**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Telling TAACCCT Tales: Using Story Telling to Share Project Successes**

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LAURA CASERTANO: Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's webinar, and I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Cheryl Martin. She's a program manager for TAACCCT grants at the U.S. Department of Labor. Cheryl?

CHERYL MARTIN: Thank you, Laura. This is Cheryl Martin, and welcome. We are delighted to have you here today. It's great to see all the different names down the left side there and all the people who have joined us. So we're excited about what we've got in store for you today.

We start out with our little TAACCCT Learning Network map and show you where we are on that map today. So I'm with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, the national office, and we have a number of partners that work with us, including Jobs for the Future that does a lot of TA and CalState/MERLOT, which as you know manages the SkillsCommons website for us. And that is actually part of this map that this webinar is coming from today.

So I am going to introduce – oh, before I introduce our speakers, I wanted to just remind people, if you haven't done so already, to please sign up for the TAACCCT Weekly Digest. You know that we have the TAACCCT Learning Network, our community of practice on WorkforceGPS, and you can always go there to find information. But if you sign up for the weekly digest by checking the little box next to TAACCCT Learning Network under my memberships and notifications, you will also get a weekly e-mail that sort of summarizes and reminds you about new things that we posted on there.

Now, I would like to introduce our speakers today. First of all, we have Helene Mancuso who is the project manager for Luzerne County Community College in Pennsylvania, and she will be our facilitator of this call. So I'll be turning it over to her in one minute. She will be joined today by Alexandra Shinert who is with the Northeast Resiliency Consortium in New Jersey and various other states.

She will also be joined by Kathy Spada who is the project manager for the INTERFACE Consortium in Wisconsin. She is at Northcentral, a number of other colleges in that consortium as well from Wisconsin. In addition we have somebody from way over on the other western side of things, Nicolette van der Lee who is from the University of Hawaii, Maui College.

So welcome to you and Maria Fieth who is the program manager for communications and community at SkillsCommons. Some of you may recognize that she was a TAACCCT grant program manager from before. So she comes to us with a different hat on. So thank you so much to each of you for joining us today, and I'm going to turn it over to Helene to kick us off.

HELENE MANCUSO: Thank you so much. I see that we have people from a variety of organizations and backgrounds. So this will be a robust discussion about storytelling and TAACCCT tales.

Over the next hour we'll talk about how and why this group met and continued to meet over the last year to communicate our passion for TAACCCT sustainability and for our sponsor's organizational successes. I'll begin the conversation today with a quote from an article published in the AFCD on rubrics, "The whole idea of sharing and presenting is not to save people with knowledge and carry them out of their ignorance. The idea of writing and sharing is to help them get unstuck from their journey."

So in olden times when wishing still helped, project narratives were engaging. They served as an inspiration and guide for future development. As projects and budgets grew, the narrative was less about impact and sustainability. In the past five years of the TAACCCT grant, we've been doing really great things, but we lacked a venue to proclaim it. So we're introducing a rubric today that will help communicate our accomplishments, challenges, and legacy planning with others who may benefit from this hearing.

Our purpose is to introduce better produced stories that are strategic, compelling, and inspiring, may help solve problems, resonate with audiences, and celebrate successes and challenges that we overcame along the way. Through the interactive rubric you will follow us on this journey through its development, and so finally, we invite you to take part in our storytelling community and to join the impact storytelling network hosted by SkillsCommons.

So a great while ago while the world was full of wonders a tale begins of kept project directors separate by geography but united in motivation. In that year the online learning consortium met in New Orleans in April. Now, New Orleans is one of my favorite cities in the world. I find inspiration, life, art, comradery in each nook and cranny of this magically historic place.

I've never been in New Orleans in early spring. So I kind of knew I was in for a different experience. So gone were the days of hot and humid 108-degree weather gregariously seeking the freedom of tank tops and shorts. Rather it was set to be a bit more introspective, and so I met this new experience swaddled in a cape like an infant greeting the world for the first time. So layering up like an onion I set out on my first night in search of my colleagues but to no avail.

So I heard the next day there would be a special meeting for TAACCCT staff. Well, I came in armed with all sorts of questions, thoughts, some not so optimistic. You see, we were struggling with employer engagement. Sure. We had employers who worked with us but not in true partnership sense.

