**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**ETA 2016 SECTOR STRATEGIES VIRTUAL INSTITUTE**

**State Level 201: Diving Deep into State Level Policy to Guide, Support, and Sustain Local Sector Partnerships**

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*Transcript by*

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OPERATOR: Good afternoon. My name is Benita, and I will be your conference operator today. At this time I would like to welcome everyone to the State Level 201: diving deep into state level polity to guide, support, and sustain local sector partnerships workshop hosted by WorkforceGPS. I would now like to turn the call over to Brian Keating with Maher & Maher. So please begin.

BRIAN KEATING: Thanks so much, Benita. Thanks to – looks like the overwhelming amount of you have actually been on other workshops in the series that we've been doing this week. So you're no stranger to how this works. So I'll keep my remarks brief.

Before I do, I want to encourage you, if you haven't already done so, to go ahead and introduce yourself in the chat window that's on your screen. You can also submit any questions or comments you have during the first part of today's workshop, but we are going to be going to an interactive breakout session where we will invite you to chime in with your thoughts, comments, ideas, suggestions. And want to just encourage you to feel free to jump right in verbally, and we'll be encouraging you to do that and telling you more about that when we get to that part of the workshop.

But for now, welcome to the "State Level 201: Diving Deep Into State Level Policy To Guide, Support, And Sustain Local Sector Partnerships." Like I said, if you haven't already done so, type into that chat window who you are or where you're from and even what you hope to get out of today's workshop.

Without any further ado, I'm going to turn things over to Martin Simon to kick things off. Martin is the director with the Economic, Human Services and Workforce Division of the National Governors Association. Martin, take it away.

MARTIN SIMON: Good afternoon, folks, and welcome. As Brian said, I'm Martin Simon. I'm with the National Governors Association, Center for Best Practices where I'm the director of Economic, Human Services and Workforce Division. NGA has been working with states on implementing and supporting sector partnerships for well over 16 years, and we're very pleased to be a part of this Sector Strategies Virtual Institute.

As Brian said, this workshop is titled "State Level 201: Diving Deep Into State Level Policy To Guide, Support, And Sustain Local Sector Partnerships." This is the second state level workshop today. The first focused on the state's crucial role in seeding and supporting sector partnerships. So as the title says, we're going to take a deeper dive into how a state policy supports sector partnerships at the regional and local level.

Just a little bit of background to set the context for this session, as states economies continue to grow and put more people to work and – (inaudible) – the greatest challenge that faces many American business that are trying to stay competitive is finding a skilled workforce. While the estimations of the size and severity of the skills gap varies, governors and state officials have taken this challenge very seriously.

Today almost every state has employed some form of sector-based strategy to support regional effective partnerships to address this issue. The core focus of sector partnerships is bringing together business at scale to align education and training to the needs of the economy. Sector partnerships serve as proven successful vehicles for communicating these industry to the public sector and ultimately serving both workers and industry.

In addition to the state actions to support and expand sector partnerships, several developments make clear that now is the time for rethinking and new efforts focused on sector partnerships. Passage and implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act offers states and local leaders an opportunity to reframe existing challenges and to begin new conversations with stakeholders.

This reset provides governors and state and local leaders a chance to ensure that sector partnerships have the components necessary to be successful. By requiring states to describe their sector strategies in their state's WIOA plan, WIOA has given states an opportunity to develop a consensus on a clear vision and strategies to support sector partnerships throughout the state.

So with these opportunities in mind we have set five objectives for this workshop that are outlined in this slide. One is to identify a state policy framework to support, sustain, and scale local and regional sector partnerships. The second is capitalizing on WIOA as part of state policy to guide sector partnerships. Third is bridging the roles of state and local workforce boards to support sector partnerships in the operation of One-Stop centers. Four is engaging key stakeholders to support sector partnerships, and then fifth is aligning WIOA performance requirements with state and local goals for establishing sector partnerships.

We have two speakers who will discuss how their state is implementing and supporting sector partnerships and taking advantage of WIOA to support these efforts. One state, Washington, has a long history of supporting sector partnerships, and the other, Louisiana, is more recently engaged in those efforts. So let's start the conversation, and I'll introduce the two speakers.

