**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**ETA 2016 SECTOR STRATEGIES VIRTUAL INSTITUTE**

**Work-Based Learning, Apprenticeship, and Sector Partnerships, Oh My!**

**Thursday, May 19, 2016**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Murrieta, CA*

OPERATOR: Good morning. My name is Benita and I will be your conference operator today. At this time I would like to welcome everyone to the "Work-Based Learning, Apprenticeship, and Sector Partnerships, Oh My!" workshop hosted by Workforce GPS. I would now like to turn the call over to Brian Keating with Maher & Maher. Sir, please go ahead.

BRIAN KEATING: All right. Thanks very much, Bonita. Welcome everyone to another workshop hosted by Workforce GPS, a sector strategies virtual institute. It looks like many of you have already attended a session with us, so I'll keep my remarks pretty brief so we can spend as much time here on the content. It sounds like you've got a pretty good idea of what to expect for today.

But real quick, I did want to welcome everyone to today's Work-Based Learning, Apprenticeship, and Sector Partnerships, Oh My! workshop. For those of you who haven't already done so, please will free to go ahead and introduce yourself in that chat window on your screen. You can let us know what organization or group you're representing today, where you're physically located in the country, and how many are joining you if you happen to be attending in a group today.

Now, we're going to leave that chat window up, if you have questions or comments during the main part of today's presentation. But as we've done before, we are going to be moving to an interactive collaborative breakout session and we'll be talking more about that, but for now, just make sure you know where your mute button is and are ready to chime in verbally, and please minimize any background noise, and we'll remind you about that in a few minutes when we're ready to actually go to that breakout section.

But for now to kick off our content, I'm going to turn things over to one of our presenters, Deb Lyzenga. Deb is a regional business solutions director with West Michigan Works! Deb, take it away.

DEB LYZENGA: Good morning, everyone, and we'll just go through the objectives of our workshop today, and that is to discuss experiential learning within a career pathway, including earn and learn models; show how sector partnerships can play a vital role in expanding workplace learning, including apprenticeships; and explore what states are doing around work-based learning policy.

As Brain said, my name is Deb Lyzenga. I'm from the West Michigan Works!, and that is the – you put up your mitten and you look at the – you put up your hand – and here in West Michigan we say we put up our hand, look at it, and I am on the west side of the state, right in the middle of the state. Scott Sheely a special assistant for Workforce Development from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture will also be joining in this workshop as well.

So just to give you – we're first going to delve into a practice in West Michigan that we have developed around medical assistant apprenticeships and developing career pathways. Just a brief background of West Michigan, it's a seven-county workforce development board. Our second largest city in Michigan is Grand Rapids and that's our main city in the seven-county region.

We have a population of about 1.4 million people, 25 percent of the population is 18 years and under and we have more than 20 colleges in the seven-county region. The last point is about three years ago West Michigan Works!, we as a workforce development board, created a business solutions team that was employer-driven. The team works specifically with employers to solve their talent needs, and that can include anything from finding workers for their current openings to helping upscale their current workforce, connecting them with education partners, and helping to fund those trainings.

So the catalyst – what happened here in West Michigan is we had several things going on. The business solutions team was talking to multiple healthcare organizations. At the same time, they were separate organizations, but we were having the same discussion about the need for talent.

Specifically, it was about the clinical piece of healthcare, medical assistants. Knowing that our job seekers have a choice these days, particularly in West Michigan, of where they want to work, it was becoming a critical issue here in West Michigan that we needed to increase the supply of talent available to our employers.

So the core ingredients of this initiative was that we had similar employers. We had initially five hospitals and healthcare organizations talking to us about the need increasing their medical assistants, and then we also had partnerships between education facilities.

We have three community colleges in our region and they all have medical assistant courses that we could take advantage of, and we, as the workforce board, were the convener of all of the hospitals and the education entities. Then, of course, a core ingredient was the stakeholders – all of us had to collaborate for the good of the community and business. So we had to just come together and agree upon some basic principles.

The reason – sometimes you have to have a good claimant in order for some of these things to come together because the hospitals are highly competitive in West Michigan, as they are, I imagine, in the rest of the country. But we had a very low unemployment rate. West Michigan, the averages falling below 5 percent with several of our counties in 3 percent and below. We lost many of our youth to other states during the great recession, so now we were dealing with zero population growth but high job growth, and it was becoming critical to our economy to keep our youth in West Michigan.

We've all heard, of course – the employers heard and we've all heard about our twenty-somethings coming out of colleges with tens of thousands of dollars in debt, and that was no way to grow the economy in West Michigan. Then our regional data projections in healthcare was going to experience a 15 percent growth for medical assistants over the next 10 years. For West Michigan, that meant we had to produce 329 new educated medical assistants each year, and that does not include turnover or retirement. So we were in trouble. This was a problem.