Thought maybe I could meet up with some project staff and talk about these things one on one, but alas, with the deliverables of my grant hanging over my head, my expectations on that fateful morning as I entered the conference room were to discuss TAACCCT, meet other project directors and get some best practices, and then go to dinner and explore the French quarter. Little did I know that crossing that threshold meant a substantially different experience. I sat down at the circle table at the back of the room to just observe my colleagues because – (inaudible) – I've met from my previous conferences. I sat alone. My colleagues were much more interested in their phones than in sharing experiences.

So then we were charged with some group activities. My table completed the exercise and then went back to their phones. Then Maria from SkillsCommons did a presentation about a group called MERLOT Voices and encouraged us to sign on. Well, my interest shot like a rocket. There's a whole community? I could connect virtually with other TAACCCT staff? As we worked through our group assignments, it became clear to me that the magic happening in that room was as unique as New Orleans.

So after the break I sat in the middle table with Kathy Spada, one of my fellow presenters today, who served as our scribe. Our group's activity took on a life of its own. Ideas were flowing and experiences were shared and stories were told. We heard about the influence of the tribes in Montana. Heard about resiliency and also the struggles of other TAACCCT projects. So occasionally SkillsCommons had to reign us in because of all the discussion. So as the days and the week progressed, it was clear that we captured the essence of a sustainable partnership.

So if we tried to bring this out of the TAACCCT projects, what would that look like? Would other projects say, well, so what? Could we replicate and teach others how to move that needle within their own communities? So we pondered these questions virtually for quite some time, and we wanted to relate our experiences and share our strife and solutions.

We want to interact with those who've already done it. How did we communicate historically with the learning for generations? Storytelling. Storytelling is the bond that we share as a group. It's a safe place to share ideas and develop replicable stories. This is an important work for sustainability of our efforts, partnership, and deep learning. I learned more about the process of our project in terms of students, learning motivations, deepening business partnerships, and sustainability of those discovered stories.

I am privileged to be at the table with all of you folks from different parts of the country with different experiences, and that is the TAACCCT experience for all. I'm learning about the resources SkillsCommons provides, and I'm grateful for the conduit and repository for our experiences. Through the collaboration process we've discovered one common resounding issue. We all have things that we're concerned about. Alexandra?

ALEXANDRA SHINERT: Thanks, Helene. So now, we'd like to take the time to ask you a question. We want to know what keeps you up at night. We're going to actually do a quick activity with everyone on the line today, and what you see right now on your screen is a word cloud. Like Helene mentioned, for all of us who came together in New Orleans, we spent some time focusing on common challenges so that we could work together to find solutions. Our group today is interested in learning what are some of your struggles? What are the things that you need help with? What kinds of common challenges do you have? Basically, we're asking you, what keeps you up at night?

At this time we'd like you to type in an answer into the word cloud box which you see on the screen. This is going to be really helpful for us because it's going to generate all of the different responses or challenges that you have. So instead of the main chat that you see on the left-hand side of your screen, we'd love for you to type your answer into the word cloud box. While you're doing that, each of us are going to share with you the kinds of things that are keeping us up at night.

So here in the NRC we're in four different states, and we have seven different colleges. For me, my role in communications means I get the chance to talk to a lot of different people. As you can imagine, I start to hear similar stories and characters that emerge across schools. In fact, a lot of their stories sound the same, and I think what was keeping me up at night was trying to find ways to connect people to solve those problems and find solutions together.

In a lot of ways, I had seen a lot of similar characters emerge across our colleges, and so within our communications efforts we really wanted to find a way to hone in on the people who have common challenges or successes and put those at the center of our storytelling efforts. So as you could see on the screen, what keeps me up at night is people. Helene, I have a feeling something's keeping you up at night too.

MS. MANCUSO: Thanks, Alexandra. So the world fell silent. All you can hear is the echo of your heart pounding as the beads of sweat trickle down the side of your face. You feel nothing except for the lump in your throat and nausea quickly creeping in as you realize that something has gone wrong, very wrong. We've all been there, that dreadful moment when a company visit becomes our own worst nightmare.

The manager stated somebody from your organization or industry partnership has just visited the previous day and asked those same exact questions. So the birds' eye view of the TAACCCT project that you see in my picture is our employment and economic development partners. We're all chasing the same sort of Holy Grail or in this case "l' arc de triomphe" of true partnership engagement in an organized, systematic way.

Business communicates clearly education was truly the solution for workforce development, and those skills gap analysis appear simple but are really challenging to compile. Although business and education are separate, we are all after the same goal, impacting the region in a positive way and bringing in redevelopment. So many times education and business are talking different languages, and we expect them to know what they need in five years. Most businesses don't know what they'll need next year. Kathy?

