**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)**

**National Grantee Orientation, Day 2**

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*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Murrieta, CA*

(Music.)

MICHI MCNEACE: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Michi McNeace as Laura mentioned and I'll be your moderator for today's session. So we welcome you to the second part of the national grantee orientation.

And we do have a full agenda today, which we have for about two hours; and we understand that two hours might be quite be a long time to be sitting in front of a computer screen. So please at any time that you feel you need to push away, stretch your legs, please do so.

As Laura mentioned earlier, the webinar is being recorded and will be posted on our older workers community of practice within two to three business days. So if you feel that you missed anything you can always go back and go through the recording.

Today's objective. Today we're going to hopefully cover everything that you might need to know – a high-level overview of the SCSEP performance and data management system. You're going to learn a little bit about the SPARQ overview. You're going to get a little bit of in-depth information about the QPR and of course, performance measures. And then we'll talk about the next steps.

So with that being said, what I'd like to do is introduce today's presenters, which is Mr. Bennett Pudlin with Charter Oak and Terry Cram with BCT Partners.

Before we get started we have a poll that we would like for you guys to participate in. The poll question is, what do you know about the SCSEP performance system? The questions you can choose from is, it won at Daytona last year; it keeps your staff motivated; something related to the Common Core curriculum; the performance measures and related data collected by SCSEP.

We're going to give you a couple minutes to provide an answer, and right now it seems as though – Bennett and Terry, we seem to have 100 percent who all selected number four, the performance measures and related data collected by SCSEP.

So with that I'm going to go ahead and hand it over to Mr. Bennett Pudlin and he'll get us started. Bennett?

BENNETT PUDLIN: Thank you, Michi, and good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to what we hope will be the first in a series of modules presenting aspects of the SCSEP performance system.

Today's presentation, as Michi said, is designed to provide a high-level overview of all the components of the system. For new grantees and for new staff of current grantees this will be an important overview that will lead to more in-depth training. For the rest of you, this will just be a refresher – at least we hope it will be just a refresher.

So there are six major components in the current SCSEP performance system. First we have six core measures and three additional measures required by the Older Americans Act. Second, the customer satisfaction surveys of our three clients groups – participants, host agencies, and employers.

Third, the annual minority report required by the Older Americans Act and addressed in your annual grant application. Fourth, the SPARQ data collection system required by the SCSEP regulations and your grant agreement.

Fifth, data validation required for all DOL Employment and Training Administration programs. And last, InfoSPACE, an interactive reporting tool linked to SPARQ.

At the end of the presentation we'll talk about changes to the performance system made by the most recent amendments to the Older Americans Act.

The core measures used by SCSEP are a balance between those that measure various aspects of service to participants and those that look at aspects of the employment outcomes achieved by our participants. This balance reflects the twin goals of SCSEP – providing community service opportunities to as many qualified participants as possible, and providing increased self-sufficiency through unsubsidized employment.

The core measures all have negotiated goals for which grantees are accountable. The first three measures all relate to a participation in the program. Service level; this is about serving as many participants as possible by maintaining a healthy turnover rate. On average, grantees provide service during a program year to about 1.6 participants per each authorized position in their grant.

Second, community service. This is providing participants with the number of community service hours that the grant can support. DOL expects grantees to stay fully enrolled and to provide all participants between 18 and 22 hours per week of community service.

And third, the most-in-need measure. In addition to the basic eligibility requirements, grantees are required to enroll and serve participants who are most in need as defined by Congress.

The second set of measures all focus on employment outcomes. Entered employment. Do participants get unsubsidized jobs when they leave the program? Employment retention. Did those jobs last? And average earnings. Did those jobs pay well?

Of course the core measures do not capture all the dimensions of good customer service and important customer outcomes. Does SCSEP has additional measures that supplement the core measures – can we advance the slide, please?

So the core measures don't capture all the dimensions of good customer services and important customer outcomes, but SCSEP has additional measures that supplement the core measures. These additional measures do not have goals, but grantee performance on them is published.

The first is retention at one year. This extends the core retention measures from the first three-quarters after exit to the fourth quarter after exit. Customer satisfaction looks at many aspects of services to the three customer groups and the outcomes achieved by each. And last, volunteer work examines an important participant outcome that is strongly related to participant well-being after exit from the program. Do participants engage in volunteer activities after they leave SCSEP?

The negotiation process for the performance measures has been in place for the last 12 years and is largely unchanged. In the spring we determine each grantee's performance for the first three-quarters of the current program year. We use this performance as the baseline for building the goals for the next year.

Grantees below the national average on a measure have a goal that is designed to move them closely to the nationwide average. DOL is aiming to move grantees 75 percent of the way from their own baseline performance to the nationwide average.

Grantees above the nationwide average for a measure usually have a small continuous improvement increment added to their baseline performance. All goals have caps and floors. In addition we make various adjustments to the proposed goals based on certain statutory factors, like high unemployment or poverty rates; and for data issues, like the number of rejects or for very small denominators, which make the data unreliable.

Grantees can negotiate if they don't think their goals are reasonable. The negotiation can cover anything the grantee wants except the methodology used to setting the proposed goals. However, the negotiation must be based on data supplied by the grantee.

Final goals are incorporated into the grant agreement for the new program year and are published. Grantees can submit comments to be published along with their goals if they still think the goals are unreasonable. If circumstances change during the new program year grantees can seek an adjustment of their goals. The adjustment can be requested at any time up to the formal closing of the program year on September 30 or thereabouts of the following year. We'll have more to say about adjusting goals for the national grantees at the end of the presentation.

Grantees are evaluated annually on their performance and their performance on each core and additional measure is published. In addition, an aggregate percentage for the six core measures is calculated. If the aggregate is less than 80 percent the grantee must do a corrective action plan. If a grantee is above 80 percent in the aggregate but less than 80 percent on specific measures the grantee may be required to receive technical assistance.

If a state grantee fails to achieve at least 80 percent of its aggregate goals for three consecutive years or if a national grantee fails for four consecutive years, that grantee may not receive a grant for the following year. We've come close in a few instances but it has never happened in the 12 years that the law has been in effect.

All the resources you need to understand the SCSEP performance system are available on the older worker community of practice on WorkforceGPS. The major sources are the statute, which defines the requirements; and the regulations, which contain additional details.

