**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Sector Strategies Virtual Business Engagement Academy**

**Core Session 2: Industry-Specific Approaches**

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GARY GONZALEZ: Good afternoon. This is Gary Gonzalez. I want to welcome everyone to today's event. Before I turn things over to our speakers, just a couple of quick housekeeping items.

First and foremost, at the bottom left hand of your screen you'll notice that there is a chat window where you can type in your name, your organization, where you're located in the country, for instance your city or state or even your region, and how many people, if any, are attending with you. While you're doing that or if you've already done that, I want to let you know that we are recording today's event. We're going to be posting that recording to WorkforceGPS in approximately two business days. We've also posted today's content, the PowerPoint and the handout, in the file share window, but that is also on the archive page of today's event.

So with that let's go ahead and transition over to today's PowerPoint. Just another reminder to tell us a little bit about yourself using that chat window at the bottom left hand. Also you can use that chat to type in any questions or comments that you might have at any point throughout today's event. You can also raise your hand using the raise hand icon at the top of the webinar room to indicate that you want your line unmuted so you can chime in over the phone verbally.

So first, we have a quick poll, and the poll reads, what type of industry sector partnership are you involved in? And the options you have are manufacturing, healthcare, construction/building trades, energy/utilities, transportation/logistics, IT, agriculture, other, which if you use other, go ahead and type into the chat what that other might be, and then none yet. So we'll take a second so that you can respond to this poll.

And while you're doing that I'm going to go ahead and turn things over to our first speaker, Todd Cohen. He's the director of strategic initiatives at Maher & Maher. Todd, take it away.

TODD COHEN: Thanks, Gary. Let's just give another few seconds here to fill this out. What type of industry sector partnerships are you involved in or have been involved in or you, your organization has played an active part, has had an active seat at the table? And manufacturing, healthcare. Any energy/utilities there, chime in. But it looks like good representation across. We're going to hit all this today. All right, Gary. You want to shut that down.

Well, hi, everyone. Yeah. As Gary mentioned, my name's Todd Cohen. I'm the director of strategic initiatives at a firm called Maher & Maher. We support ETA, the Employment and Training Administration's sector strategies national technical assistance effort.

I'm joined by Beth Brinly. Beth, who I suspect many of you know, served as the deputy secretary of the Kentucky State Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. She also was the commissioner of Kentucky's Department of Workforce Investment and really the chief architect of Kentucky's statewide sector work, which was really a transformative effort to get – really launch quality industry sector partnerships across the state.

Beth, I'm wondering maybe a few seconds if you could just – you're there; right? Hello?

BETH BRINLY: Yes. I'm here, Todd.

MR. COHEN: Yeah. Maybe just a little bit about the wide array of industry partnerships that you saw pop up in Kentucky maybe under your watch or something.

MS. BRINLY: Certainly. And we undertook an effort with our economic development, education partners, our universities, community colleges, and others to identify state sectors, and we identified five. And then we worked with our local workforce investment areas and our local partners in education, economic development, workforce development, and human resources to identify regional sectors. And so we had five state sectors, including healthcare, business services, energy creation and transmission, auto and aircraft manufacturing, and then the transportation, distribution, and logistics. And then we had a wide array of regional sectors.

OPERATOR: The leader has muted all lines. You will now be joined to the conference muted. To unmute your line, press #6.

MS. BRINLY: To lead Kentucky to develop the talent pipeline that our employer community needed in those critical state and regional sectors.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Beth. So, Beth, you obviously got a lot to share and lots to bring to this conversation. We're going to be really the MCs for what is going to be a great panel session I'm going to introduce in a minute. Let me tee up the conversation, though, this way.

So we had the opening session yesterday. I hope many of you, most of you were a part of that. It was a great conversation with our healthcare employers, talking about their workforce needs and skill shortages and a lot of conversation afterwards about sort of how to engage healthcare industry, hospitals, medical clinics, other health organizations. Really some tips and approaches for how to extract from them talent needs, credential requirements, and then how to engage them in the process through the solutions. And the conversation yesterday was really about common takeaways. Regardless of whether that was healthcare industry or any other industry, common tips about how to do that. And today we're going to go a lot deeper.

So today we recognize that a healthcare sector partnership is a lot different than a manufacturing partnership, which is a lot different than a financial services sector partnership, which is a lot different than the cybersecurity partnership and so forth and so on. For those of you who have done this across industries, you know that what works in one industry is not going to always work in another industry in terms of really providing solutions and listening to employer needs.

And so today that's where our discussion is going to really lie is the differences between these industries. They have different needs, different motivations for even being at the table with us in the system, and so to figure out those differences and to capitalize on we'll make the difference and make a successful sector partnership. And then we really are going to get down into the weeds into some of the how-to's, the ways that you can all go back and do this better than – we hope than you are now as well as do it a more enhanced way.

So what we're going to do is we've got a panel of really I think phenomenal speakers. I'm going to introduce them in a minute. It's going to be very conversational. Beth and I are going to throw some questions at them back and forth. We really want you all to engage. So if you have a question, you can put it in the chat at any moment.

You see the chat where people are putting their names? Type your question in, but we – at a point in this conversation we are going to actually ask you – we'll get into this when we get there – to raise your hand, and you'll get on the phone and talk to us. We're going to really try to go that angle because I think that kind of conversation, having you all talk and talk with our presenters will make for a really robust, engaging session.

So I'll come back to that, logistics around that, but first, let me introduce our panel. There we go.

All right. So as I mentioned, I think – for what we're trying to do today, I think we've got really a perfect combination of individuals here. Andrew Bercich is the Comcast business talent channel lead for Comcast West Division in Colorado. So he leads a talent acquisition strategy development department for Comcast Business, Comcast Services. He oversees staffing and talent management in area of sales, retention, technical support, billing, and order management.