Greg DeClouet is with the Louisiana Workforce Commission. He's been with the commission for over 28 years. He began as an interviewer trainee; moved on to being a supervisor and then a manager of a One-Stop center. He also served as a member of the local workforce investment board. He was promoted in 2004 to the director of field operations with the Louisiana Workforce Commission, Office of Workforce Development. Currently he is the director of business services for the Office of Workforce Development.

Some major contributions that he's made include participation in development of certification workforce development boards, implementation of current service delivery system for One-Stop centers. He was on the transition team for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and played a significant role earlier in the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act.

Our second speaker is Eric Wolf from Washington. Eric is a policy associate at the Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. This is the state's public oversight and policy setting board for workforce development and career and technical education programs.

Eric has coordinated planning and implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in Washington. Before joining the board staff, Eric was policy counsel and non-partisan advisor to members of the Washington State Senate's committees on early learning and K-12 education, higher education and workforce development, and trade and economic development.

Let's start the conversation with you, Greg.

MR. KEATING: And, Greg, you may need to unmute your line.

GREG DECLOUET: Okay. I'm sorry. Thank you, Martin, for the introduction, and good afternoon, everyone. Want to thank you all for letting me come in and share the Louisiana story on implementing regional sector partnership. It's been a journey for Louisiana the last two years. We have had some successes, some challenges, even setbacks. But even with the challenge and setbacks, we are moving forward, and we're now able to implement regional sector partnerships by formalizing and inputting a policy for the local workforce boards.

Now, this journey that we talked about started a few years ago, and just a very brief update or background is that we have a few successes in the area of construction and chemical plants. And with those successes we move forward in trying to implement a formalized sector partnership policy. And so along with that, we provide state resources, technical assistance in order to help implement, even business metrics.

The policy that we have, the key is the philosophy, is we had a change in mindset in Louisiana and that philosophy is the mission of Louisiana Workforce Commission, Office of Workforce Development is to put people to work by continuously improving a demand-driven system by responding quickly to immediate and long-term needs of employers, by solicitation of targeted feedback from businesses that becomes part of the catalyst in the creation of a value added workforce system allowing responsiveness to the needs of the Louisiana employers.

And so with that philosophy was a change in mindset that was not only at the state level but at the regional and local level, and with that change in mindset we were able to move forward and try to engage employers not one on one but more as a industry, as a partnership.

The purpose of the formalizing of regional sector partnership was to give a process or formalize a process with the local boards in the regions that focus on going and utilizing business and industry to build packages of services and strategies to meet business need today and in the future.

And through the partnership, expected to increase overall business utilization and value received from the workforce system and thereby reducing employer costs to recruit and hire qualified workers. Through the regional sector partnership is intended to better align responses by local workforce organization, education institution, and economic partners to meet the needs of business.

And so with the philosophy, with the purpose we developed a framework in which you see to have a leadership team in that region made up of businesses. A vision, what is a vision for the sector partnership of that region? Providing a data team, a data team not only through the board but also economic development even through the state.

Having neutral third-party convener, somebody that's neutral. Not only one convener. Could be a couple conveners. That has business driven and that there are performance metrics and sustainability of the partnership. And so with that we put in policy some of that we would formalize for the local workforce development boards in order for them to be able to start implementing.

And so through WIOA it helped us to bring together – because WIOA talks about sector partnership not only at the state board level but the local board level. There's emphasis on developing employer engagement by using strategies through sector partnerships. And so through WIOA in our state plan where we incorporated sector partnerships, and one of the goals we have identify as employer engagement, using strategies like sector industry partnership and trying to engage industry, engage businesses to be able to have a better understanding, to be able to provide with them the workforce that they would need not only now but also in the future.

And so with that we also incorporate in that regional and local plan directions to also show us how they're going to develop those regional sector initiatives, how they're going to develop those career pathways. And so we put into our state plan this is how the framework is through this policy, and this was the expectation.

Now, tell us how you're going to work together in the region in order to develop your own initiative in this area. And so with that, in order to help the locals or the local workforce development boards in trying to meet that, we provided resources, technical assistance through training.