The hospitals also found a need – they had a proven need that we needed to increase our diversity. People like to see people who look like themselves in the hospital, so we needed to do that, and also that turnover piece.

So this was our model. The slide that you see here was our model for the apprenticeships. The multiple employers were willing to hire the apprentices; the community colleges were willing to come together and negotiate an agreement for a set curriculum and cohort model, and curriculum and standards; they negotiated – the employers negotiated wage commitments and then we had to, as a group, determine the number of apprentices each employer would hire so that we had enough to fill the classes for the community college and the talent needs of the employers.

Then West Michigan Works! came in as a workforce entity into the candidate prescreening and as subsequent, all of that upfront work and that paperwork that employers were very, very happy to relinquish.

Many people ask us how this works out with the braiding of funds, and that was one of the attractiveness to our employers was how we could take workforce dollars and help to educate these students. So what we did is we sat down – and this was part of what West Michigan Works! did – we sat down with each individual student and figured out were they eligible for FAFSA, were they eligible for other grants in the community, or eligible for the WIOA on-the-job training reimbursement.

We also had an apprenticeship program through our skilled trade training funds. That's a $20 million grant put out through the governor's office that employers can apply for. Specifically, the grant pays for $3,000 for each apprentice for an employer. So then, of course, contributions through employers.

Again, the apprentices were hired by the employers, so they had wages right from the beginning. Then the employers, if there was not funding in all of these listed under the potential funding sources, if the student did not meet any of those, the employer tuition contributed – popped in, so that the apprentices had no cost – at least tuition cost to them.

We also looked at – we understand that when you work part-time and going to school, that you have limited funds. So we helped with mileage. We were able to connect with our local DHS office for those that qualify for mileage and uniforms, and we were able to supply on campus parking for the apprentices. So we were really working to make this as low cost to the apprentices as possible.

Of course, this model could not have been done without the cooperation of the stakeholders, and here I have listed our primary stakeholders. Our employers, there was three of them last year in the first cohort. Now we're going into the second cohort and we have two additional hospitals jumping onboard to sign on to those apprenticeship standards.

We had state partners. The office – Dave Jackson and Russell Davis through our state office of U.S. DOL apprenticeships were right there working with us – the entire group working through those standards. Then we had our talent director at the state level as well, helping to just supply any needs that we needed at the state and through the governor's office.

Then, of course, here is our educational partners, Grand Rapids Community College, Montcalm, the community college in Muskegon. They all had to come together. They all had different curriculum, and so everybody had to make changes and to agree that we were going to work together collectively to impact not only our talent in West Michigan, but also the economic – eventually economic – the forecast for West Michigan as well.

So that is just a synopsis of a practice that was here in West Michigan, and now I'm going to turn it over to Scott to talk about sector partnerships.

SCOTT SHEELY: Great. Thank you. It's good to be with you today. Basically, I'm going to, I think, start maybe a little bit higher level type of discussion. Some of you know that I was the executive director of the Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board for 15 years. Then I retired and ended up not retiring after all and back at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

When I got there, the secretary of agriculture who I worked for basically was very interested in thinking about a statewide sector partnership in agriculture and food processing. So I basically took a lot of what I learned at the local level and we're now trying to apply that to the state.

So just kind of walking through that, I could give you some of the steps, but also trying to also talk about tools in the toolbar that can be used whatever level you're working at. We started basically with data, and the data really was an attempt to look in the next 10 years where the agricultural and food industry will be in Pennsylvania and, in particular, trying to look at where we see the occupational openings that would be available and the opportunities there.

So what ended up happening is that the numbers were very interesting. We in Pennsylvania have about 250,000 people working in the agricultural of food industry. About 10 percent of them work in production agriculture and many work in other parts of the industry as well. The Agriculture Department of Pennsylvania also looks at the hardwood industry and also does quite a bit in horticulture.

We supervise the horseracing industry, so there's a variety of other things outside of production culture. But one of the things that the secretary wanted to do is to move away from just thinking about agriculture as production agriculture and begin to think about it as the whole supply chain and more of the food industry as well.

So we have – in our numbers we have looked at food processing at food distribution as well and really find that to be very compatible with a cluster kind of approach, as Michael Porter and other people have done those over the years. Again, within that, we find 250,000-some people, probably another 250,000 who are involved in ancillary industries that are part of the supply chain. As we looked at the projections for the next 10 years, a very minimum 75,000 new and replacement job openings throughout the state.