So talent's his thing. He oversees a lot of different divisions, a lot of different people, a lot of different skill sets and skill needs. He's – and he's also the chair of the Arapahoe/Douglas Works board in Colorado and is part of NAWB, National Association of Workforce Board at the national level. So he comes at this from the private sector side as someone that's sort of been in a sector partnership providing information as well as really seeing it from the national and the regional intermediary side as well.

So Andrew's going to talk about a lot of things, but we've asked him to really key in on the IT sector. That's his hat. That's what he does every day. Talk about it from both the sort of big business, Comcast-big-business IT side but also he knows the world of small, medium-sized IT startups and what they need and how to interact with them. So we're going to ask him to sort of take that approach. So thank you, Andrew, for being here.

Mike Temple is director of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and its operating affiliate Workforce Solutions, which forms the public workforce system 13-county Houston-Galveston region of Southeast Texas. As you might imagine, in Houston-Galveston area a couple of key industries, energy and with the Mayo Clinic and other hospitals healthcare. And so we're going to ask Mike – Mike's actually worked across a number of different partnerships.

We're going to ask him to really key in on healthcare and energy today and come at it from the intermediary role. So he's the board CEO. He's played that role of sort of listening to business and then trying to work with training providers and other providers to address hiring training needs. So, Mike, thank you for being here as well.

And then finally, Scott Sheely, special assistant for workforce development at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. So for those of you who know, who have been in this business for a long time, you know Scott in his former life, the CEO of the Lancaster Workforce Investment Board in Pennsylvania. He had what was and really still is one of the most powerful manufacturing sector partnerships going. He had that decades ago.

So he's been doing this a long time. We've asked him to put his manufacturing hat on and talk about it from that angle, but now, he's in a unique position because he's working at the state level and working in agriculture and trying to create really a pipeline of talent in the agricultural industry and so can also speak to what he's seen in terms of those employers coming together and talking about some of their needs. And that will be really critical for those in the audience in more rural areas and can agriculture be a sector partnership. I think you'll hear the answer is yes, and we'll explore that as well.

So let's bring all these guys up. Can we bring them up here? There we go. Hey, guys. All right. So I'm going to fire off the first question. Beth, you're going to jump in as needed, of course, too. We'll do this back and forth, but let me – let's start here. Andrew, let's start with you.

If you would all – we're going to ask the same question for everybody. Really a quick overview of your experience within your industry about sort of the broad workforce needs. OK. Just give us the 50,000-foot level of what you've seen, what you've heard, what you've experienced in terms of broad workforce needs, and we'll kind of pinpoint the differences between. But, Andrew, why don't you go first?

ANDREW BERCICH: Well, thanks, Todd, and thank you all for joining us today. As far as IT goes, I think the main thing to consider is where are we going to be five years from now? If we look at where IT was just a few short years ago, technology has changed so rapidly that it's very, very challenging as an employer to stay on top of those trends.

So as we think about sector partnerships, as we think about initiatives that we may take as a workforce development system, the number one thing I think that's important to look at is what are your business customers' demands going to be not just today but as you're having those future conversations with them, where are they going to be a year from now, two years from now, five years from now because that is really going to be where the strategic advantage lies as a workforce development partner in conjunction with business.

If you can skate to where the puck is going, that is going to give your region, your state, however you're defined as a workforce area a strategic advantage in business recruitment, business retention, etc. As far as we look at IT today, it's a never-ending growth opportunity not just for major metro areas but even in smaller more rural areas.

We were having a conversation the other day about agriculture, and who would have thought 15 or 20 years ago that a farmer could be sitting in their combine that's driving itself using GPS while they're sitting on their iPad that's connected to some wireless service managing their inventory, checking the groundwater saturation levels, paying their bills, doing all these things remotely that they would have had to stay up until midnight or 1:00 a.m. back in their office back at the farmhouse doing just a couple of decades ago.

That's where the future is going. That's the kind of impact that IT is having not just on the actual information technology and infrastructure industry but across all industries, even those that have been around since the beginning of humanity. And so the better we can prepare as a system to try and address those coming challenges, to ask the question where are we going to be, I think the better off we're going to be at serving the business customers' needs, the needs of jobseekers, and ultimately all of the stakeholders that you may have as a workforce development professional.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Andrew. And you brought up another interesting thing that I'm sure we'll go deeper in, which is IT – sometimes there's a group of IT employers in a room but you got – when it comes to skill sets, some of those skill sets cut across so many different other industries, and so to explore that as well is going to be key for you there.

Mike, same question to you. Get us grounded a little bit, if you would, in healthcare. We heard some yesterday in healthcare, but your experience will be helpful and then energy as well. What are you seeing? What are you hearing? Where is it going?

MIKE TEMPLE: Sure. Thanks, Todd. Healthcare is another one of those industries where you're going to see a lot of technological change that is going to impact the kinds of skills people need to have. It's also changing the way healthcare is delivered and the jobs in healthcare. Healthcare, interestingly enough, is a very siloed sort of industry with nurses and doctors and allied health occupations and others kind of existing side by side. And some of that is changing as the technology changes and the demand for healthcare services expands.

Energy is a little different in that it's a big industry here, and it essentially comes in three parts. The upstream part of the industry is the drillers and the exploration and production people. The midstream part is the transportation, and the downstream is the manufacturing. Right now –

MS. : Hi. Who is this logged dialed in from a 951 area code? The last four digits 0301, if you could just unmute your line for one second and let me know your name and then I'll move you back into the conference.

OPERATOR: The leader has muted all lines. You will now be joined to the conference muted. To unmute your line, press #6.

MR. TEMPLE: Are going to retire. So the issue there is not only finding people with the skills to do that work but also finding younger people and diversifying the workforce that's been a rather un-diverse workforce in the past and the employers there are quite concerned about making sure that it is diverse going forward.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Mike. And, Scott, to you. Again, two things. Manufacturing, give us the sense and then in agriculture what you're seeing.