KATHY SPADA: Well, I would say that in the past reports used to keep me up at night, but I think it really is storytelling that I think about most often now. We've made a deliberate effort in our round three TAACCCT project to share our successes with internally and externally with our stakeholders and partners. We do that through a quarterly e-newsletter with colleges submitting I'm going to call them articles in a really traditional report-like format, and we publish those articles.

But the stories don't quite resonate in the way that I think would engage those partners and pay more attention and share the successes that we're having. So what keeps me up at night is really trying to move from that traditional way to a more focused way of storytelling that keeps the successes moving forward and being shared. Nicolette, what keeps you up at night?

NICOLETTE VAN DER LEE: Thank, Kathy. Aloha, everyone, from Hawaii. Wow, it's really telling that sustainability keeps so many of us up at night. Let's see. Thanks for advancing the slides. This – sustainability also keeps me up at night, and it's really that question of how to continue the successful programs after our grant funding ends and enable future students to participate in these programs to enhance their skills and lead to exciting career pathways that align with – (inaudible).

Storytelling is one important way that we can support the sustainability of our TAACCCT programs by sharing the successes of students. So a picture like this one that I'm sharing with you is – (inaudible) – fulfilled and excited student achieving her dream of a college education, and that's also what keeps me coming back to our storytelling network. How can we share these stories to inspire future students and our community to sustain our successful program?

So what has our storytelling network been working on since New Orleans when we all connected? I think we realized from the beginning that although we knew the importance of storytelling, we didn't really know how to do it well. We intuitively knew what a good story would sound like when we heard one, but what makes a good story? So as a first step we decided to research and tap into resources that already existed.

As you can see on this slide, we created a community using MERLOT Voices as a platform. Here in Hawaii our grant director for the TAACCCT round two grant, Karen Somaki, had already pointed us to Debra Bragg and the collaboratory principles of transformative change at the College of Education in Illinois. The principles identified storytelling as a means to facilitate learning about innovation and transformative change.

So our group from New Orleans continued to meet through our MERLOT Voices platform, and during this research Kathy discovered that the stories were telling resources from Georgetown University and the Myer Foundation. And we decided that creating a rubric inspired by these resources would be a mutual tool to guide our storytelling efforts. You can see on the right side of the slide an outline full of the storytelling – (inaudible) – looks like.

We continued to meet virtually every other week since New Orleans, supported by our SkillsCommons colleagues, and we worked collaboratively in Google Drive actually to create this rubric. We realized that, in essence, we had organically formed a community of practice focused on storytelling, as it was a voluntary effort that we all committed to over the past year and are excited to share with you today.

So the rubric we developed consists of six categories or components of an effective story and three levels to evaluate the effectiveness of a story, whether it's needs improvement to exemplary. So, for example, does the story you want to tell have an effective character that is three dimensional, or does it actually lack a character altogether? We will go into more detail on the rubrics later in this presentation using interactive tutorials.

So we realized early on that the rubric is not intended to judge a story or be the last word on a story's effectiveness. Rather, you can use this rubric to guide your creation of a story and kind of check in throughout your process to see if you're hitting all the categories, or you may make an informed decision not to. So, for example, you may decide that there's not one central character to your story and that it's okay not to be exemplary for that component. Instead you really focus on having a three-act class, multiple characters, and a hook that helps – (inaudible) – story to resonate with the audience and keep them engaged.

So let's see how we can inspire people to use the rubric. We worked with the SkillsCommons team and created an interactive storytelling rubric tutorial, and this is available on SkillsCommons.org. Let's watch a module from the tutorial next to learn about the purpose and value of storytelling.

VIDEO: Stories have been told throughout the ages for very specific purposes. Take Odysseus' story, for example. Odysseus left his family and essentially gave up everything in order to fulfill his mission. Just as in today's world, Odysseus encountered challenges and rewards along the way, but he battled through and came out better for it. A strong story has a main character with a problem, but with resilience the character faces and eventually overcomes the challenges, not to so unlike the path taken by many major initiatives and individuals in higher education and workforce training today.

Storytelling can help problem-solve, provide guidance, build confidence, or share the wisdom of those who have walked this path previously. Stories can be used to help others overcome challenges and invite them to embark upon the next steps of their own journeys. Storytelling offers solutions to common problems. It's supports and encourages sustainability by sharing and connecting the audience to viable strategies. Every time a story is told, the solutions are passed down and the learning is leveraged.