We also provide them with resources by creating eight regional positions that our state funded that these positions would be reporting to the boards in a region and helping them to move forward this initiative. And so the state is working very closely with each of the regions in trying to help them move forward in developing these regional industry partnerships.

And also besides those regional partnerships, we also have created regional business service teams in each of the regions to help in the formalizing that initiative. Those business service teams are represented with the same stakeholders that are participating in these partnerships, and so it is a collaboration at the state level, local level. We all have the same vision, same message, same support in helping them move forward.

And one last thing to talk about is the performance measures. We have created business service performance measures to help them in measuring how successful those partnerships are, targeted market penetration, repeat customer, employer-based training, and the staff referral to demand occupations.

We have developed these performance measures over the last few years, and now we are refining them and that it can be used to see past data and future data of what is happening in each of the regions. And so with that I'll turn it over to Eric, and he can share with you all what's going on in Washington.

MR. SIMON: Thank you, Greg. Eric, we'd be glad to hear about Washington.

ERIC WOLF: Great. Well, thanks, Greg and Brian. Again, Eric Wolf from Washington State. As Martin mentioned at the beginning of the presentation, Washington's been pretty heavily engaged in sector strategy work for several years. It really began almost 10 years ago now.

The state and the state legislature put together some funding for industry skill panels based at the local level primarily in our community and technical colleges. That really served as a base that we built off of when we started thinking about what we were going to do to plan and implement WIOA and really meet WIOA's mandate to improve how our system is engaging with industry in the state.

We really had a few sort of baseline core principles that guided us when we convened committees to do business engagement planning. The first was that WIOA really does charge our local counterparts and local boards with a heavy leadership role and figuring out employer engagement in their community, and that made sense to us from a state level.

So we were very careful to approach this as putting together a toolkit that our local counterparts could pick up and adapt in ways that made the best sense to their community. Sector partnerships specifically, though, we're very excited about in Washington because we see this as a way to make business and the customer of the system really more of an active participant in the design and creation of their workforce solutions that they need. So those were some of our core thoughts.

In Washington we had a business engagement panel that was convened in the process of planning for WIOA implementation. That panel is being repurposed into an ongoing subcommittee of our board. That's going to focus on business engagement and sector strategy and form a sort of convening panel at the state level to work with locals. That panel came up with various guiding principles for sector strategy work, and in the interest of time I'm just going to throw these up and sort of talk about them generally.

In Washington we really see sector strategies and workforce development in general as being the other side of economic development, two sides to the same coin. We really grounded all of our discussions in that. We came up with a framework – it sounds very similar to what Greg was describing in Louisiana – that we adapted based off of what one of our local boards had been putting together to build a sector-based partnership from scratch.

It was a five-step framework. Essentially it's a way of convening the industry, being able to tie some data and metrics around the project and the deliverable that you want to create together so that you can use that data to have an ongoing conversation about iterating and approving the project over time. We really did focus on emphasizing that any sector partnership you create should be heavily tied to data and informed by data as a way to make sure that it's a sustained partnership.

One of the things that we really heard when we engaged with our industry partners is that they felt fatigue about working with our system on one op partnerships. Frankly, we as a system felt fatigue about the exact same thing. So we really landed on creating a good, common, agreed upon set of metrics to create iterative programs as a way to sort of short-circuit that issue we were having.

So I referenced our industry skill panel statewide, and I really wanted to kind of zoom out and talk about the culture of sector engagement in Washington because what we've done here we think was pretty pioneering, and we've seen start to pop up in many other states.

Our industry skill panels were convened a few years back, brought together industry specific leaders with officials from our Department of Commerce, Office of Economic Development, along with our community technical college system and our four-year baccalaureate program system in order to talk about what they could do to better align education pathways with industry needs. And recently that's really evolved into a new iteration called Washington sectors for excellence.

We have 10 sectors of excellence which are based in community and technical colleges around the state. Each center of excellence has adopted a focus that connects to an industry that is a pretty profound component of that community. In Washington we're a pretty regionalized state to begin with geographically, demographically, and economically. Right now, our local workforce development board boundaries actually line up very closely to just sort of the classical economic development regions we thought of in Washington.