SCOTT SHEELY: Yeah. So in agriculture we actually have – in a similar way that Mike was just talking about the oil industry, it's a similar kind of thing in agriculture to think about ag production which is where it actually – the products get grown through food processing, which is actually a manufacturing category, and then food distribution, which tends to be a logistics and transportation category.

So we kind of cut across a variety of sectors, but the other thing is that food processing itself is really a major activity and has its own career pathways. So we've been kind of looking at that as the separate function. And then in Pennsylvania we also include in agriculture in Pennsylvania the hardwood industry. Pennsylvania has some of the best hardwood trees in the world, and so we are involved in, again, harvesting, processing, exporting, that kind of thing. So it's kind of a broad ranging type of industry that really has this component of manufacturing that's very strong.

I think I'd like to talk more about the ag production piece of it. I notice not many people on the line who have that in their list, but it's a very interesting one, particularly for rural areas, and it's one that oftentimes gets forgotten. The thing that we see about the workforce is that it's kind of like a – it's a pyramid, and in agriculture everybody wants to talk about the top of the pyramid.

It's the scientists, the engineers, and it's certainly important because these are the places where we have new knowledge generated and it keeps the industry alive and growing and competitive globally. So what we see is that there's really factors in both the middle and the base of the pyramid as well.

In the middle of the pyramid, this is where we actually see the skilled worker shortage, and this is particularly difficult in agriculture because we have pretty much identified that once somebody leaves our high school ag program, if they're not going to a four-year school for an ag degree or something like that, it's really what I've been calling kind of a vast wasteland as far as training opportunities and career path development sorts of things. So that's worrisome, and we see many, many problems beginning to develop in terms of skill shortages.

The other part, though, is at the base and, again, all of the speakers here, I'm sure, can relate to this and all of you can as well. At the base we're all experiencing this competition that we have for the low-skill, low-wage worker, and here it's basically we need somebody who has good soft skills and will come to work and will get along with people and will do what we tell them to do.

Unfortunately, the people we're looking at on farms and in greenhouses and as people to take down trees and that sort of thing are the same people that the convenience stores, the nursing homes, and the whole variety of other folks and industries are looking for. So here it's more of a – it's a market problem. We don't have enough of those people.

At the same time that group is being challenged by their literacy, their use of technology, a whole variety of other kinds of things. So it's a multiple and it's kind of a different problem that we have with talent as we begin to look at kind of this broad industry. I'm not sure which is worse, the talent shortage or just the shortage of people. They're both bad in their own way.

MS. BRINLY: Thanks, Scott. And heard some different things from all three of you, the diversity challenge that you touched on, Mike, the need for the industry to stage where the puck is going as far as IT is concerned, and then the competition to draw folks into your respective sectors that you've been talking about.

Want to take you back to the formation of some of your industry partnership work in respective areas that you addressed us about and talk to us about what the dynamic was like in the early stages between the companies.

And did they welcome the opportunity to gather together to have this discussion about their talent pipeline needs? Were they guarded about their proprietary information? And if so, how did you overcome that, that kind of storming, norming, conforming process that you went through early on in the sector work you undertook? Mike, how about I start with you?

MR. TEMPLE: Sure. Thanks, Beth. I'm smiling because I remember both the healthcare and the energy sectors when we started. In the healthcare sector we started with 13 major hospital systems, and you could have heard a pin drop in that room the first time they got together. We actually had a champion who was on the board of one of those major hospital systems but who himself was not in healthcare call everybody together. And they came together and they all sort of agreed they had a nursing problem and then none of them wanted to admit to the fact that they were all stealing nurses from each other.

So they were quite guarded about their particular problems and their needs, and the way we got around that one was to bring in a third party to do a survey, gather information, and then come back and report to the group what they had all said privately in aggregate and compare that to the labor market data that we had presented to kick the whole thing off. And the survey data came back with a far greater need than even the labor market data showed. It impressed everybody, and they started to move on down the road there.

Let me just say real quick about the energy industry because that one was fascinating as well. In that one we were invited into a working group of the American Petroleum Institute by one of the companies that we had done some layoff work with. And we went to this HR working group, part of API, to talk about the shortage of petroleum engineers, and I must tell you at every API meeting they have a standard protocol they work through to make sure they're not sharing any information that might be construed as price fixing or otherwise colluding together.

So that one was a very structured way of talking to one another, and over time we had to work through that particular structure to get anywhere with petroleum engineers.

MS. BRINLY: Thanks, Mike. Some great perspective there, and oftentimes surveys are a way to kind of at least initially break that ice when folks are feeling a little uncomfortable about sharing what their true needs are in the long term.

Scott, what's your perspective on both the agriculture and manufacturing and those early forming days?

MS. SHEELY: Yeah. It's been interesting to kind of experience again the startup that I was involved in here over the last 18 months with agriculture. And in some ways we followed similar processes that we did with manufacturing, but many of you who know me basically would not be surprised to say that I started with data and tried to find out as much about the industry to the point where I can actually go and talk to people and maybe know more about the industry than they know themselves because we can do it in a little bit broader perspective. And now that I'm working for state government, it has to be even broader than that. We have to be thinking about the whole commonwealth and the way that we hook together with other states as well. So I think the data's a piece of it.

Thinking through what your scale is in terms of the actual geographical area before you actually go and start talking to people is really important as well. We're working on – and again, I'm agriculture. So we're working on a sheep and goat cluster in Southwestern Pennsylvania that we find actually goes into Western Maryland and Northern West Virginia. So that's going to dictate kind of a different approach than if we were just working on a cluster that was in the midst of Pennsylvania itself. So I think that's another important piece.

The other thing that I have realized about agriculture is that it's much more personal. Talking to a farmer is way different from talking to an HR person in a manufacturing facility. You tend to find farmers who I would call experts, people who are subject matter experts and can kind of point you in the right direction and can begin to tell you a little bit about how this cluster that you might have identified with data actually works in terms of supply chains, distribution chains, who's actually doing what where, and how that all works together. So I think these key informants are hugely important.