The department issues various guidance to grantees from time to time and also provides technical guides like handbooks. Over the years we've also developed a large inventory of recorded trainings of various sorts. All of these are available on the community of practice.

Customer satisfaction. As I mentioned before, we're required to survey all of our customer groups – participants, host agencies, and employers. The surveys for host agencies and participants are conducted annually by mail house. We usually do it in the fall. Grantees are required to help support that effort by informing all participants and host agencies that surveys are coming and that it's very important that they been filled out and returned.

Unlike the participant and host agency surveys, the employer surveys are conducted locally by subgrantees on a continuing basis and are delivered to qualified employers only. There is a SPARQ management report – Terry will be talking about those reports later – that lists all qualified employers and tells grantees when they need to deliver the surveys.

Resources here are the Older Americans Act, the SCSEP regulations; the community of practice does contain copies of all the prior annual surveys as well as a package called the employer survey kit, which contains everything grantees and subgrantees need to have for administering the surveys; and, as I mentioned, the pending employer survey management report, which tells you who to survey and when.

So at this point we should be on another poll.

MS. MCNEACE: Yes, Bennett, we have another poll, which will be a great segue into our next session. The poll question says, "What is the minority report?" The answers that you can select from – a report presented by less than half of the members of a committee; the 2002 movie with Tom Cruise; or an annual report of SCSEP service to minorities. We'll give it a couple of seconds to see what kind of responses we get in.

So far the annual report of SCSEP service to minorities by 92 percent. And I agree; I thought it was the 2002 movie with Tom Cruise. I'm going to put my vote on that bullet there.

MR. PUDLIN: All right. Well, let's not keep people in suspense.

MS. MCNEACE: Such suspense. OK. We're going to move on.

MR. PUDLIN: All right. So the minority report has been produced every year since program year 2007, and it is based on – well, it's got two parts. There is a participation section of the report that compares enrollment in SPARQ of each minority group against its proportion in the population overall.

The population estimates are based on weighted Census data for each county in a state served by a grantee. The Census data look at SCSEP-eligible minorities in the population. The report lags the SCSEP program year because we have to wait for the census to provide us with the data.

The PY 2014 report, which is the most recent one, was issued in the spring of 2016, and it uses Census data from 2010 through 2014. Those are the latest data available. We are expecting to get the data from 2011 through 2015 right after the start of the New Year this winter.

The second part of the report is the outcome section. This compares employment outcomes recorded in SPARQ, that we look at those achieved for each minority group and compare them to the outcomes achieved by nonminorities. If any significant disparities are identified in the report, grantees are required to address those disparities in their annual grant application narrative each spring.

The TEGL for the annual grant application contains the instructions for responding the latest program year minority report. And like the customer satisfaction surveys, the report itself, as well as the recorded webinar on how to use it, are available on the community of practice.

And I think we are due for another poll and then I'm going to pass it over to Terry.

MS. MCNEACE: Actually what we're going to do is, Laura, we would like to go ahead and open it up for questions and answers at this time.

LAURA CASERTANO: Sure. So if you are joined in over the phone, to unmute your line you're just going to hit \*6. You can introduce yourself, ask your question, make your comment, and that'll open the dialogue. And then once you're done speaking just make sure to hit \*6 again and that'll remute your line. (Pause.)

MS. MCNEACE: We have one question that came through. It said, "When will new grantees obtain access to SPARQ?" Terry, would you like to go ahead and answer that?

TERRY CRAM: Well, I'm actually not sure when they will be authorized to get into SPARQ. We can set up the accounts as soon as they are authorized, but that would be up to the national office to decide. I don't know if you've made that decision or not.

MS. MCNEACE: I believe once the new grantees receive their NOAs and they have been officially that they receive their award agreement, at that point in time then we would move forward with accessing them SPARQ rights. I believe there's going to be additional guidance sent out to all new grantees.

And we have another question that came through. "How does DOL set performance goals for new national grantees?" Bennett?

MR. PUDLIN: Sure. We're going to mention that at the end. But the FOA specifies that new grantees do not have goals for this year. Instead, they have what are called targets. Those are based on the average national grantee goals of all the national grantees.

So it's to give you something to shoot for, gives you a sense of what your colleagues on average are doing; and as targets they're not subject to sanctions. But they're an important tool to help you come up to speed next year when you will have goals and you'll go through the normal goal-setting process in the spring.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. We have another question that came through. "One of the slides mentioned needing 80 percent of the goal. Is that all performance measures total or for each performance measure?"

MR. PUDLIN: So for the statutory evaluation it's all six core measures in the aggregate. We just compute a simple average of your percent of goal for each of the measures. But when DOL looks at grantees in need of technical assistance it looks individually at each measure, and you can be over 80 percent in the aggregate – you can be over 100 percent in the aggregate and yet do poorly on one or more measures because you've done very well on some other measures.

So in order to get a more accurate picture of grantees who need assistance, DOL looks at each individual measure both in terms of your actual – your performance against goal but also your actual performance. If you are doing well below the nationwide average on your actual performance, even if your percent of goal is over 80, DOL is flagging that.

And I believe we sent out the PY '15 evaluation of grantee performance recently?

MS. MCNEACE: Yes, sir. We did. It was the latter half of last week, I believe.

MR. PUDLIN: Right. So every grantee got that. And if you look at that spreadsheet you'll see the first column shows your aggregate percent of goal. But then the subsequent columns list each individual measure, and if you're below 80 percent of the nationwide average in your actual performance or below 80 percent of your own goal for a given measure, the cells there will be highlighted in orange, I believe, as a flag.

And if you go all the way to the right, the last two columns give you a count of how many measures you've fallen below that level in.

MS. MCNEACE: Great. I don't see any new questions coming through. And again, any time we open up for questions and answers we would love to hear from you, so please hit \*6 to unmute your phone line. That way we can have a verbal conversation as well.

No new questions coming through so we're going to go ahead and plow forward.

So we have another one of our poll questions. The question is, "What is SPARQ?" Choose from five answers. The first one is, yes, my son just bought a pair; speed, power, agility, reaction, and quickness; the SCSEP data collection and reporting system; it precedes a flame; or a very nasty disease. Give it a couple seconds.