So these centers of excellence have grown and thrived now inside our community and technical colleges for a couple years. They serve as a broker of information and resources between industry and our system. They translate industry research into best practices that our system can pick up and adopt, and their whole mission is to really work with industry in their community to build a more competitive workforce.

So from the state level what we're trying to do is really build a much better relationship with our centers of excellence. The state's put a pretty significant investment forward over the last year. Our governor has designated sector leads within our Department of Commerce who have all been very engaged in our WIOA planning and will continue to be engaged in our state level business engagement group. Those sector leads are responsible for reaching out to these critical industry sectors in Washington, building contacts and relationship between those sectors and the government in Washington State, and also critically go out and help recruit new companies to Washington to help grow those industry sectors in the state.

Our state's labor department, the employment security department, and pretty much all of our local board components have designated their own sector leads. A lot of the work we're doing now at the state level is figuring out a better way to coordinate and streamline communication between these disparate threats to make sure that the message is being refined and focused. What we found in the course of WIOA planning when we engage with our partners in business is that they were feeling like they were being approached by an overwhelming number of programs at once.

So they had trouble filtering through which program might fit best for them to build a sustained relationship with, and they were oftentimes confused by the many different dialects of education and workforce development ease that we all speak.

So it's a critical focus for us over the next few months at the state level to do some more conversations about ways we can standardize the way we communicate with industries in the context of building sector partnership and really come up with a more standardized glossary of terms and make sure that those terms are communicating what we do to industry in ways that make sense to business, really demonstrate to the businesses value line or bottom line what we're doing for the business or to the sector and what we're doing to help close the skills gap within that sector.

So with that, we're right out of time, and I'm going to turn it over to Brian so we can go into our breakout sessions.

MR. KEATING: All right. Thanks so much. So we are going to go ahead and move into an interactive breakout for about 20, 25 minutes. I want to just quickly review the questions we're going to be asking you. So you'll notice we're – we'd like to know, what do you see as the major differences between the state and local roles in supporting and sustaining local and regional sector partnerships? What are the key metrics that should be met to ensure sector partnerships are high quality? And last but not least, what key challenges have you encountered in setting up and sustaining sector partnerships, and what are innovative ways you have addressed them?

So these are the questions we're going to be asking you. We are going to go ahead and move into a format where you can give us your verbal as well as your chat comments. In a moment when we break out, if you go to breakout room one, you're going to be with Martin Simon. Again, he's the director of Economic, Human Services and Workforce Division with the National Governors Association. And breakout room two is going to be facilitated by Michael Bartlett. He's a policy analyst with the National Governors Association.

Just a reminder, I know many of you have participated with us throughout the week. Your line is going to be muted. So please take a moment and find your mute button, and if you could mute yourself when you're not participating verbally, that would be great. That being said, we do highly encourage you to chime in verbally because we would love to hear from you, and we really do want to get your feedback.

Obviously you can type into the chat, but we'd love for you to chime in over the phone as well. And your phone line is going to be unmuted to start so that you can chime right in. So we do encourage you to do that, and with that being said, I think we're going to go ahead and move to the breakouts themselves.

So, Benita, if you could move us audio-wise to the breakouts, we're going to go ahead and move all of us to the breakouts so we can have that conversation.

OPERATOR: Thank you. And please hold for your transfer.

(breakout session)

You're back in your main conference at this time.

MR. KEATING: All right. Thanks so much. Thanks, everyone, for your participation and for taking time here at the end of the day to be with us. We're going to spend these last portion of the workshop reviewing what we just discussed. So hang on one sec while we bring that up, and we'd love to find out what happened in each of these discussions. So I think we're going to start with breakout room one.

So, Martin, I'll turn it back to you. You've got the notes here that we just took, and if you could go ahead and share what we had just talked about and some of the conversation that happened.

MR. SIMON: Yes. Thank you, Brian. We started the conversation with the first question about the major differences. And a couple points in the conversation is that it's important for local boards to take to heart that they have to be supporting sector partnerships as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Part of that is developing the relationships with the local businesses but also the educational system and other stakeholders.

A key role for the state is bringing together organizations so that they can work together, and someone pointed out that it's important for – at the state level that they're working across the agencies and being supportive of local efforts.