And then the last thing would be that to do this work and to do it at scale you really need to be looking at what intermediaries can help you. There's just a variety of groups that oftentimes have personal connections. These could be all the way from economic development to these workforce entities, trade organizations. We found the cooperative extension to be very helpful in the areas that we're working in.

So you can't ignore the intermediaries because typically they have connections with a broader group of people than you can get just coming into the cluster and trying to do that work solo. So I think those are the key things. It's data. It's scale. It's trying to figure out what is actually going on in the cluster at the grassroots level, and then finally using intermediaries appropriately. Those are ways you can move ahead a little quicker.

MS. BRINLY: Yeah. I agree, Scott. Data is a great way to start the conversation with the business folks across the table and also it's just so important for us to think in the way that industry is organizing its work, which doesn't necessarily always line up with our geographical lines that we have of states or could be college systems or workforce systems and just the importance of that, that the intermediary is someone that those industries trust and has credibility with.

So, Andrew, let's talk a little bit about the IT formation phase and some of your observations for there.

MR. BERCICH: Absolutely. And first, I just want to say I think Scott and Mike hit on a lot of common issues regardless of what industry cluster you're looking at. Coming with a data-driven approach, not only is it wise under the guidelines of WIOA, but at the same time it's just a smart way to operate a business. That way you're not investing too much time into areas that aren't going to provide a good ROI for you. But I'll take just a slight different path and talk a little bit about the concept of coopetition.

And we're in the process now of trying to stand up a broadband sector partnership here in the Denver area, which is kind of the home of telecom for the country, given its proximity to the center of the nation. Several of the cable companies are headquartered here. One of the satellite companies, many of your big broadband, dark fiber companies are headquartered here. And similar to nursing, similar to some manufacturing, we have an issue of trading employees and people come and go.

So then the concept of trying to sit down and bring these partners to the table to talk about our future needs because we're all trying to expand into next gen networks that will allow for multi-gigabit service in your home, 100-gigabit service into your businesses, things of that nature is very tenuous.

So to Scott's point, if you've got an intermediary that can help to facilitate those conversations, trade associations, just places where we're seeing eye to eye and have that commonality where there's already an established layer of trust and that provides that social pressure to that business that may be a little bit queasy about entering into a practice with a competitor, those are the kinds of – I think the kinds of services that not only do those trade associations survive to facilitate, but it's also the kind of thing that helps you get a better understanding of what's going on in that business.

Again, to Scott's point, you need to know more about their business than they know or at least about this aspect of their business, and if you don't have that trade partner, that industry partner, or at least one company that's willing to give you that level of insight, it's going to be very, very difficult to be able to sit down and have that strategic partner conversation.

So my suggestion is always seek out those organizations that have a bias for helping the industry as a way to learn and to gain that kind of – just that trust factor with the companies when they're in a very competitive environment.

MR. COHEN: Great.

MS. BRINLY: Thanks, Andrew.

MR. COHEN: Thanks. Yeah. Thanks, Andrew.

Let me drill down a little bit now into the partnership itself. Who do you all bring in? Who from these companies do you actually engage with? I suspect it's probably different levels of people. I don't mean one-time conversation, but who within these partnerships, these companies is willing to sit around a table over time with you, is high enough where they can see the entire spectrum of the industry but still willing to roll up their sleeves? Who have you found to be most crucial to what you do within your sector work?

So, Scott, we'll start with you, and you talked a little bit about agriculture but maybe a little more and then the manufacturing side. I know you and I have both talked about sort of the shop floor guy, but yeah. Say a little more about that.

MS. SHEELY: Well, so can I talk about agriculture first?

MR. COHEN: Absolutely.

MS. SHEELY: What we find in agriculture is that this – I talked before about using intermediaries. Well, that's important, but you also have to make sure that you don't use an intermediary, a trade person or economic development person to the point of excluding the voice of the industry. If you don't have farmers at the table or people who are involved in the agro business sector, you've lost it because they are the people who are on the ground making it happen.

I mean, I think that's the same that we would find in the leadership of other sectors as well, but it seems that particularly in agriculture we have this problem of how do we have the farmers' voice actually involved in it? The difficult part of that is that on the one hand they need to be there. They're absolutely important. But on the other hand they hate meetings, and trying to get them there and to come on a regular basis sometimes is very difficult. And again, I think this applies to other kind of partnerships as well.

We have tried to get creative in terms of telephone conversations, webinars. Sometimes you just actually have to take the information from your meeting out to the individuals and talk to them at their kitchen table. So this engagement process is a difficult one because, in a lot of ways, everybody's busy. Everybody's got stuff to do. They don't really want another government person coming by and saying they're here to help.

They really just want to get things done, and you have to stress the idea that they're only going to get done right if you are involved. So it's a balancing act. It's trying to figure out what's the right combination of being together to get the input that we need but on the other hand not bugging people to the point where they walk away.

MR. COHEN: Scott, before we move on, actually, somebody just posed a great question. It's fits right for you. When it comes to manufacturing specifically, you got so many different levels, HR, top level, training development, shop floor perhaps. As the workforce system and intermediary, you don't want to spend your time trying to get them all on the same page. I mean, tell us a little bit about how that dynamic works and worked for you in Pennsylvania.

MS. SHEELY: Well, and I think I'm still doing a lot of work in manufacturing and finding the same thing. The HR person is the gatekeeper. That's how you get in, but the people that you really want to talk to about workforce and about training and that sort of thing is really an operations person. It's really somebody who is on the shop floor who deals with the problems every day, who is confronting technology as it comes in, who's dealing with all the negatives when the workforce is not prepared for the technology.