So I think that gave us kind of a big picture perspective of what we're up against. Yes. It's very similar to many other industries, but when you're at the statewide level, you need, I think, to begin to drill down and begin thinking about how does that actually play out in terms of the employers that you're working with and where you go with that.

So in the midst of this end and kind of the next phase for us was actually a lot of validation of those numbers with employers. We've been seeing at least one or two employers per week for the last probably six months, just asking them about what's going on in their world and what kind of things do we need to address, and really keeping in the back of our mind the sector type of philosophy that we were interested in.

So basically things coming out of that with the rapidly changing pace of technology, we see the employers increasingly focused on their knowledge and skills base and how to keep their workforce up-to-date. Skills are really what employers want and they do ask for degrees and credentials, but as more or less proxies.

What they really want to know, though, is what can people do. We think that as we begin thinking about how we begin to address that, the work-based learning, in its broadest sense – not just the kind of traditional things that we think of – but work-based learning really complements the didactic and it marries very well with this whole approach of employers of skills with knowledge.

The important point, as we get into that conversation, is that we really need to be demand-driven in the way that we approach employers and take seriously what they say. Now, I know we all say that we do it, but really not all of us do it. Listening to the needs of employers in detail is one of the more important ongoing tasks that we have, and that is not surveyed. That is basically people out talking to folks, and, again, trying to find a way to do that so that we and our partners are not contributing to employer fatigue in terms of seeing so many of us coming through their door.

We also found that the employers are differentiating clearly between a soft and hard skills, and one of the things that we have reminded ourselves and I think it's really an important lesson for the workforce system, is that not everybody needs training. Sometimes people just need good career counseling, which can be a challenge for our system as well because many of us, I think, would agree that the people who are our frontline staff do not necessarily all have the kind of counseling that we need to have.

As we begin to look at skills, we're really finding employees talking about three levels of skills. They're talking about the foundational, typical soft skills: attendance, being on time, being drug-free, getting along with others, being prepared for work, all those things are very important.

But we also find them talking about general literacy skills as well: reading for information, locating information, mathematics; the basics. But with many people in my work with the one-stop center, we work down to the basics of things like telling time and making change was really where we were beginning with that. But if that's where we need to start, that's where we need to start.

Then also hard skills. And hard skills – employers will often time-fluff (sic) that off and say, don't worry about it; we'll take care of it. They don't really mean that. They actually do mean that there are some hard skills and would be good for the perspective employer to have as they come into the job.

So we have translated that in terms of things we're doing at the Department of Agriculture in conjunction with our colleagues and the Department of Education and the Department of Labor and Industry to really talk a lot about work-based learning and beyond. Everybody wants to talk about apprenticeships and internships, and that's good. I mean, that's a traditional way of doing that kind of work-based learning, but we think that there are some new kinds of work-based learning that really have not been explored in depth.

We think that micro-skills and micro-credentials that can be learned in short timeframes, can be used immediately on the job have great prospects. There're problems that need to be resolved with that in terms of who grants the credential and kind of the rigor that they are established with. But we believe that there's a lot of possibilities there and we would encourage people to think through some of that as they begin to develop the way that they deal with the whole issue of providing skills for employers.

The other part is that if you stack these credentials with more skill sets and have a strong experiential component, it sounds like a traditional apprenticeship, but it can be kind of broken apart. We believe that these competency-based kind of approaches can be very helpful over time, and many times they can be translated into a formal apprenticeship.

We also think there's great possibilities in hooking up pre-apprenticeships as a bridge back into the K-12 system, that there are many career technical programs that could be places where pre-apprenticeships are done. In many cases, they already have the content that's there, and we think that that becomes part of a conversation with the K-12 system that's worth having.

So I'm sure that I've used up my minutes. Those would be the kind of things that I would want to point out there for discussion.

Brian, at this point, back to you.

MR. KEATING: Great. Thanks so much, Scott. Definitely want to build on the work that we did just now. We are going to move to a facilitated collaborative breakout session and I do want to go ahead and throw up the breakout questions that we're going to be addressing in that conversation.

So here's what we're going to be talking about. We'd like to know: how can we get employers to be more forthcoming about all of their needs; who can better define the needs, HR or production; what strategies are being used to facilitate agreement among employers and sector partnerships around identifying the appropriate credentials, certifications, and/or degrees; how are partners braiding funding to support the development and implementation of sector partnership training and support employer engagement in the process.

So that's what we're going to be asking you. If you're going to be joining us in breakout room one, you're going to be joining us with Beth Brinly, and Beth is the vice president Workforce Innovation with Maher & Maher. Then those of you in breakout room two, we're going to be joined by Diane Walton who's with the Employment and Training Administration in San Francisco.

