of your questions and link you to additional information that may be helpful while we continue to keep dialogue open throughout this transition process.

We'd like to thank you for joining us today. Although we surely couldn't have answered all your questions in this short of webinar, we're committed to providing you with everything that you need in order to take full advantage of the opportunities during this time of transition. We'll leave the chat box open for a little while longer so that you can ask any additional questions. If any more questions come up as you discuss this with your teams, please be sure to contact your federal project officer for more information.

MR. KEATING: All right. Great. And again, we want to invite you to ask your questions or comments. Like we said, we may be getting back to you with those answers after the fact today, but we will pause here to give you a chance to ask questions or make comments in that questions window on your screen.

Also just a reminder that we are recording today, and the recording and written transcript will be available in about two business days. So thanks for your patience with that, and feel free to make a note of that so you can come back later and join the recording to watch that after the fact.

Also want to encourage you to stay with us. If you don't have any questions or comments, you can give us feedback in a few minutes here when we wrap up for today. So thanks for the feedback we've gotten so far. We do want to encourage you to chime in with any questions or comments that you might have. Again, we'll give you just another minute or two to go ahead and ask those questions or make those comments.

MR. BLANCH: And, Brian, I see that there are some people who are asking about the timeline. I'm going to pull that slide back up so that people have it, but again, just please keep bringing your questions into that chat box for us and we'll collect them. And we just want to thank you once more for joining us today, and we hope everyone had a great week.

MR. KEATING: All right. Very good. Sounds like a plan. And I'm sorry, which slide was that, Jake? Maybe we can – I can help you bring that up?

MR. BLANCH: It was number 10.

MR. KEATING: Number 10. Okay. Oh, here it is. Very good. All right. Perfect. All right. And if you need this timeline, you can also download the slides. That is available there at the bottom of your screen, and it's also available on the website where you signed up, on WorkforceGPS. We've uploaded the slides there as well so you can download those at any point. All right. Very good.

All right. Very good. Also want to encourage you to type in your questions or comments. We are going to probably be wrapping up here. So want to encourage you to go ahead and keep typing in any questions you might have, and then what we'll do is give you an opportunity to give us feedback as well here in just a moment. All right. Thanks for those questions and comment that have come in. Appreciate that.

Sure. All right. So what we're going to do I think is wrap up in terms of the formal part of our webinar, but again, we do want to invite you to not log out. So we do want to give you a few minutes to ask any questions or comments that you might have. So before I wrap up, Jake or team, anything else you want to say to close out this event?

MS. WATLER: No. We don't. We just want to say thank you very much to everyone who participated. And we see the questions are coming in, and we encourage you to continue to answer the questions so – I mean, ask the questions so that we may follow up with you. Thanks again.

MR. KEATING: All right. Sounds good.

(END)