For me that's the person that's at the heart of these conversations, and we find it again and again in the food industry and also in the lumber and wood industry that really those are better informants so that what's actually going on, but once again, they are operations people. They don't necessarily get paid to go to meetings. So you have to be fairly creative in terms of the way that you find to get their input and to bring it in. Once again, you can't bug them too much, but we absolutely need their input.

MR. COHEN: Great point, Scott. Thanks. I mean, another great point about not – this isn't always about sitting around a table discussing too. You're finding ways to engage them often one on one too.

Andrew, the same question really. IT, big from IT but also the small startups, who's the right person to bring in the room that's willing to have this conversation and offer their insight?

MR. BERCICH: Well, and then, Todd, I think you bring up a good point because it does vary depending on the organization. Realistically, given where a lot of these organizations are in their organizational maturity model, you may have a small firm that doesn't have a fully developed HR department, may not have a fully developed – a lot of processes in place for how they bring talent into the organization, develop talent through the organization.

And in that case you're probably looking more at the actual business owner themselves. In a large organization it really could be a myriad of individuals. It could be a vice president of IT. Likely the conversation starts with someone in recruiting or human resources that's your primary contact, but oftentimes they are not necessarily the decision maker, especially if you're thinking about an industry partnership where you're asking the business itself to maybe make a considerable financial investment to ensure the sustainability of the program, be it through investing dollars for training resources, actual cash contributions, in kinds, things of that nature.

So I think the important part is always trying to be very socially aware of who are the right people in that organization and it will be different but establishing that line of questioning early in your investment time with that company. We find that actually in our business, if we don't have the right people at the table when we're trying to sell an advanced technology data network – we've got the CFO. We've got the CIO, but we forget the VP of engineering – that VP of engineering has as much veto power as the people that can actually sign the contract.

So making sure that you're asking that question all along the path, who else should we be talking to? Is there anyone that we haven't thought should be a stakeholder in this conversation? I think they can sometimes prolong your process, but they can make it much more sustainable for the long term.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Andrew. Appreciate it. And I see folks posting questions. That's phenomenal. Keep doing that. We're going to address them, and then we're also going to come back to you and ask you to actually talk – raise the question over the phone. So we want to engage you, participants, verbally. I think that's really what we want to get to.

But, Mike, let's go to you. I imagine the same kind of thing in healthcare. You've got the big hospitals. You got the small providers, and then energy, probably the same deal. Who do you –who have you brought into the room? Who's been the most helpful, and when do you shift?

MR. TEMPLE: We started healthcare with the hospitals because they had the largest share of the employment and they had the – more critical need and we started with the CEOs. Once we got the CEOs in the room and they all agreed that they wanted to work together on a problem and they decided what that problem was and kind of the general outlines of where to go with it, then we went on to the people who were most critically involved with that, and that included some of the chief human resource officers and mostly the chief nursing officers.

And those were the guys who came to the meetings, who staffed the work groups, who did pretty much all of the work, and when they needed – when the work expanded, they were high up enough in their organizations to be able to bring other people to the table to get things done.

In energy it was a little different. The first time in energy we were working with the big integrated oil companies, and we started in the HR area for the broad company, and we were generally, as I said, working on petroleum engineers, which are a part of the exploration and production side and fairly highly skilled.

Our most recent foray into energy has been on the downstream side in manufacturing, and that was really, as Andrew mentioned, going to the trade association. That started through a local trade association, and the people who were involved there were the individual plant managers. They were the closest to the issue, the closest to their particular needs for talent, and they're the ones that have driven that effort and been the ones who contributed when we needed them.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Mike.

MS. BRINLY: Well, great – yeah. Great observations again.

So, Andrew, we've had a participant question specifically related to the IT field that I'd like for you to weigh in on. Some folks in California are finding that many of the companies she's asking staffing firms to find their talents. And have you had success using staffing firms, and what's your thought on this? And how do they play into our industry partnership work?

MR. BERCICH: Sure. I think it's a great and a timely question. In – especially in the IT space where, again, you have high-growth firms, many of them are very small and don't have dedicated recruitment departments. You know what; I started with Comcast about two and a half years ago.

All of my staffing for my organization was done through executive search firms. I have 42 of them that we worked with, which was across the western U.S. anyways, which was a considerable amount. I think that, again, it's very specific to the organization and to their development along their maturity model. When I came in, I actually did away now with all but one of them that we use as an emergency vendor and put in an in-house model that I think is certainly a more flexible approach for my business need.

But as you look at organizations that maybe not have – don't have the same kind of funding to stand up a full-time recruiting group, as you look at organizations that may have a lot of project-based work, and of course organizations where the work itself is compartmentalized by project – so you've got a particular release that you're looking to come out with your new software program. You're coming out with a beta version of something that's going to be more development intensive on the front end. You're looking to put in a data center that is going to just have a high work load for a short period of time – there's a huge need.

And so when we're looking at having our partnership, for example, here in our broadband sector, we actually have an IT staffing firm as the co-chair, and then we have a member from IT that is the other co-chair because there are two different mentalities and thought processes, but we all have to have the same skill set just for different durations of time.

So I would invite those partners to the table because they're also some of the biggest demand drivers that you have out there, given their constant turn. They do tend to have a higher level of pay, given the shorter duration of some of the contract work. Now, they may not have the same benefits and things like that, but for what you can get for $100,000 or $150,000 a year for a full-time worker, you might be able to get $180,000 to $250,000 as a contract worker.

So there's definitely a place at the table for those firms and organizations, and certainly I'm happy to have a separate conversation with anyone who wants to talk more about those kinds of partnerships offline. I'll go ahead and throw my e-mail address here into the main chat window, and you can feel free to reach out to me separately for further conversation.

MS. BRINLY: Great, Andrew. Excellent insights. To meet the IT needs in communities and regions all across, it's going to take some creative solutions and creative partnerships to make that happen.