By using this rubric to design well-told stories, educational institutions, workforce centers, and employers can share the path projects have taken to build successes and overcome challenges. Others could then benefit from the learning maybe – (inaudible) – energy, and perhaps funding. Think of it as a creative reporting mechanism. Normal reporting is important, as storytelling is not meant to replace reporting processes.

Storytelling complements more traditional reporting by sharing a quick understanding of the importance and impact of the work. A project's components might be the story's character, and the project's goals become experiences and achievements realized despite the challenges. Themes emerge, strategies are formed, and lessons are learned.

Purpose of structured storytelling. To produce better stories that are strategic, are compelling and inspiring. Help solve a common problem. Resonate with the audience. Celebrate successes and challenges overcome along the way. Outcomes of structured storytelling. Effective communication of an initiative's long-term impact. Share and leverage lessons learned. Value of using the storytelling rubric. Clarifies qualities found in effective stories. Embeds research-based building blocks intended to help create more engaging stories. Guides the observation of peer and self-assessment of storytelling products.

MS. VAN DER LEE: Okay. Great. So now that you've had a bit of a teaser of this rubric tutorial – and it available on SkillsCommons and we'll be sharing a link after the webinar – at this point we're going to share some of our own TAACCCT – (inaudible). We invite you to gather around the table like a writer's room. Let me get to the next slide here. Here we go. So we invite you to gather around the table and this we're all together in a writer's room and we're going to share an inside glimpse into some of our own storytelling challenges and how we are using the rubric to guide us in the creative process.

So here in Hawaii the concept of talking story expresses the tradition of oral history of the islands. Because we live over 3,000 miles from the mainland on remote islands, we are a very tight-knit community, and talking story is a way of staying connected to each other. People tell a story to each other every day, whether in a casual chat or as a means of passing on a meaningful story. For our $12 million TAACCCT round two grant, it was awarded to a consortium of community colleges on the islands of Hawaii, Oahu, Kawaii, and Maui. We wanted to figure out a way to talk stories to connect with our community and beyond and share the stories and the positive outcomes and long-term impacts of these workforce development grants in Hawaii.

One of the stories our grant director wanted to tell was the impact of a $1.6 million infrastructure investment and capacity building initiative spearheaded by the grant. This sounded like a pretty dry topic. So I felt challenged to figure out how to tell the story in a more compelling way than just showing images and describing materials. In other words, why does it matter that we bought a lot of stuff? What was the value of this TAACCCT grant investment?

To begin the process we brought our grantees together from many different communities, from the various community colleges across the islands, and we made a list of all the stories we wanted to tell and every way that we might tell it – tell them from a web report to a booklet to a video. We decided to return to our respective campuses and organize teams to work on the stories throughout the last year of our round two grant.

On Maui we reviewed our list of potential stories, and we prioritized them with teams to work on each one. So here's an example for our – the infrastructure story that we wanted to tell. Our team had a kickoff meeting to brainstorm how to tell the story. You can see that we used the rubric developed by our storytelling network to help us work through the process. It really worked like a writer's room or round table style approach where everyone's ideas were welcomed, and we could workshop through ideas until they felt right.

So if you refer to the table, we started in the top left with character. We first discussed the question of what was the underlying problem that the character was facing. In the case of our infrastructure story, we focused on the concept that our students lacked effective student support services, equipment, and supportive learning environments.

So the infrastructure investments really addressed the underlying problem. We realized that the value of the infrastructure investments were to provide our students and instructors with the resources and tools that would support effective teaching and learning. Something that we had to continuously remind ourselves is that the grant itself is not the character. Rather it was the students and faculty experiencing the benefits of the investment that was really the effective characters we wanted to share.

So the solution or how we did it was we decided to interview students and faculty who had those compelling stories to share. So as you can see here, we worked through each category in the rubric to generate ideas and develop solutions for how to build the story with effective characters, a three-act structure, authenticity, action-oriented emotions, a hook, and meaningful connection with the audience.

So our approach was to use video and other formats to tell stories. In order to do this, we actually built our own mini multimedia production studio. It was very collaborative and team building. Our team consisted of a grant director and outreach coordinators who wrote the script collaboratively in Google Drive. As a next step we ran through interviews for the production process, and then we provided direction on media production. For step three our videographers and editors shot the video, edited, and recorded the voice-over narration.