So what we're going to do is we're going to move you now either to breakout room one or breakout room two. Your phone line is going to be un-muted, so everybody please take a moment and do us a favor and find that mute button; hopefully you have a button on your phone. If not, you can press \*6 once we move you to the breakouts to meet your phone line. This will all be displayed. We do want to encourage you to chime in verbally at any point during these 25 minutes or so. So we are expecting you to participate, but if you have background noise, please go ahead and mute your phone.

You can let us know if you need anything. There's going to be a chat window on your screen where we encourage you to type in who you are as well. We'll announce all that.

All right. So I think we're going to go ahead and actually move to the breakout sessions now. So Bonita, if you could go ahead move us audio-wise. We're going to go ahead and start the breakouts now. We'll see everybody in about 20, 25 minutes.

(breakout session)

All right. I think we're back to the main conference. Is that true, Bonita?

OPERATOR: You're back in the main conference.

MR. KEATING: All right. Perfect. Thank you so much. All right. Well, thanks everyone for all of your participation today. We are going to go ahead and move now to a quick review of what we covered during those breakout sessions, so thanks everyone for participating and hopefully you got a lot out of the conversation that you had in the breakout itself.

We're going to start with the breakout I was in with Beth Brinly. Thanks so much for facilitating that conversation, Beth. For the benefit of those who weren't in our breakout, we want to give you an opportunity now. Here are some notes we took. If you could just give us a quick overview of what we talked about in that breakout room one.

BETH BRINLY: Absolutely. Thanks, Brian. So in breakout room one, we had a great discussion. As we talked about the first question about how do we get employers to be more forthcoming about what their needs are and whether we need to engage HR and production, it was important conversations that we really need to develop relationships up front among our business partners so that we can get the type of valuable input that we need, and that they felt pretty strongly that both HR and production add important things to the conversation.

HR is that understanding of skills and abilities, and that employers need to know that what they're going to share with us is going to be held confidential if we're going to be able to get what we need from them.

These were part of the table too that often times those conversations are about specialized areas and we need to talk to those subject matter experts to bring that to the table. Then as our conversation moved into how do we reach consistent among employers, folks said that surveys might be a great way to begin to gather data, but that there's also some great opportunities to use the customer-centered design framework here as a way to have the conversation and reach consensus among employers about the foundational and practical skills that need to be adopted.

We talked a little bit too about an emerging fast track training model with employers, serving as volunteers to lead workshops that could reduce the cost of training, provide more relevant targets , and employers can cap the job candidates using that framework. We did talk a little bit about the customer-centered design framework and there was the opportunity to talk about the elements of that.

I won't go into detail, but if you're interested in it, we sure have more information on Workforce GPS or on ION about customer-centered design as a tool that helps you in the process.

What strategies are being used to identify credentials and certifications? The conversation really got started by using career pathway, tapping into O\*NET resources to start the discussion, using job profiling and testing through the National Career Readiness Certificate and WorkKeys as an opportunity to move as a baked credential that could be helpful to individual customers that we could analyze job descriptions to start the needed certifications while assisting trainers in the colleges for live training.

Finally, in Minnesota, that they heard a great deal about the need for digital literacy, and we had a great conversation about digital literacy being as a very important foundational skill, along with those technical skills, and so very important.

There were a couple of other things that we talked about. We talked a little bit about braiding funds, and our friends in California talked about Prop 39 as a mean for tapping the funds. We talked about state rapid response funds they use to support stacker partners and their work, and then also that there are some great resources at workforce GPS to provide information.

Then our last discussion was do you have an apprenticeship program as part of your sector partnership work, and we heard about some good work that's been going on in Georgia in advanced manufacturing and they're moving into the healthcare sector. Then in California that they're working to leverage machine in the apprenticeship program with Parker synergized the community on an apprenticeship. Then finally someone suggested the use of the competency model framework to braid foundational skills and industry-wide skills together.

So with that, that's a quick summary of what we talked about and our whirlwind discussion in breakout room one. Diane?

DIANE WALTON: Wow. So we had lots of the same things. They're going to put the notes up so I don't tell stories about what we talked about. But it's so great when people – when we get to hear what other people are doing.

We had the good fortune to have Scott Sheely as a continued presence in our conversation, and his wisdom about how you actually get meaningful conversations with employers that lead to being able to feed their business and feed the economy – so useful; the discussions about operational versus HR, kind of interesting; and then what the pre-approach – like if you've got a leader in the organization – if you've got the president or somebody who can vouch for you on the way in, it somehow is just much easier.