And 92 percent selected the SCSEP data collection and reporting system. OK. We had a little handful that said it might be a very nasty disease. We're not sure, but we're going to go ahead and move forward. At this time I would like to introduce Terry Cram, who is going to either give us the correct answer or the wrong answer; right, Terry?

MS. CRAM: Hi, everybody. I suspected the people who chose "nasty disease" are all experienced users. (Chuckles.)

I just want to let you know, Michi, that my screen also froze, so I am not able to see the presentation; I'm following along in my own copy. I assume we're on slide 23 right now?

MS. MCNEACE: Yes, we are.

MS. CRAM: OK. Great. Thanks.

So SPARQ stands for SCSEP Performance and Results QPR system, and it is an online system for collecting and reporting SCSEP data.

SPARQ contains the web data collection system – which we almost always refer to as the WDCS – for entering data. It has the quarterly progress reports, which we always call QPRs; management reports; and various utilities for tasks such as transferring participants to another grantee or extending a participant's durational limit.

InfoSPACE is an additional system for reporting. It draws on SPARQ data to provide performance reports over time and interactive tools, but it is not actually part of SPARQ. Bennett will speak about that later. For now I'll just be concentrating on SPARQ.

All grantees and subgrantees will have access to SPARQ. All of them should use SPARQ whether they're doing data entry or just using the reports to monitor the program or both.

Security is an ever-increasing concern because SPARQ contains sensitive information about participants, including PII – enough information that people could steal identities. Grantees must ensure that they're using, understand, and comply with all of the SPARQ security rules. They should also ensure that all hard copy information is properly secured.

The security rules are a part of the getting-an-account process, so if you don't already have an account, when you write to us we'll send you the specific information about those rules.

SPARQ has many features beyond data collection. It is designed to collect all of the data required for the performance reporting, and it also contains many case management and diagnostic features. In addition to the numerous management reports, grantees can download complete data extracts, which they can use to create their own reports and analyses.

When you first log into SPARQ you'll be brought to the SPARQ homepage. Announcements are posted on the center of the page, and these announcements may provide information about recent releases or reminders about upcoming deadlines and any information that may be pertinent about changes; for example, when the persistent unemployment tables are updated.

The menu on the left shows what each individual user has access to. The menu on this slide shows the functions that grantee administrators can access.

The second-to-last choice SPARQ user accounts is only visible to grantee administrators and subgrantee administrators. I'll talk about this a little bit more later, but administrators must use this function to monitor their SPARQ accounts, especially as soon as they become aware that a user no longer needs SPARQ. They must notify SCSEP help so that the account can be removed.

The last choice, my user info, is available to all users and everyone should use this function to reset their passwords frequently. For security reasons the password must be reset at least once every 90 days, although it is possible and recommended to reset it more frequently.

Now, if you look at the light blue bar at the top of the page you will see a link for WDCS.

All grantees are required to use the WDCS to enter data on participants, host agencies, and employees. The data fields are listed in the four hard copy data collection forms that are approved by OMB, and those forms are available on the Charter Oak website.

The WDCS follows the same order, uses the same names and numbers of the fields that are in the hard copy form. Grantees can capture the data in the hard copy form and then enter them into SPARQ; they can enter the data directly in SPARQ; or they can capture the data in their own data systems and then enter the data into SPARQ.

We are exploring the ability to upload data from a grantee's data system directly into SPARQ, but for now, grantees that have their own systems have to do dual entry.

Grantees are obligated to ensure timely and accurate data entry. Since the data entry is usually done through subgrantees, the grantees need to have appropriate language in their subgrant arrangements to hold subgrantees accountable.

SPARQ was built originally as a performance reporting system, but over the years it has acquired much case management functionality. We hope to increase that functionality as resources permit. Just so you know, many of the optional fields in SPARQ were added at the request of grantees for case management purposes.

SPARQ is designed to minimize errors. Many fields will only accept certain values. Some fields that have edits will not allow you to save data or leave a screen if you have entered information that is clearly wrong. The enrollment-level data quality problems, or EDQP, will show you all errors in a record before you leave it; and the data quality reports, or DQRs, will show you all of the errors in your database.

With all of these data checks it is easily possible to have close to perfect data if grantees make that a priority.

When a user enters the WDCS they will see a screen that enables them to perform several functions. You can add records; search for and edit the existing record of an individual participant.

There are also three administrative functions at the top of the page. The organization function is used to edit data regarding host agencies, training providers, and employers. The CSA hours and waiver factor functions allow users to enter data from multiple participants on one screen rather than having to pull up the record for each individual participant. So at the end of a quarter when you have to enter the CSA hours for hundreds or thousands of participants, this makes it a lot easier.

When entering or editing the data for an individual participant, users will use the functions shown at the bottom of this slide depending on whether they want to edit the enrollment or add an assignment, edit an assignment or placement. They will use the various buttons that you see at the bottom of the page.

If we could go to slide 29. This slide shows – as an example we're showing one of the screens in the enrollment record. As mentioned earlier, SPARQ is designed to minimize data entry errors, and this data entry screen is showing the example of a screen edit.

At the top you'll see that red message. That particular message is regarding an invalid formatting problem. The record cannot be saved until that error is corrected. And you'll notice a small number of fields that have a dagger next to them. In this example the daggers are next to fields 1, 4, and 9. There are screen edits that will not allow the record to be saved unless data is entered in all of those fields.

And this slide also shows an example of a drop-down, which is offered to users so they cannot inadvertently make an invalid entry. So this kind of message or option stops the user from ever even entering the incorrect information before they can save the record.

After a record is saved, the user can access the EDQP to see if there are any data issues that were not prevented by the screen edits. In these cases SPARQ allows the record to be saved even though certain pieces of data are missing in recognition of the possibility that the user needs to do some research to collect that particular piece of information. The user can check this screen to be sure that they have entered all of the data correctly while they still have the file open on their desk so they don't have to go pulling data later.

You'll notice that there are different error types that are color coded to indicate the level of severity. A reject, which is highlighted in red, indicates that the record will not be included in the QPR at al. A warning, highlighted in yellow, indicates that the record will be included in the QPR but may not be properly counted in every single place that it should be counted.