We actually recruited a team of three media specialists as full-time grant staff to do this production and post-production work, and we also had them build a media library of photos and videos that we could leave behind for the campus after the grant ended. As a team we reviewed the rough cuts, made revisions, and produced a final video to post on YouTube and our website. We essentially applied a four-step process, writing, production, post-production, and sharing consistently for every story we developed.

So our round two grant has now ended, and we've archived all of our reports on a website here to support ongoing access to these stories. We hope this online resource will provide other grants with ideas and inspiration for how to effectively implement an impactful grant project that has meaningful outcomes for our students, employers, and community. I welcome you to visit our website and check it out. We also posted a final infrastructure story that we called "Leaving a Legacy" on YouTube.

I'm sharing a link here and hope you'll check it out and see how we were able to tell the tale of infrastructure investments in a more creative way than a typical grant report. Now, I'll hand it over to Helene in Pennsylvania to share her storytelling process.

MS. MANCUSO: Thanks, Nicolette, but the story is never over. It keeps evolving because, historically, oral tradition is really how we learn about how the way the world works. It's a primary resource of mentorship, ways to solve problems, and to learn how to succeed. When interacting with friends of colleagues, we relate stories of business ventures for many reasons, validation, camaraderie, problem solving, or reporting.

Recognizing that stories are live, we explore them to share common challenges and strategies to overcome them. We find that when we collaborate through stories, we have a conscious and purposeful collaboration. Stories help us discover relationships and resiliency within our projects. The sharing of stories is a precursor to storytelling.

Similarly, I found that through our TAACCCT project that employers have a universal struggle. They need qualified workers, legacy, and upskill planning. By sharing the story of one employer's journey, both colleges and businesses will be able to see how it might be replicable. The future partnerships and operating procedures may need to be disruptive for growth.

So like most colleges, we have a long history of transactional relationships with business. Through the TAACCCT grant we're able to deepen those relationships in our stakeholders and to blaze a trail to new relationships. One of these examples is our deepening employer engagement. It's told through a story called "The Tale of the Cheetah."

This tale takes a listener through the process of a relationship with the community college as told through the business owner's eyes of Cheetah Chassis. Here's an excerpt. Cheetahs blaze a trail. They act. They respond. They bolt into action when the opportunity arises, divinely designed to allude predators and surprise prey. They have a long, slick body marked by beautiful brown and black spots. It's large heart and lungs are expansive, capable of taking in more oxygen to support the swiftness of the sprint.

As the only species of cat unable to retract its claws, they reach impressive speeds and have extra grip, – (inaudible) – and power. We can picture it in a full out run through the grasslands of east African warm sunlight. So much like Ariana Multodum (ph), Cheetah Chassis stands apart in industry-renowned quality, swiftness to action, core devotion to new and existing customers, and a highly dedicated and tenacious and skilled workforce. Always on the prowl, successful businesses are keenly aware of its surroundings, the responses to the undertones of the region's economic needs.

Looking throughout our facility, I see employees with tremendous work ethic. I have dedicated and a loyal workforce, but looking toward the future I see some would like to move into supervisory positions but really don't have the right skills. But if I don't advance them, I may lose them to my competitor. So if they move up, who will fill the jobs that they once had? I have lots of contacts coming in that need fulfillment and more on the horizon.

Do I have enough skilled employees to – (inaudible) – this job? In this time of decisions I look to the founder. Thanks to Rick's pioneering spirit, his innovative passion is what led our company to bring the customer the finest chassis and – (inaudible) – on the road today. I must find a way to preserve my workforce, upskill my employees, and devise a legacy strategy that will help our company succeed well into the future.

So facing the skills gap in my factory amidst an upswing of manufacturing, I invited my long-term friend and mentor, Dave, for a bite to eat. We sat at our favorite lunch spot in the center of town that our special table is tucked in a corner, draped in red cloth with shining white votive. We pondered the future of our employees, business, and economic growth as a whole. As we sat he pointed to the kitchen and simply stated, business today is likened to what happens in that kitchen.

Intrigued, I asked him to continue. He said, imagine there are three ingredients that go into that pot of water, a carrot, an egg, and coffee grinds. What do you think happens to them? I felt like I was taking one of those leadership courses in college. I stated, well, I guess the carrot would probably become mushy and disintegrate with time. The egg would be hard, and the coffee grinds would probably be something else like coffee.

Well, grinning from ear to ear, he said, yes. In business you decide your economic and business response. You can either shrivel and fold up like the carrot, become stone like the egg and refuse to change, or you can embrace change like the grinds and see what happens.