The importance of knowing the needs of the people with whom you speak; the importance of speaking their language; you just – don't be afraid to ask because in asking, you're going to learn how to meet the needs of employers and there are lots of opportunities that are going to become available and you also need to be responsible for knowing what we've got in the workforce system that could actually meet the needs.

So we're all trying to get better and know more about registered apprenticeship and how that can be part of the talent solution, and so we're working on that. So that was – that's quick on that one.

Also, the use of staffing patterns – like, really, really, the amount you know across employers in a given industry is going to really be the key to how much you get out of those conversations. So keep learning.

Let's see what else. Really, really, really huge was finding commonalities. All right. So we have some rural areas. We have some areas where there are population declines, as well as layoffs – different problems in different areas, and it all comes back to knowing where there is a light that you can head for and how to build around that.

The think that Scott had brought up earlier in the discussion was that employers are looking for skills. They may voice it as credentials or certifications or degrees, but they're looking for skills, and so how that gets put together – and we talked about a couple of tools. The NIMS tools, some other ones out there to measure the work readiness credential – those kinds of things that just give a little bit of bolstering to the discussion might be of use to you.

This use of – it's not all not all on you and it's not all one-to-one with the employers. So as you start working with more consortiums of employers, more consortiums, then that's just going to give you a broader base and allow you to be more successful.

And we just kept talking, but we never did get to the money part. That's what I know.

MR. KEATING: All right. Great. Thanks so much, Diane. All right. Great.

MS. BRINLY: I wanted to add one other thing. We were talking Diane that – our group talked about how important it was to have a business champion leading the discussion that folks could feel more comfortable opening up when they have business champion leading conversations.

MS. WALTON: Yes. We did talk about that too, but it's – and sometimes you just – you have to keep going further and further up the food chain to get some results coming back down sometimes, and there are some tricks to doing that as well. But, yes, champions matter.

MR. KEATING: All right. Great. I guess I'm going to turn it back to you, Deb, real quick. We've got – if there's any other questions we want to address now, otherwise we've got I know some contact information and we want to encourage folks to stay logged in here so that they can give us feedback, and hopefully they'll join us for the closing plenary and any other workshops that are still available. Deb, I'll turn it back to you if you have any other thoughts or closing remarks.

MS. LYZENGA: Really appreciate the discussion that went on during the breakout sessions and was wondering if we could get those notes. I think that that would be – the breakout -- (inaudible) -- note, I think that that would be very valuable for each of the participants to receive.

MR. KEATING: Happy to. All right. Great. Well, thanks for that suggestion. We'll definitely talk about that. What we'll do is any handouts we want to make available we can post on the resources page. Everybody, just to make it clear – and this is true throughout this week's events – we have already started to post the recordings or we will be posting the recording in a couple of business days. So where you went to register, that'll become the resources page and you can go back and access the recording, the transcripts, and any other handouts that we make available.

For those of you who might want to join, there's a whole list of events for the week that you can find just by doing a search for sector strategies virtual institute. But, there's also a link here to the closing plenary, so feel free to go ahead and register, if you haven't already done that yet. We'd love to see you on Friday afternoon to close out the week of events.

All right. Great. All right. Well, I think that's it then. Unless there's any other feedback anybody from the team has that we want to give, we'll go ahead and close our today's event. Any other thoughts, Beth, or anybody else on the team? Diane?

MS. BRINLY: Well -- (inaudible) -- was making a note about we hadn't really had a chance to talk about internship opportunities. In our breakout room, we actually talked about internships as a real means of opportunity not only for the experience with the individual customer, but also as a friendship bracing opportunity with employers, as we're building trust and credibility of the workforce system, partner with them that that's a great way to move along the workplace on a continuing. So great note and shout-out by somebody.

MR. KEATING: All right. Excellent. Thanks for addressing that. All right. Great. Well, you see some content information. This content is all available. You can download it from the files window here on your screen, or it's available on that resources page I referenced earlier. I want to thank all of you for participating with us today and everybody for – also to our presenters for helping facilitate that conversation.

Before we let you go, we would like you to give us some quick feedback, so you'll notice that coming up on your screen now. Go ahead and just vote on some of these polls and then give us your open-ended comments. We'll leave the webinar room open for a few minutes to give you an opportunity to do that.

Otherwise, though, we are going to call it a day for this session and we do want to encourage you to join us on any other sessions that might be available the rest of the week – today or tomorrow, and hope you can join us at least for the closing plenary tomorrow and hope to see you on other events in this series.

So we'll leave it there. Thanks everyone for joining us today and hope you can join us on other sessions in the institute, and review any that you have missed so far.

Thanks so much, everybody, and we'll see you on the next session.

(END)