There is another level of error not shown on this slide, called the duration reject. Durational limit includes all time in the program since July 2007 under all grantees. And since no individual grantee has information about the participant's experience under other grantees – if they had transferred or if they had left the program and come back – SPARQ is the only source for durational limit dates.

You have to check SPARQ in order to find out whether or not a participant – find out what a participant's durational limit date. Therefore, it is imperative that all data used to calculate duration be up-to-date and accurate as possible.

A durational limit reject indicates that the record will not be included in the QPR, but also that there is some situation in the data that may be causing the participant's durational limit date to be calculated incorrectly. This kind of error should always be dealt with immediately.

Coming back to the SPARQ homepage, you'll see two options for viewing the QPRs. Under reporting, the final QPRs link takes you to a screen that displays the QPRs for all grantees for all time periods. Under monitoring, the QPR review link takes you to a screen that displays the in-progress QPRs for the grantee or subgrantee that the user's role provides access to.

Slide 32. In the example on this slide, the user's role only provides access to the example grantee, so he or she only has buttons allowing access to the reports for that grantee. Bennett will be covering the QPR in detail so I won't go into that now, but I would like to call your attention to the other buttons.

The DQR button displays the report showing all data errors including rejects and warnings. The rejects button displays a report showing both regular rejects and durational rejects. The DUR rejects button displays a report showing just the durational rejects. Ideally that report should be empty at all times, and grantees should use this report often to make sure that durational limit can be calculated correctly for all participants at all times.

Now, if you look back at the menu on the left under reporting, the first link which is management reports, you'll see there are 21 management reports that allow grantees to monitor various aspects of the program. They're broken into six categories: applicant, participant, follow-up, action, host agencies, and employers. Obviously there's too much to go into every single one of those reports, but on slide 34 we'll look at one.

The current exited report is one that you'll probably use quite often. Using that as an example you can see that we have several options. Most reports offer the option of showing results, summary, and/or result details.

Many of the reports offer ways to filter the results; for example, by showing records within a certain date range or that meet some other condition. In this case you can choose to see all currently active enrollments, exited enrollments, or both. You also have the option of showing all assignments or only the current or latest assignment.

Under system tools there are two search functions, participant search and organization search. Those links are available to grantee administrators, grantees, subgrantee administrators, and subgrantees.

The participant search allows users to search by last name, Social Security number, or participant ID to find basic information about existing participants, including whatever enrollments they have had under whatever grantees they may have been with. This function must be used as part of the eligibility determination process to ensure that an applicant is not already a participant under a different grantee or subgrantee.

The organization search allows users to search by organization name or FEIN. And if you desire, you can also limit the search to a specific state. This allows users to find information about the host organization, including which grantee and subgrantee own the record.

The transfer change and durational limit extension utilities are only accessible by grantee administrators. Grantees can use the transfer change utility to submit requests to transfer participants from one grantee to another or to move participants from one subgrantee to subgrantee within the same grantee. The transition transfers will be entered in bulk by SCSEP Help so you won't need to worry about those.

Grantees who allow extensions can use the durational limit extension utility to submit requests for extensions. Even if you don't allow extensions, if a participant who has already received an extension is transferred to you, then you can use this utility to view information about that extension.

Slide 37. The data validation, or DV, utility is only available to users with a role of validator. This slide shows the menu for users with two roles, one for grantee administrator and one for validator. Sometimes a validator is a staff member that should not have access to other SPARQ functions, so if you need to you can assign a user just that one role of validator; in which case they would only see links for the DV utility and the my user info.

Bennett will be reviewing DV in more detail later, but for now I'll just point out that you have two basic options. You can either export the sample to a CSV file or download the spreadsheets, record the results outside of SPARQ, and then enter them into SPARQ; or you can open the individual worksheets in SPARQ and record the results as you go along. Either way, when you're done you can review a report of the results.

As mentioned, administrators are responsible for monitoring user accounts. The SPARQ user accounts link is only visible to grantee administrators and subgrantee administrators. This page provides a list of all accounts to have access to the data and/or reports for the subgrantee of that grantee or subgrantee.

So in other words, the subgrantee administrator can only see the accounts for people in that sub; a grantee administrator can see the accounts for everybody in the grantee level or subgrantee level.

Administrators can use this function to add new accounts, revise information on existing accounts, add new roles, and reset passwords. You should watch out in the account status, which on this screen just has a blank. If it shows that the account is expired, that means that the user has not reset their password in at least 90 days or longer.

So if you know that the user still needs the account then you would reset their password. If you realize that the user no longer needs their account then you would contact SCSEP Help to have it removed. And removing the accounts – as I mentioned in the security sections, removing the accounts of people who no longer need access, that's an important part of keeping the data secure.

The extract files link is only available to grantee administrators. Clicking on this link brings you to a page that allows you to download the most recent extracts for your grantee. You can actually generate those extracts yourself at any time that you need them, and once they are generated you would download them as CSV files. If you need to work with those we can give you information on how to join the files as needed. You just contact the SCSEP Help for that.

And before I finish I would like to point out that the top right, in that light blue bar, see the help link near the top right corner? This link is available on every page in SPARQ. You can even access it from the welcome page before you log in. The online help system provides information about most functions in SPARQ. SCSEP Help also maintains a help website with more detailed information and a help desk where users can reach out for individual assistance. Details on those resources will be provided at a later date.

And now I think we're back to Bennett.

MR. PUDLIN: Thank you, Terry. Yes, we're up to slide 39.

So we mentioned InfoSPACE as a component of the performance system. InfoSPACE uses software called Business Objects to permit more sophisticated analysis of SCSEP data than SPARQ is currently capable of. All grantee administrators are able to have access to InfoSPACE.

The latest version, 2.1, has much enhanced functionality including the ability to customize the reporting and to analyze performance measures by participant characteristics. It also allows users to examine multiple dimensions that may impact performance, like race and education at the same time.

And at the most basic level, it allows you to look at multiple QPRs in a single view. You can look at – not QPRs, per se – but data on measures in the QPR. So without having to open multiple QPRs you can look at all of your entered employment performance going back to PY 2012; or you can look at the performance of all the grantees in a state or all the grantees in a region without opening multiple QPRs.

InfoSPACE will be made available to subgrantee administrators incrementally once we know that it can handle additional traffic without compromising performance. A new release, 2.2, is expected soon; please stay tuned.