Well, Dave and I are both members of the industrial association with our business park. So our discussion hearkened back to a meeting there a few months ago. The discussion confirmed that many other businesses are facing the same workforce skills gap. I really need to find a way to train my employees that are tailored to my company's diverse needs. Well, Dave stated, the community college is a resource. There you can collaborate, experiment, and grow your business. They have the capacity to foster business partnerships and contribute to the economic and technical and social advances to the region.

So we chatted while we ate, but my mind was spinning. I did meet some Luzerne County Community College representatives at a recent industry board meeting. I know they have the – I have their business cards, and they do have training programs. They can probably help me prepare my staff for supervisory roles. I wonder if they can help train some employees to backfill some slots on the floor.

Well, that's an excerpt, and hopefully I'll be presenting soon the end of that story. But as you can see the college can also use the mentor's story about the pot and the water and three ingredients, carrot, an egg, and coffee grinds, and stretch its symbolism to business engagement as a whole. If you boil the carrot too long, it becomes mushy and disappears.

So don't overuse those partnerships. It could lead to business fatigue. The egg becomes hard, and so don't be too steadfast or self-righteous in your thinking or doing. The relationship would then be brittle and easily broken. Finally, the grounds become something else in the water. So don't be afraid of the unknown. Sometimes a leap of faith yields strong results. And now, the story is yours, Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA SHINERT: Thanks, Helene. Well, I want to welcome you all to the writer's room for the NRC, and I'm going to share with you our process for a Voices of Opportunities project. So this project was a part of a TAACCCT webinar that our consortium had the opportunity to do last year and it was a TAACCCT grantee-led webinar and it was called voices of opportunity, creating resiliency and building community.

A big part of this webinar was to focus on storytelling, and we really wanted that to be a major component of what we were exposing people to. While we were sharing our best practices around resiliency and really promoting critical skills that keep people going, this was also an opportunity for us to experience something new and to take a chance with storytelling.

So what you see on the screen right now on the left-hand side is some webinar mapping that we were doing, and very early into this process we had allotted a space for storytelling. We talked about building in a testimonial component. Because the part of the webinar has the word community in it, we really wanted to find a way to expose individuals to our community. So we thought about splicing together different voices as a way to share the story of our community using real people from our community. So that's what you see on the left-hand side.

On the right-hand side are instructions that we came up with really early into this process after we had seen this idea build. And so what I did was I put together a concept and I shared it with people and I asked them very simply to take some time to answer three questions. We wanted people to actually record these on their own time using a voice recorder as a way to strip away barriers around storytelling, so even just using an iPhone as a way to capture an experience.

This project was really emphasizing the importance of self-awareness and reflection, which are pieces for us that are essential for building resiliency, and in a lot of ways building a story and building resiliency are very similar. You'll see what I mean on the bottom right-hand side of the screen. We asked individuals in our community to answer three simple questions. What have you learned about yourself from your involvement in the NRC? What are you proud of, and what has been most challenging? We really have experimented with storytelling. We have a podcast, and so we wanted to bring in some of that element to our webinar.

And so what happened was people took to their microphones and they sent me back their voice recordings, and so I had the opportunity to listen through everyone's experiences and transcribe and analyze different things that came up in their voices. And I had a feeling that there would be some commonalities across our community because, again, these are things that we have in common, what our experience is like.

Certainly, that's what happened. I think some characters also emerged as well, and as I did the analysis I really wanted to build the story based on what I was hearing. And so you'll see on the left-hand side of the screen that things like people and learning and students and resiliency came out in different people's voices as they talked about their experience with this project.

So what I did as I produced this story was I wove together different voices and experiences building on each person's ideas. And that's what you see on the right-hand side of the screen, that Alese's thought gets built upon by Francesca and so on and so on. And I actually weaved this together in different parts. So when you take a listen to it on the next screen – it's available on YouTube to listen to – you'll hear those different themes that emerged. And hopefully, you'll also identify with the different characters within our community.

As I mentioned, this was a storytelling component within a larger webinar, and as you probably know, if you were on it, this was a new venture for us to really expose individuals to storytelling and not just share practices but share stories. And so this was a way for us to actually test out how well our story was resonating.

We asked individuals to tell us throughout their time listening to this piece if they heard something that resonated or made them think of themselves. And that was intentional. What you'll hear a little later into this webinar today is that you really want to build the story that resonates within an audience and that has this authentic voice. And as I produced this piece, I knew the audience of TAACCCT grantees. I knew the audience of people who are here to help others succeed. And so you hear those voices in this project.