So we have another question that came in through our participant chat, and this one I'm going to throw out to probably Mike and Scott might have a little bit more insight in on it. How do you negotiate the barriers that get set up by states, counties, city, economic development, and education folks who are always protective about contacting sector partners and framing industry and tolerant to too many folks reaching out for their time and interests?

And how do you really facilitate convening the right stakeholders to address all the barriers that we in government sometimes have a tendency to throw up into the process? So, Mike or Scott, whichever one of you want to jump in there first.

MR. TEMPLE: Well, I'll try first. And I don't mean to be flippant in my answer, but I will say, if there is a big problem, if there's a real problem in that industry, it's easier to get the top of the organization to pay attention. And mostly you get the word out that you've got some data, you've got some information, and you want to see if you can help.

Obviously, the use of a champion, somebody – a person that they all know or respect or have heard of, or you work through that trade association. And once you get those folks together who agree that there's a problem, then you can get started and the barriers aren't quite as tough.

MS. BRINLY: Yes. Definitely it's a conversation-starter. Scott?

MS. SHEELY: I would just add to that, and I think the easy answer and maybe sort of the flip answer is don't invite the stakeholders.

MS. BRINLY: Yeah.

MS. SHEELY: I have had much more success just working with the employers. There's certain folks who will come to the table when there's any whiff of grant money and you got to keep that smell away from them and you have to keep it focused on what's good for the industry and how does the industry want to do it. And, by God, we're not going to accept the curriculum package that you have on the shelf. We want custom type of training for our operation.

I've been readily criticized in the past for this. Even when we get the partnerships in the past up and running, we've had a separate group that would be the other stakeholders. Sometimes it just gets too muddled with all the other folks kind of running around, and, I mean, you would say, well, isn't that a contradiction since you just said that you want to work through intermediaries? Well, yeah. It is kind of, but I think if you have a relationship with the intermediary, one of the things you can say is, well, thanks for sharing your e-mailing list.

We appreciate it, and we're going to invite some people to the meeting. You can come but you have to sit in the back and you can't say anything. And I think that we have to be that assertive so that we don't get sidetracked because you just keep – you keep going down paths that you don't want to go if you have all of these other voices.

The employer voice has to be preeminent and you just have to listen to it constantly and sometimes it takes a while for that to develop. I've seen these things go for years and it takes that long for the employers to actually engage and to develop their voice. So we need to remove the distractions.

You still find some ways to hook – to connect with the intermediary groups, the economic development, the education, all the rest of – you don't leave them totally out of the picture, but they can't come to the meeting.

MS. BRINLY: Yeah. So I see another – you have the same probably situations where all the intermediary or the partner agencies outstrip the number of employers. Then nothing will set a conversation down among industry partners, business friends when that's the case. And so seeing lots of creative strategies. One you mentioned, Scott, was you put the employers around the table, and then you put the partners on the outside and theirs is to listen and to do.

The other I've seen that's been really effective is that the intermediary hosts the meeting with the employers and then they invite the partners to come in and look at the story board from those meetings and then talk about how they could craft some solutions and business solution as a system back as opposed to the individual partners.

So couple of the different things that I've seen work elsewhere. And so, Andrew, any thoughts you want to add in on that one?

MR. BERCICH: Sure, and I think there were – Mike and Scott made some great points. The other thing that I would consider and I do like the idea of making sure that what's comfortable with the employer is paramount to the success of the program because, if they're uncomfortable, they are going to walk.

The other thing I would look at is part of me wonders if some of this question doesn't come with just dysfunction within your partner network, and as the convener of conveners – right – as a – let's say your workforce board should be doing, is there a place to negotiate some of these things using our chief elected officials? They're the ones that are kind of knee-deep in a lot of this work day in and day out.

Certainly, the EDs that are on the line – and I think there are quite a few of you – you're interfacing in some of these areas as well, but there's a point at which we've got a core activity to do, which is to deliver a great product for our constituents, whether that's business, whether that's the jobseeker.

And the internal politics piece needs to be handled by – sometimes by other folks so that we don't get distracted and bogged down because, I'll tell you, from an employer point of view, when I see dysfunction amongst those partner organizations, it does cause a pretty high level of consternation as to is this something I should be doing.

And over the years and the roles I've had I've probably worked with about 27 different workforce investment areas, and I can tell you the five that are great, the 10 that are OK, and then the ones that fall into that area of the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. And I think there's a point at which you have to look at those elected officials to help make sure that the train's hitting the station on time.

MS. BRINLY: Yes. Good point. Good point.

So we want to encourage folks that, if you have questions, you can certainly go live on the line with us or you could type –

MR. COHEN: Yeah. Let's – well, let's do this, if you don't mind. So everybody see this button up top there with the person raising their hand? I'd really encourage you to hit that, and then our IT superstars are going to get you on the line. It takes one brave soul.

That's all it takes, one brave soul to get in there, pose your question, and then the floodgates will open. Burke, I'm looking at you. You're asking a lot of great questions. You might be a great person to start this off. So another plug for that, click that raise your hand button, and we're going to get you on the loop here.

While we're doing that, let me ask a quick on. I'll ask you guys to go fairly quickly. So we've got about – oh, we've still got about 20 minutes left. So we got plenty of time here, but let me – so let's go through this idea of keeping these industries engaged over time. We talked about that first meeting, who you bring in, who you don't, but what's been your experience in bringing these industries along over time, keeping them?

What did you need to show them to keep them engaged? What did you need to have as outcomes to keep them in the room and maybe a little bit about – from that we can kind of figure out what's different among how these companies operate. But I don't know. Mike, you want to take that first?

MR. TEMPLE: Sure. On the healthcare side that group stayed together for about 10 years, which I concert to be a pretty long time. And they early on developed a strategic plan, and they developed a set of measures against that strategic plan so they would know where they were going and if they were getting there.