There are numerous resources to help you manage data collection and reporting, and all of them are accessible through the community of practice.

SCSEP is a targeted leads-based government program with detailed rules; and as a consequence SPARQ II can be complex. It's not reasonable to expect new staff to memorize everything, but they should know where to go to find the answers.

For data collection, the data collection handbook, supplemented by the Ask The Experts forum online, is essential. Subgrantees should have the handbook handy at their desks and should have the forum bookmarked on their computers. Terry mentioned other resources available directly from SPARQ and on the SCSEP Help page, and staff need to be aware of those as well.

Terry talked a little bit about data validation. It is required of all ETA programs. SCESEP has been conducting data validation – affectionately known as DV – since PY 2007. Grantees must appoint as validators people who have no connection with the collection of data or the entry of data by their subrecipients.

DV can be done in person at the subgrantee office or the grantee can have the subgrantee mail copies of the sample files to the grantee. The DV samples are drawn in the fall after the program year has closed. You should all be aware that we just drew the samples for the PY '16 data validation.

The samples appear in SPARQ in the form of worksheets listing the elements and each individual record to be validated. The validator marks those elements as pass or fail, and SPARQ produces a report of the results at the grantee level.

They are currently no consequences attached to the DV report; however, grantees are expected to use the results of their data validation to identify the need for additional training and oversight.

The validation for the program year has two samples. The first, the eligibility sample, is drawn from the records of those participants who are newly enrolled in the program year that just closed. For the data validation that's taking place during PY 2016 this sample contains new enrollments during 2015.

The second sample is the performance sample, and this is drawn from those participants who exited in the program year before the program year that just closed. For the data validation taking place this year, PY 2016, the sample contains participants who exited during PY 2014.

Here's the major resource that grantees and subgrantees need, the data validation handbook. It is written both for validators so they know what to look for, and for case workers at the local level so they know what documentation they're supposed to be collecting in the first place.

Like everything else, it can be accessed through the community of practice. We're in the process of revising the data validation handbook for this year. The revisions will not be significant and for the most part not substantive at all. But as we do every year, we want to keep it up-to-date and in sync with the latest developments.

It's essential that grantees train their subgrantees on the DV requirements. It's also essential that the subgrantees are trained in the basic data collection requirements that are contained in the data collection handbook. The data collection handbook requirements are explicitly incorporated into the data validation requirements. You can't do one without the other.

And now I think we are going to open it up for questions again. Is that right, Michi?

MS. MCNEACE: Yep. We are now going to open it up for questions and answers. Laura?

MS. CASERTANO: Yes.

MS. MCNEACE: We would love to hear from you verbally, so if you guys would like to unmute your phone lines and talk to Bennett or Terry hit \*6 to unmute your lines. Or of course we will take any questions in the chat box. We'll give it a couple of minutes. We see some questions being typed in. (Pause.)

OK. We received a question. It says, "We've observed a SPARQ reject in gray and not in red. Are there any special circumstances for that reject?"

MS. CRAM: Hi, this is Terry. Every monitor shows the colors a little different. I suspect that what you're seeing as gray is what I see as white. If it's at the top of the list – it says "duration reject" – that's how the duration rejects are displayed, in the brightest white so that – it's supposed to catch your attention.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. And we have another question. "Is there a limit on the number of administrators for a national grantee?"

MS. CRAM: Actually yes. There is a limit of three administrators at the grantee level and one administrators for each subgrantee.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you, Terry.

MS. CRAM: Just so you know, you have as many regular grantees and as many regular subgrantees as you need. It's just the administrators that have that limit.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you, Terry. We have some questions being typed in, so we'll give it a few. (Pause.)

OK. We're going to go ahead and move forward and we're going to start off our next segment with another poll. So Laura? (Pause.)

Our next poll reads, do you understand your QPR? The answers you can select from is, well, yes, I do; well, some of it; it's too many numbers; and no way. Let's see what we're getting. Right now "yes, I do" is leading, followed by "some of it." (Pause.)

So I have to say that Terry and Bennett, you guys have done a wonderful job of explaining and helping the grantees understand their QPR. So with that being said we're going to go ahead and move on to the next segment.

MR. PUDLIN: OK. So we should be on slide 46. And at the risk of confusing people who think they know what's going on, we're going to go at kind of a higher level before we drill down into the QPR.

As I said earlier, the SCSEP performance measures support the dual goals of the program – community service opportunities and increased self-sufficiency through unsubsidized employment. The performance measures also relate to key program components into the delivery of service to our clients.

On the next page we're going to look at a simplified flowchart that shows each major cluster of program activity and the performance measures to which it relates. As we'll see when you examine measures in detail, the measures also relate to and reinforce each other so that improvement in one measure may lead to improvement in another. In fact, improvement in one measure is often essential for improvement in another. So let's take a look at that flowchart.

I'm just going to walk you through this briefly, and please remember, it's a highly simplified view that omits many important details.

We start at recruitment. This is essential for full enrollment and meeting the service level goal. Recruitment as opposed to just enrolling whoever walks through the door is also essential for meeting the most-in-need goal. Selection is only really possible if you're fully enrolled and have recruited the participants you want to serve. Otherwise you must take whoever's eligible and manages to find you. Selection, like recruitment, supports most-in-need.

Assigning participants to community service will by itself provide a count for the service level measure. Having participants actually start their assignments and earn pay will support the community service measure.

Time spent at the host agency also counts for the community service measure. The quality and effectiveness of what occurs at the host agency will be reflected in the customer satisfaction measure for all three customer groups – participants, host agencies, and employers.

Job preparation and job search activities obviously relate to the three employment outcome measures, of entered employment, retention, and average earnings. These activities also impact customer satisfaction.

Exits and follow-ups also support the three employment outcomes. Follow-ups will also allow you to administer the employer satisfaction survey and capture the data needed for the volunteerism measure.

Now, most grantees are familiar with sections E and F of the QPR because they contain the core measures and the additional performance measures. However, many users do not realize that the rest of the QPR contains critical information to help you track and manage the activities that go into your performance measures.

Section B contains the details of customer flow and placement activity. Section C tells you how many participants are performing service to the elderly population or the general population and how many hours of community service they're providing.