Another part of the conversation we talked about employer engagement, and of course that's central to any sector strategy. And being able to identify and focus on the needs of employers is a very important prat of both building but then sustaining sector partnerships. Eric, do you have any additional thoughts from the breakout session you want to share?

MR. WOLF: No. We had a specific conversation I guess about apprenticeships and building – the importance of building or including apprenticeships in the equation, but beyond that I think you covered it. Thanks.

MR. SIMON: That's right. I did miss the discussion on apprenticeships and how some of the states are building apprenticeships into their career pathways, which are then part of their sector strategies and integrating all of those into a strategy.

MR. KEATING: All right. Great.

MR. SIMON: Those were the main points.

MR. KEATING: Go ahead. I'm sorry. Something to share, Martin?

MR. SIMON: I was saying that those are the main points from the breakout session one. I guess we can move to the – Mike in breakout session two.

MR. KEATING: Sounds good. All right. And we just brought up your notes, Michael. So go ahead and, if you would, tell us about the highlights of what you discussed in breakout room session number two.

MR. BARTLETT: Thanks, Brian. We had some good discussions in breakout room two, and Greg did a great job talking about what they're doing in Louisiana. One of the first things we covered was talking about – a little bit about the metrics. This is one of the more challenging aspects of understanding and kind of wrapping your arms around sector partnerships and he kind of – Greg talked us through their process, starting out with eight metrics around sectors and kind of over a year or so honing that down to about four or five metrics that they feel are much more appropriate for kind of measuring what's going on. Things like targeted market penetration, breaking it down by sectors region to region and understanding what was going on with training.

Some of the other things we talked about, partnerships. So how do you engage particularly local boards, getting the chairs of boards, getting them moving, and getting them to be part of sector partnerships. So it's really about energizing your board members and getting them to buy into the vision and have them kind of champion it out in their own local areas and regions.

So the way we talked about achieving that is beginning a dialogue with the different players in an area. It's kind of having all those stakeholders in the room and starting that conversation. And the good points were made is that oftentimes having a sector strategy focus does not preclude talking with other businesses and industries as well because boards can have kind of a lot of responsibilities and things they have to focus on.

So it was a good conversation there, and I guess I'll ask Greg if he had any other observations or comments he wanted to add to that, if I missed anything, which is possible.

MR. KEATING: All right. Greg, you may need to unmute your line. Anything to add?

MR. DECLOUET: Yeah. I'm sorry. One of the things is the engaging stakeholders. If you can push it down from the state level down to the regional levels, those entities like adult education, like vocational rehabilitation, like the community college system that they need to be engaged in this initiative, it helps with the stakeholders being a part of this initiative.

MICHAEL BARTLETT: Yeah. So that entire idea of kind of the state modeling what effective partnerships look like, and then you use that modeling to kind of push it down to the regional and local levels. That was a good point. Thanks for reminding me, Greg.

MR. KEATING: All right. Great.

MR. BARTLETT: But yeah. That was pretty much what we covered. Back to you, Brian.

MR. KEATING: All right. Thanks so much, Mike. All right. I know we have just a few things to cover here at the end. So let's go back to the slides. And, Martin, I'm going to turn it over to you just to kind of cover any last remarks you have or any contact information here, and then I think we'll call it a day. Back to you, Martin.

MR. SIMON: Thank you, Brian. On the slide you see on your screen you'll see contact information for our two speakers. Both I know have a lot more that they can share that they haven't been able to discuss, and my contact information is on there also. So feel free to contact us, and we appreciate your participation in this workshop today. Back to you, Brian.

MR. KEATING: All right. Thanks so much, and thanks, everyone, for taking time here at the end of your day. We're going to – before we invite you to log off, we're going to encourage you to give us some feedback here. So a couple of polls for you to answer, and you can type in your open-ended feedback as well. So feel free to go ahead and do that, and we're going to leave it there.

So thanks, everyone, for participating today, and hope to see you tomorrow potentially for the end of the institute. Have a great day, everybody, and hope to see you tomorrow and on other events in the institute. Thank you.

OPERATOR: And this concludes today's workshop. You may now disconnect. Presenters, please hold the line.

(END)