And I just really want to mention that building a plot and bringing in authenticity, all of these components that make a really good story, I don't think I would have been able to produce this piece had it not been for my involvement in the storytelling network. They were the ones to push our consortium forward, to go out on a limb and kind of lead the way with storytelling, and we were really grateful that we had the opportunity and space to try something new.

For us, I think we found that sharing our stories and our practices are essential to sustainability and that the wisdom and the knowledge that so many people across our schools have gained from their time within the NRC, that will be passed on. And so this is just one portion of our storytelling efforts. I want to mention that you can check out this project on YouTube. I have the instructions as well, if others are interested in taking on storytelling and finding a way to do this. So I want to turn things over to Kathy who's going to share with you her storytelling process.

MS. SPADA: Hello again. So I want to share with you or jump back a minute to the thing that keeps me up at night was our traditional storytelling and the way we were sharing our work. So what you see on the screen here is a story excerpt – we'll call it an article – that appeared in one of our quarterly e-newsletters. Now, this was a four- or five-paragraph article from one of the colleges in the INTERFACE Consortium reporting out about their success with an event, with a summit, an IT summit.

And so if we just look at this excerpt for a minute, I'm just going to read it to you. I want you to join me in the writer's room. Put that hat on a minute because I think you probably all face similar scenarios where you share out really exciting successes but in a way that's really report-ish. So if you're sitting in this writer's room with me, I want you to think about how could we, thinking back to that rubric, incorporate those components and massage this kind of story into something that really resonates with people?

The formal summit offered students a valuable learning lesson outside of traditional guest speaker presentations or organized student events. It gave them insight on industry trends and potential career paths, allowed them to network with experienced IT and cyber security professionals, and provided them with information about realities and the risks of today's technological environment. Hmm. There's meat there. It's really interesting, but I think it's something that Nicolette said earlier. The event isn't the character here.

So if you think about this, what is the character here? There are so many options here. This could have been a story that was an interview with a student, a participant, a TAACCCT participant who attended the event. What was their life story? Was it a painful life story? What brought them to this point, and what did they take away from this IT summit that would resonate with an employer?

So this could be the voice of a student. This could have been the voice of a subject matter expert, a presenter in this event talking about trends and innovation for the future that we should all be thinking about as we sustain all of the great things that we developed through TAACCCT. Where should we be in five years? This could have also been a hook. So what did this event solve? Was there some sort of problem or issue that this solved for an employer? Was there an aha moment for someone in the audience?

So this is where we're at using storytelling and the rubric, trying to move from this kind of sharing in a very traditional way to something that somebody will say, oh, wow. I got to share this with the person next to me in the next cubby or in the next office. Look what they did. And again, I think that has to do with sustainability and helping people connect the dots and demonstrating our relevancy.

I had another excerpt here. It was very similar, but I think because we're running short of time, I'm just going to skip it and go on because we really want to share with you and showcase these components of the storytelling rubric. And you don't have to be writing this down or taking notes. This storytelling rubric, this tutorial is on SkillsCommons.org for you to review and use, but we just wanted to walk you through it so that you knew that it's there as a tool as you start to move into storytelling. And not that we want you to use it to judge the writing, but it really describes the kind of writing I think that will resonate with people.

You see across the bottom the six components of the rubric and then the three levels of effectiveness, and you can see that as we talk about the first component, the effective character, you've heard my colleagues talk about this in their storytelling processes but what is the quality of good storytelling that has an effective character?

And this really is something that has to do with universal needs and emotions and things that are intangible and that connect with the audience and that make the character relatable. Maybe because the experiences are similar to the reader or the listener or maybe it's because there are connections that the audience feels, like, oh, jeez. This could happen to me too. Those – so that is the first component we think that you want to try to work into any kind of storytelling media that you're using.

We're going to go right on into the second component that is plot and another good quality of good storytelling. We know that plot keeps the story moving forward, that there's an actions-oriented story, and I think by that we mean that it propels the story forward so you don't quit reading or you don't quit listening or you don't quit being engaged. The plot might include a setback. Not everything works the way we think it's going to work. Sometimes sharing the setback is as important as the success. You might – with the timing sequence, is it linear? Is your sequence linear, or are you providing flashbacks in the plot as you tell the story?