Section D displays participant demographics and characteristics, including those that make up the most-in-need measure. Whenever you explore a performance measure in Section E or F in detail, you should also examine the relevant fields of the QPR that contribute to or reflect that measure.

The next two slides show Sections B through D of the QPR with annotations listed and the performance measures to which various fields are relevant. As we go through these measures in subsequent presentations, we'll be referring to these QPR fields, so you might want to hang on to this slide for future reference.

So here we're seeing the first page of the QPR, containing Sections B through C. On the bottom legend – right at the bottom of the page there – gives you the abbreviations that we're using as we annotate each of the fields. I'm not going to walk you through each annotated field, but I do want to point out a few general relationships.

So up at the top, fields B1 through B5d and B11 through B13 generally link to the participation cluster of measures – service level, community service, and most-in-need. Fields B8 through BF generally relate to the employment outcome cluster – entered employment, retention, and average earnings.

Section C at the bottom of the slide relates to community service.

Section D relates to the most-in-need measure at the top of the screen you're seeing all of the hard demographics – gender, age, ethnicity, race, education. And then below that you're seeing two components – two clusters of the most-in-need measure that are color coded.

So those items that are highlighted or boxed in blue relate to the priorities of services; and those that are in sort of reddish-orange towards the bottom are those that identify the waiver factors that count both for the most-in-need factor and can be used in determining if a participant is entitled to an extension of their individual duration in the program.

So as Terry mentioned, the QPR comes in two flavors, a final QPR and the QPR review. You have the option to choose one or the other from the SPARQ home page. The final QPRs are produced approximately 30 days after the end of the quarter, and they're the official report of performance for that quarter.

The final QPR for the program year – the so-called fifth quarter – is produced around September 30 of the next program year. The extra time between the close of the calendar quarter and the final QPR for that period allows grantees to clean up their data by correcting any rejects and warnings, and to complete undone follow-ups.

Once the final QPR is produced, the data as reported in that QPR are frozen and never changed. However, the underlying data in SPARQ can change as new data are entered or existing data are modified. Any such data changes for frozen QPRs will be reflected in subsequent QPRs for that program year in the fields for year-to-date – referred to as YTD – and last four quarters – L4Q, often called rolling four quarters as well.

QPRs are produced at four levels: nationwide, individual grantee, subgrantee for grantee, and for national grantees in each state in which the national grantee operates. All final QPRs are considered public records and are available at all level to all SPARQ users.

Unlike the final QPR, the QPR review is a work in progress. It reflects the current quarter's data until the quarter is officially closed. Once the quarter is closed and final, the QPR review for the quarter will show the frozen data from the final QPR.

The QPR review is not considered a public document because it's preliminary. SPARQ users can only see their own data. That means a subgrantee can see only its subgrantee data and a grantee can only see its own grantee data and the data for each of its subgrantees.

The QPR does not reflect new data in SPARQ until the QPR is generated. The system automatically generates all QPRs over the weekend so users will see up-to-date QPR data on Monday morning when they come to work. Users can generate their own QPRs during the week whenever they want to see the latest SPARQ data reflected in their QPRs. The buttons for generating the QPRs are on the subgrantee page of the QPR review.

Key resources here are the data collection handbook, the posting on the Ask the Experts forum, and the QPR handbook. Like all other key resources, they can be assessed on the older worker community of practice.

And I think it is now time for questions? Yes.

MS. MCNEACE: Yes, sir. Again, a great opportunity to interact with your presenters. If you'd like to unmute your phone, hit \*6 to unmute your lines. And of course, please present any questions through the chat box. (Pause.)

We have one question here. The question is, "What is an example of when a grantee needs to clean up their data?" And we will toss that over to Terry.

MS. CRAM: Hi. When Bennett used the phrase "clean up your data" he's meaning in terms of getting rid of all of the rejects because the reject means that a record is not included in the QPR at all; making sure that you've got all of your follow-ups entered and you'll be able to use your management report to find out which follow-ups are due.

Ideally you should also resolve warnings, because if a record only has a warning it will be included in the QPR but there may be some particular count where it won't be reflected properly.

So a perfectly clean data would mean that you had no rejects, you had no warnings, and that when you look at your management reports you see you have no outstanding follow-ups.

Bennett, is there anything I'm missing?

MR. PUDLIN: No, I think you've covered it. I would just say that within the warnings we have three categories, warning 1, 2 and 3. And what Terry said about we'll accept records with warnings but they may mess up your data, that's particularly true of warning 1.

Warning 1s are very serious, just shy of being a reject. But it does mean that your compliance with important program rules is in danger, at risk of being compromised; or that you're not getting a count in a performance measure where you could or should.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Great. Earlier on during the poll session, about whether or not you understood the QPR and the data in your QPR, there was a handful that said that they were somewhat – they somewhat understood but they somewhat did not.

So is there anything that you would like to ask us now that will help us to help you clarify any uncertainties, if you will? If so, please if you like, you can ask those questions verbally by unmuting your phone by hitting \*6 or put your questions into the chat box. We'll give it a couple seconds. (Pause.)

OK. We have another question that says, "Just as a reminder, the QPR cover sheet does list the numbers of rejects." So thank you for that.

Question is, "I believe I may not fully understand SPARQ; will it become clear once we have access to the program?" Terry?

MS. CRAM: Yes. Hi. So once the national office gives the go-ahead we can send out our information about contacting us and we'll send information to everybody about how to get a new account. We do have a SPARQ resources available sheet that we'll send out.

One of the resources that's available is a training site or a demo site where you can go in and start playing around entering fake data. When you first get your SPARQ account the new grantees will not have any data in there until February 1st. There'll be no data in there. So you can look around and poke around but you won't see any data.

But in the demo site you'll be able to put in dummy data. The only thing we ask is make sure you don't put any real data in there – no real SSNs, no real names and addresses. But once you start doing that I think then it starts to become more easy to grasp because you're actually doing it with your own hands.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you. We have a couple more questions coming in, we have one that just came through; it says, "What does vacancies mean on the QPR?"

MS. CRAM: Bennett, do you want to take that?

MR. PUDLIN: Yeah. So Section A of the QPR in the upper right-hand corner, your number of authorized positions and your number of modified positions; and just below that in Section B5 or 6 there's a field for vacancies.