The work changed over time because the – as the group addressed and provided solutions for some issues, there were other issues that came up. One of the most interesting things to me was the fact that those hospitals were very concerned about their internal work environments.

It wasn't so much about the number of people they had or didn't have or the job of needs that they had. It was about how people related to one another with inside of a hospital and how they could improve the work environment so they're turnover rates would go down and their retention would be better. That was something that kept them all at the table for a very long time.

On the energy side, that one had a quicker life to it, primarily because there was really just one issue they were interested in at the time and one issue they wanted to talk about. And once they figured out what they wanted to do about that and got something done, they were like, OK, well, we're done for now.

And honestly, these partnerships do have a useful life. Sometimes – they always start when things are hot and heavy, and they may cycle for a while and then fall back and then start up again. It just depends on the nature of the industry and the particular problems that they're working with.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Mike. And, Scott, yeah. Same question to you. What – how did you keep them engaged over time? What worked? What didn't?

MS. SHEELY: Yeah. I would agree with Mike. I think that there is a certain life that these groups have. I guess what I've seen both in manufacturing and we had an agriculture group in Lancaster as well – and I'm trying to think about that experience in terms of what we're doing at the state level – is that many of these locally started up around workforce, and they started up around funding.

And as the people came together and developed a culture of working together, one of the things that we found is that the workforce piece was so important. It's always one of their issues, but there were other things that became just as important and in some cases kind of took over the priority. So, for example, one of the things we're dealing with in a big way here in this part of the country is conservation that's required around water quality in relation to the Chesapeake Bay.

Well, that's a big deal and U.S. Department of Environmental Protection is coming into farms in Lancaster and in other areas around the state doing inspections because of water quality. Well, people in agriculture want to talk about that, and for them that's just as important as talking about career pathways and all the rest of that.

So what I've seen at the state level is that so many of the projects that we are looking at right now really come out of more of an economic development need, trying to find ways to create more jobs, which is really not the job of workforce. This is the economic development role. Growth of jobs, jobs, new jobs for people, new industries, that sort of thing, that seems to be the theme.

And, I mean, all this methodology works just as well with – in the economic development world as it does in the workforce world. And I think sometimes we in workforce get a bit of tunnel vision, and we don't really get that there's bigger issues at stake here that have to do again with jobs, with economic development, with increasing prosperity in an area.

And sometimes we need to be reminded about that. And the thing that's always on my mind or has been in the past is that grants run out and they're done. And we don't want it to be the case that, when the grant's done, the project's done. And so I think kind of connecting with that broader purpose is the way to keep you focused so that you don't let that happen.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Scott. And yeah. I mean, your point about the willingness to go where the conversation went, even if it went outside of talent needs, just to showcase yourself as a solutions provider I think is – it's a great point.

Andrew, the same question to you. What keeps you and your IT colleagues at the table? What do you need to see? How quickly, that kind of stuff?

MR. BERCICH: I think for us it's really around is there relevance in what's being brought to the table by our workforce partners? Is the technology current? Are you as familiar with our industry as we are?

And I forget if it was Mike or Scott that said that earlier, but knowing your – their business almost better than they do and what's the direction of the industry. I think if you can stay current on those topics, it does lend, number one, credibility, but then, number two, you feel like there's value there.

Part of the reason – back to the question that John posed earlier around using staffing firms, it's because those staffing firms tend to provide or at least they say they can provide candidates that are utilizing current technology. They invest a lot to source those folks and move them into the pipeline. If we can do the same thing by developing those skills, then we become just as critical a partner and a part of their talent development platform as any third-party search firm or something along those lines. So I think that's the number one critical component.

The number two component is showing that the system is sustainable. And when we talk about having a program like the healthcare partnership in Houston that ran for 10 years, will our technology – how have we built the program?

Is it built around the technology of today and that is the only thing you can get into, or can we build those partnerships so that there's enough flexibility to be able to address the needs of tomorrow when that next big technology breaks? I think that's a key consideration to think about as you're designing those partnerships as well because, if you allow for that flexibility, you're going to have I think a lot of takers and people that want to stay engaged for a long period of time.

MS. BRINLY: Listening and responding, some of the most important things and positioning your industry partners for future success and the ability to expand and grow are so important.

So we have another question for one of our participants who is focused on the criteria employers use for hiring are oftentimes based on scorecards such as they have a GED. They've cleared their drug test. They have the appropriate postsecondary degree or credential that the employer's looking for.

But not all employers are thinking about the essential skills, both the soft and the hard skills that are needed. And how do the workforce system practitioners drive the need for clarity on skills, the essential skills and competencies required for the 21st century workforce, no matter whether it's agriculture, energy, healthcare, those essential skills? Scott, you want to start there or –

MS. SHEELY: Yeah. I think, again, we have to be a little bit more broad in the way we think about things. Andrew's dealing with a very highly-skilled workforce, a lot of degrees and technical knowledge. I'm dealing with people who pick apples and who clean animal stalls and that sort of thing.

We also are working with – and again, this is one of the facts of life in the agriculture production workforce – many, many people who are – they are migrants. They are immigrants. They are guest workers, that sort of thing that bring problems of English and second languages and all the rest.

That's on the supply side, but on the demand side employers who are just absolutely – they need people so bad that they are trying to make every accommodation to get folks on board. And what we've been trying to inject in the conversation is basically we have an obligation, and whether they are that part of the workforce or just other people who are in the low-skill, low-wage labor group, we have an obligation to get those folks into career pathways.

And we need to do that however we need to do that, and if that's English language skills or bilingual training where we can do language skills at the same time we're doing technical skills or maybe it's just a concentration on the soft skill piece of it just to get people in jobs. I find that so many employers would really just like somebody that comes to work and comes to work on time, and then if they could do a couple things, that would be a good thing too. If they know that before they come, that would be even better. But employers bear such a burden of on-the-job training that anything that we can do to make it easier for them, you will become their best friend.