The third component and, again, another quality of great writing is authenticity and voice. And again, this has to do with does it resonate with the audience? Does it feel truthful? Do we get at that character's voice? And again, the character can't be the organization. It can't be the grant. It can't be the event. It has to be a real person because people have emotions, and people have voice. Those other things really don't. So we want to know how the character feels and we're not just telling you how they feel but we actually can sense in a really natural, truthful, and relevant way.

The fourth component is again tied to that, action-oriented emotions that engage the audience at the exemplary level, that pushes the audience, that there are active emotions, anger and anxiety and excitement and awe and maybe not just sadness or contentment, which are more passive kinds of emotion. We would hope that good stories would convince or persuade people maybe to change their mind or their behaviors, maybe to think about implementing changes in their own environments.

Going on, the fifth – whoops. There we go. The fifth component of good storytelling, again, is the hook, as you heard earlier. Can we make an immediate and lasting connection with our audience? If we can respond to that what we asked you earlier, what keeps you up at night and why are you here – if we can respond to that, if we can respond to what's at stake here and what's the urgency, then we have definitely created a hook.

And our final component is the resonates with the audience component and again at the exemplary level of effectiveness. We really think that this is something that gives the audience a reason to stay engaged. Maybe we're pulling their heart strings with a student story. Maybe it's an underdog story. Maybe it's a story about swimming against the current or even eating humble pie. All of those I think are reasons for an audience to stay engaged with us.

So this was a really quick walk-through of these six components that, again, are on the interactive rubric tutorial on SkillsCommons.org, and we just felt we needed this as a framework so that we – again, we're not judging kinds of writing but that we were using – we could use it to describe what we think are really great kinds of storytelling. So given that, I am now going to hand this off to Maria who has an invitation for all of you.

MARIA FIETH: Thank you, Kathy. I appreciate that. We're very happy to be here with everybody today. We want to just let you know loud and clear that you've done a beautiful job of adding to the SkillsCommons repository. It's an amazing collection of materials that will only grow to be stronger. And we also want you to know that this piece will definitely be sustained, and when the TAACCCT funding cycles have closed, the repository will remain and it will continue to be supported through CalState/MERLOT.

Our next steps with this storytelling piece is to broaden the forum to employers, to workforce, to non-TAACCCT specific stories from colleges. So this is – right now, we're launching it out of TAACCCT, and you can be proud of that because this is an unusual way to approach a problem such as getting your story out. But we are going to broaden out beyond TAACCCT. Next slide, Kathy.

So we really want you to consider joining us and becoming a member of the storytelling network impact community, and we have included links on the PowerPoint that you can click through. You'll have to join MERLOT, and then you'll get into the storytelling network community itself and/or we'd like to offer an invitation to consider telling a story of a student, a program, workforce successes, stories that can come in lots of different forms.

It doesn't have to be a webinar, but it might be. It could be a blog, a podcast, video, strategic illustration. There are lots and lots of ways that we can do that. We worked with a tech partner to bring you the interactive rubric, and we're going to make that available to you. It's a nice guide, but the storytelling community is also available to help walk you through the process, if you feel that that could be helpful to you. Next slide, Kathy.

So we have time for maybe one or two questions. I'd like to open it up just in case anyone would like to ask something of one of the specific presenters. And if you would, you can type it into the chat, and then we'll share it out.

Robin says she has a good idea. I'm hoping that lots of folks here are thinking about their own stories and ways that – in which you can share the good work that has gone on.

Okay. So on behalf of the members of the storytelling network impact community, thank you so much for being here today. And we look forward to growing our community and opening our doors to you, opening our storytelling building experience to you so that you can benefit and be one of the next ones in line to tell your story. At this time I would like to pass it back to Cheryl Martin to help us close things up.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you, and thank you all. Lots of things to think about there. I am reminded of my daughter who was a storyteller. So I was thinking about it from her perspective too and the book that she's writing.

I wanted to just let people know about a couple of upcoming webinars. We do all kinds of webinars. We do very creative ones like the storytelling one. We do some that are perhaps a bit drier, but still I saw that closeout is what's – one of the things that's keeping somebody up at night. So we are doing the round three closeout webinar on February 9th. Round four is welcome to join us for that as well.

And we also do these consultancy calls where we get somebody who has an issue that they want some to consult with their colleagues and some subject matter experts, and we put them in the center of the fish bowl and let them tell us their – whatever it is that they're challenged by, and then everybody can help with that. So that's happening on the 13th. We have others coming up as well, but those are the next two.

So thank you for joining us for this one, and I'm going to turn it back to Laura.

(END)