What that means is, is your current participant count different from your number of modified positions? So if you are either over- or under-enrolled, that'll be reflected in the field for vacancies.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you, Bennett. We have another question. "When do you think we will hear from the national office regarding access to SPARQ?"

MS. CRAM: We have been having that discussion, so we are looking at it from this perspective to get that information out to you relatively quickly. It'll be coming very soon. We are not trying to delay that.

And again, as Bennett and we mentioned earlier on, SPARQ access will be driven by the receipt of your NOA. We understand that either all of you or the majority of you have received your NOA by now, and what we will do is check with the national office liaison to ensure that you guys get communications regarding SPARQ access.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Any more questions? We have one typing in now. (Pause.) What we try to do while we have this opportunity is try to answer at least all of the questions that are coming in, so please forgive the little short delays in between questions. When you're typing it in, it takes a few seconds for it to come through.

We've got another question. "Is there a way to calculate the most-in-need goal in real-time as opposed to once a quarter when the QPR is updated?"

MR. PUDLIN: Ah. Well, that's important.

So the QPR is updated regularly. We do it automatically once a week. You can do it 10 times a day if you like and it's totally up-to-date. The only measures that don't populate during the quarter are the three employment outcomes measures – entered employment, retention, and average earnings.

We do have reports – we have management reports for people who are in the pool for entered employment that quarter that will give you a real-time counter of where you stand. Every time you do a follow-up that report is updated and shows you what your percentage would be if we closed the quarter right then.

And it lists all the records that are still outstanding that could be used to improve your performance. We have that for entered employment; we have it for retention. So you do have a way of checking.

The other measures are reported in real-time. The most-in-need was what you asked about, and every time you enroll a new participant the characteristics that you recorded in SPARQ – the eight priorities of service, the five waiver factors – are updated and reflected in your most-in-need count in real-time, so there's not an issue there.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you, Bennett.

It looks like the questions have slowed down, and so we're going to go ahead and move forward. And it also looks like we are getting ready to wind down, so we don't have much more content to cover.

We're going to open up the next one with a poll again. The question is, "Do you know what your performance goals are?" And the answers that you can select from is I think so; of course I do; it's a 10-minute mile; no, this is the first time I've heard of them.

Well, looky here. It looks like we have – 97, 98 percent says of course I do; with a small, falling behind I think so. Well, the good news is majority knows what their performance goals are.

So what we're going to go ahead and do is move forward, and the next segment would be performance measures for PY '16 and '17. Bennett?

MR. PUDLIN: Great. Thank you. Just two more slides. 58, if you please.

So we've kind of covered this already. It's all driven by the FOA. And for those of you who've been here a while there's nothing new. This is what was done in the last three competitions now.

The current national grantees – all of whom are remaining – received their PY '16 goals in June when the state grantees did, based on the normal negotiation process that took place in April/May. Those goals remain in effect for the balance of this year, subject to the right of the national grantees to renegotiate based on any substantial change in circumstance.

That could include being moved to a radically different territory where the entered employment and poverty rates, for example, are totally different from the ones that prevailed when your goals were negotiated back in the spring.

So something like that happens or if you're used to being in an urban area and now you're in a rural area, whatever, that may give rise to a need to adjust your goals and DOL will entertain that. You're allowed to renegotiate at any time, but the strong advice is just wait. You really can't document what the change is going to be until you've experienced it.

And there's no need to. As I said earlier, you have until September 30 after the close of the program year – 90 days after – in order to renegotiate the goals for 2016. So wait until you're certain about what you're really experiencing and can document it, then we'll be happy to talk to you.

I'd also remind you of what Steve (Rietzke) said in the opening call of this series back in October – I forget exactly when, the 23rd, maybe – but basically we're well aware of the disruption that the competition and the transition have caused and will continue to cause for this year, and DOL is prepared to be very reasonable about its application of the goals and evaluation of grantee performance.

We don't know exactly what that means and we're working on it. We're going to have to do some doctoring of the QPR in order to accommodate the change in territory and the difference in slot counts because those affect – for the national grantees those affect your service level and community service measures. We dealt with that in 2012 by doing a weighted average for your slots and looks like we're probably going to do that again this year as the easiest way to go.

And we also said that the new national grantees do not have formal goals for which they can be sanctioned for the five months remaining in this program year after the transition is complete. They get these targets that are based on the average of the national grantees goals.

So short answer here is not to worry; it'll all be fine. We hope that things will sort themselves out quickly as we move into future years. However, things are never that simple in SPARQ.

As you're probably aware, the Older Americans Act made some very modest, I would say, changes in the SCSEP performance system that we have to accommodate. The main change was that we are required to adopt the new common measures that are being used in WIOA for the entered employment, retention, and average earnings measures.

The good news there is that this merely requires a recalculation of the data we already collect. They've just rejiggered those a bit using different quarters from what we've been using since – well, since the beginning of time, actually – but it shouldn't be very difficult to accommodate or to train people in.

And the three SCSEP participation measures – service level, community service, and most-in-need – are unchanged. The additional measures go away, and in their stead we have one new core measure, which is effectiveness in serving participants, host agencies, and employers.

We don't know what that means yet. DOL has yet to figure that out and there'll be a process where you all will have input into that new measure. But as of this time we don't know anything at all about what it'll look like for SCSEP. It's different from the WIOA new measure. In WIOA it was effectiveness in serving employers only; ours is in serving each of the three customer groups.

So in terms of the timing and what next year looks like, it's really difficult to say. The department desire, I would say at this point, is that they have to comply with the law, and the law says that the new measures for SCSEP have to be in place by December 31st of 2017, a year-plus from now.

The department's hope is that that can be satisfied by going through a regulatory process and finalizing those measures – as required by the amendment – by December 31st of '17. Once they're finalized they would then be used in the goal setting that would take place the following spring as usual, April and May of 2018. Then they would be officially reported for the first time starting with PY 2018, which begins on July 1st, 2018.

So as you can see it's potentially quite a long ways off. There's a lot we'll be able to do to help prepare the grantees for the change in measures, again, because we have the data. It's just a question of recalculating and displaying them so that people can actually see how they're doing under the current measures but also how they would stack up under the new measures.