And I don't think our system understands that enough that it's the basics that we have to do. We get bogged down with a lot of the high-end stuff. It's really the basics that drive employers' interest and ongoing concern with the system or their interest in being involved in the system. We got to do a better job with all this.

MS. BRINLY: Yeah. Yeah. That there is really – that workforce intelligence when they're talking with an employer about a job posting, being able to share what the competitive wages are with their partners and what certifications, credentials, and things are – they're moving towards and just understanding what's going on in their market too can be such a big part of that.

So, Mike, anything you want to add there?

MR. TEMPLE: I just want to say one of the things that's been a part of every single one of the sector partnerships that we've been involved in is always a marketing plan, and it has involved members of the industry with schools and often other public venues where we are all talking about what you need to get the jobs in that industry.

And so much the essential skills are a part of that marketing that it just becomes a part of everything we say when we go out and talk about where the good jobs are and what you need to get them.

MS. BRINLY: Good point. Anything –

MR. : Hello? Hello? Hello?

MS. BRINLY: Yes.

MR. : Nobody seems to be talking – speaking up. So can I speak up?

MS. BRINLY: Absolutely.

MR. COHEN: Please. Why don't you tell us where you are and where you're from?

MR. : Yeah. I'm Carl in California. I'd like to go back to the previous speaker and just underline what he said. It seems to me as if keep it simple. All we need to know is what kinds of jobs employers have and how the jobs change, but just don't involve them in long-term discussions with – about all kinds of issues and stuff. Keep it simple.

Find out what kind of jobs they have, and concentrate on preparing the workers so that they can be the kind of valued employee that the previous speaker mentioned, a reliable person, a person who can count and can add and who won't steal their money and who will come to work on time. And getting – preparing our customers to be that person is not easy, and there's really no reason why we need to add the burden of trying to figure out how to prepare our customers to fit whatever changes that are happen – that occur in the, for example, IT industry every six months. We can't possibly do that.

That has to be done by the employers themselves or maybe schools and so on. But I would underline that we should focus on making the – helping our customers to be the reliable employee that the previous speaker mentioned, the employers particularly value and are looking for us to provide. Thank you.

MR. BERCICH: So I would just respond to that because this is certainly an area of expertise for me in that we have moved very much here at Comcast to competency-based hiring of – my division we have about 24,000 employees, and of those about 14,000 of them would be considered front-line employees that have kind of day-to-day interactions with customers.

And of those, only about 500 require any kind of specialized skill or training or experience. The rest we hire based on competencies, and the challenge therein, when we're thinking about this from a workforce development perspective, the way I break these competency pillars down, there's a grid matrix that looks at skills, work styles, and knowledge.

The skills are considered hard skills. Those are easy to train over a short period of time, say three months. A work style, things like dependability, flexibility, service orientation, adaptability, stress tolerance, unfortunately those are things that generally, because they're more innate to an individual, take a longer period of time to influence. You can't necessarily train someone to become stress tolerant. You can't train someone to show up to work on time. You can tell them those are the things they're supposed to do, but they're a little bit more challenging to get actual tangible results in a period of time that one of your business customers might need.

As you think about – well, as we look at hiring people – and again, I'll use very much our experience here – we're going to put a lot more weight on those, if you will, soft skills or will components of an individual because we do know that there's so much more challenge in adapting someone to our environment in the period of time that would keep them employable. Read between the lines if you don't understand what I'm saying there, but if it's a skills shortage, we can come in through our Comcast University or manager working one on one.

And again, I think those are the areas that perhaps we have an opportunity as a workforce system as well to provide those kind of training resources, unless you've got a very, very long-term program that would have folks engaged, kind of a soft skills development program over an extended period of time, it's difficult to get tangible long-term results.

MR. : Can I add to that something?

MR. BERCICH: Sure.

MR. : Yeah.

MR. COHEN: Actually, guys, let me just real – just real quick. You got about 15 seconds.

MR. : OK. Speaking to – because I'd like to highlight that there's a new provision under Workforce – WIOA which is called transitional jobs, and the transitional jobs allow the expenditure of up to 10 percent of the adult and dislocated worker funds to give workers a job experience to get – let them practice how to be good employees.

I think we – it would be very good for us to encourage and utilize that as much as possible and maybe in future regulation or laws in regard to this expand that 10 percent to 20 or 30 percent so that people can actually, through practice of working in a transitional job, acquire those skills. It is very, very, very hard to do. I know that. It's changing a person's lifestyle basically, and that – but if that lifestyle can be changed, that person will never be unemployed again, apart from total disaster. Thank you.

MS. BRINLY: Well, we appreciate your – (inaudible) – and hard to believe how quickly this hour in a just a few minutes is gone. Let's thank Scott and Mike and Andrew for sharing your time and perspective lots more.

And if you have other questions and thoughts, the webinar chat room will be open for a little while longer. We thank you. We thank you for the unique perspectives that each of you brought to the panel. And, Todd, why don't we wrap it up?

MR. COHEN: Sure. Carl, you get that prize, by the way. I will send it over.

All right. Listen. So we've got another session that's coming up tomorrow. We hope you will attend that, but most importantly too, we want to drive in with the closing session, which is Wednesday at 3:00 o'clock. It's going to be a great, great session.

We'll have Eric Spiegel, the CEO of Siemens, is going to talk about manufacturing, industry sector partnerships, the future of sector partnerships. Byron Zuidema will be on as well interviewing Eric. That should be great, and then we'll have some follow up from Martin Simon at the National Governor's Association and Ron Painter at the National Association of Workforce Boards talking about both how to link this stuff that we're talking about at a local, regional level back to state level, which has lots of policy implications there too.

So it should be a great session. Please sign up. You can see the link there. We'll send this out to you again and again. Thanks again for everyone. Appreciate it.

MR. GONZALEZ: All right. We're going to go ahead and wrap up today's event.

(END)