It is going to make goal setting a little more interesting, though, next year because we always rely, as I said, on the baseline performance of each grantee determined at Q3. That's going to be kind of tricky to do this year because at the end Q3 you'll barely have climbed your way out from everything you've been through over the last year; have only had your new territories in place for two months.

We're going to have to think about a different way to approach that to have it all come out right. But again, I would just keep in mind what Steve said. The department is fully aware of the difficulty and does not want to make life any more difficult for grantees than it has to be.

So I think, Michi, that concludes it for me.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you, Bennett. What we're going to do is just go ahead and rejigger this a little bit and go to next steps, and then we'll go ahead and close out after that.

MR. PUDLIN: It's all yours.

MS. MCNEACE: So the next steps is if you need assistance with the SCSEP performance measures or any other aspect of SCSEP performance systems, please contact myself. You'll see my email address, which is McNeace.Michi@dol.gov, with a copy to your FPO.

And if your staff needs training or support in using SPARQ please contact your FPO and also help@SCSEP-Help.com. And if there is any general interest, our SPARQ team will schedule additional training on the performance measures and how to use the tool in SPARQ and how to manage your performance.

So that's a great segue into our next slide, which is the poll. Do you need technical assistance and/or training? And the selections would be, I need SPARQ TA; I need performance TA; I need TA on both; or I need SPARQ training; I need performance training; or I'll take both.

And it looks like there's 100 percent request for I'll take both. (Crosstalk.)

OK. So what we're going to go ahead and do is we have come to the end of our part two of our national grantee orientation, and we're going to go ahead and open it up for questions and then go ahead and close.

So if you have any questions or if you'd like to be a little bit more specific about what kind of TA or training needs that you need; if you'd like to speak with us, please again hit \*6 to unmute your phone or go ahead and put your questions or comments in the chat box.

We do have one question here that says, "Does the SCSEP state plan have any effect on the performance measures? Are they related at all?" I don't see where they do any impact.

MR. PUDLIN: No, you're right. Yeah, they have no effect. They're very important – the state plans are very important and they drive your service delivery, so in that sense they can influence your performance. But they're completely distinct from the performance measures are defined by statute. There's no discretion there, the statute and regs. They are what they are.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you, Bennett. I don't see any questions or anything coming through right now. We'll give it a couple more minutes.

We have a question being typed in. Meanwhile, for those grantees who have said that they need training and/or technical assistance – especially for those that said they need both – if you can go ahead and send a quick email to myself at McNeace.Michi@dol.gov and let us know what type – if you have anything specific that you're looking for, and so that we can know which grantee you are as well.

We have one other question. It says, "I know that the data validation is not done on transition participants, but cannot remember if our performance measures will be adjusted."

MR. PUDLIN: So performance measures are not adjusted. That is absolutely right about not doing data validation on participants who are transferred. You're not accountable for what your predecessor did for data validation. So we exclude those from both the donor and the recipient samples.

For the performance measures, we only transfer active participants. So if someone has exited, that performance, whether good or bad, remains with the donor. The recipient is not saddled with it. But if you take somebody who is active, then you are held to account for what happens when they leave your program, and that's true for the three outcome measures.

With regard to the SCSEP participation measures, a transferred participant is treated at the subgrantee level as though it's a brand new enrollment off the street. So you get a count for serving that person even though they may have been in the program for four years already.

You get a count for them in your service level. Any wages you pay them are reflected in your community service. And you also will get most-in-need credit for them. So there is no direct adjustment to your performance measures, but I think the way the measures are reported they kind of adjust themselves.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you, Bennett. We have one last one. "Is there a tutorial on InfoSPACE?"

MR. PUDLIN: There's not a tutorial, but if you go to the homepage for InfoSPACE – SCSEPInfoSPACE2.0 – you will see a user's guide that walks you through all the functionality for the current version, which is 2.1. And we'll update that once the new version comes out, because it has some additional functionality that's not there now. But no videos, per se.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you, Bennett.

I just want to before we end make sure that we were able to answer the question about if performance measures will be adjusted. It was combined with the question about if data validation was done on transition participants but cannot remember if our performance measures will be adjusted. Would you let us know if we were able to answer your question?

MR. PUDLIN: And while we're waiting, Michi, Terry raised a good point.

For new grantee administrators that have not gotten access to InfoSPACE yet, at the same time that you're informed that you're eligible for SPARQ access you can get InfoSPACE access as well. So you should let the national office know if you would like that.

It's one person at the grantee administrator level per grantee at this time. We hope we can open it more broadly by we're waiting for evaluation from the technical people about whether the new release is going impact on performance and how many users we can have at the same time.

But we sure want to make sure that each grantee has at least one authorized user. It's an extremely helpful tool. I encourage folks to get a look at it as soon as they can.

MS. MCNEACE: OK. Thank you for that, Bennett.

Yes, we were able to answer your question, so thank you. You also wrote, "I didn't think that it changed but you never know unless you ask." Thank you for your question.

We have one question here that says, "Is InfoSPACE a website?"

MR. PUDLIN: Yes, it is. It has a separate URL from SPARQ and you'll get that with your password when you're authorized by the national office.

The plan is to link it to SPARQ so that you can seamlessly move from SPARQ to InfoSPACE and vice versa using your SPARQ credentials. But for the moment it's a separate process of authentication and logging on.

And there's a question about whom they should contact in the national office. Should they work through their NOL if they want access to InfoSPACE, Michi? Susanna (ph) had been handling that.

MS. MCNEACE: Exactly. So I believe for right now, just to make it easier, let's just have them send – anybody who would like access to InfoSPACE, send in your request to the SCSEP national box, which is – and I always get this wrong – SCSEP.national@dol.gov.

So once again, if you need to have access to InfoSPACE email your request to the SCSEP national box, which is SCSEP.national@dol.gov. And as Bennett mentioned earlier, it's only one per grantee.

And I believe we have no more further questions that I can see. So with that being said I think we're going to go ahead and come to a close and say thank you all for joining us. We were able to get through this webinar in less than two hours; I believe it was an hour and a half. So thank you.

And if there's any questions please contact your FPO and national office liaison, or you can always send your questions to the SCSEP national box as well. Thank you for coming and thank you, and have a good day.

(END)