**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Free Resources for Apprenticeship & Work-based Learning**

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JON VEHLOW: Welcome to "Free Resources for Apprenticeship and Work-based Learning." So without further ado I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Cheryl Martin, TAACCCT Program Manager, Division of Strategic Investments with the Employment and Training Administration here at the U.S. Department of Labor. Cheryl?

CHERYL MARTIN: Hi, Jon. And hi everybody. Thank you so much for joining us. We are at 350 people and counting today, which is – oh, make that 352 – which is great. We are really delighted to have you all here today. I'm from the U.S. Department of Labor, and I'd like to introduce my co-moderator for this series – Erin Berg from the U.S. Department of Education. We'll be hearing from Erin in just a moment.

The presenters today are both grantees from a U.S. Department of Labor program called TAACCCT. That's a long set of letters – but for those not familiar with TAACCCT – it is the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Program. And it is a $2 billion, seven year grant that is wrapping up in September of 2018. It was – Congress authorized it for a period of – for four different rounds and those rounds have been given out. And some of the grantees – you're hearing from two of those grantees today – one who has already wrapped their project and one who will be wrapping up in September.

But TAACCCT was kind of unique because it provided funds for capacity building for community colleges. Often our grants pay for training. This one has training, but the funds were actually for capacity building. And the capacity building was to support changes that would make it easier for adult learners to attain industry-recognized credentials to improve their job prospects.

So the 700 TAACCCT funded colleges developed nearly 2,700 new or revised programs of study – like, say, the curriculum for a manufacturing or a healthcare program at a community college. They've also developed a lot of new ways of doing things with those funds like helping address a rural healthcare shortage using apprenticeship – just for instance – because that's one of the things you'll hear about today – or setting up a new credit (prepare ?) learning program, or dozens of other kinds of things.

And – this is where we get to that "free resources" part of the title here – a lot of what those grantees did and developed is available on SkillsCommons.org. That is a repository where we ask the grantees to post all of their materials. So in some cases you can get a partial or even a full curriculum that a college developed for a whole program of study or for a course – that kind of thing.

It can be like digital literacy, things like that, as well as something like nanotechnology or cyber or healthcare. In other cases, the resources that you can find on SkillsCommons would be like an apprenticeship tool kit, for instance, which we'll talk about today. Or something like that – more of a program or process kind of a material. And those are just a couple of examples of all of the – what is it – about 12,000 different things we have on SkillsCommons right now representing 50,000 different files. So there's a wealth of riches there for you.

So we wanted to share some of those resources with you and let more people know about them. We used to call it a best kept secret, but it's less and less of that now. There's a lot of people who know about it. But we want you to be able to benefit as well, because even though these grants are ending, SkillsCommons will continue and others can benefit from what grantees have learned and built. So you'll hear more about those free resources today. And you'll hear two great stories about how a couple of grantees in Montana made new and exciting things happen.

Before we get to that, I'd like to introduce my colleague Erin Berg, and turn it over to Erin for a moment.

ERIN BERG: Hi, everyone. Good afternoon and thank you so much for joining our webinar today. And thank you, Cheryl, for the introduction. As promised on this slide here, I'm Erin Berg with the Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. And it's my pleasure to serve as a liaison to all of the community colleges in the United States.

Since the inception of the tax program, the Departments of Labor and Education have been working to support TAACCCT applicants, grantees, and now through SkillsCommons, the greater workforce development community. In my role, I'm able to hear about many of the successes and innovations at community colleges. However, I'm also often asked about what resources might be available for colleges facing challenges, or those that are seeking to improve and update their curriculum and instruction.

As Cheryl mentioned, today's webinar will address one of those challenges. It's one that I'm hearing more and more and more, especially with the excitement about apprenticeship these days – and that's establishing new apprenticeship, work-based learning or other earn-and-learn type of educational programs.

While most colleges offer courses that lead to multiple certifications in healthcare, manufacturing, information technology, many colleges are interested in expanding their curriculum to offer apprenticeship certifications in those areas. And so we'll hear about these excellent resources available in SkillCommons.org. I think Cheryl will talk a little bit more about SkillsCommons in addition to what she's already talked about.

So we're really excited to be a part of this webinar series to sort of showcase the best of SkillsCommons – not exhaustive by any means. But we'll offer one more opportunity next month that will – and is there a list of the next webinars?

So the next slide? Sorry. There we go. Thank you. One more webinar next month on June 6th, which is Building Strategic Alliances between Colleges and Workforce Boards. Hopefully, you can join us for that as well. We're also really grateful to our colleagues – the Department of Labor for initiating this webinar series, and to our excellent presenters from the Missoula College and the Flathead Valley Community College. Thank you very much, Cheryl.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you, Erin. I'm really glad that you're here with us today as well.

So I want to say a bit more about free resources. So – in that title – so I see that about one third of you from the poll have some familiarity with SkillsCommons and about two thirds of you – looked like – didn't. We've done whole webinars about SkillsCommons resources and we've linked one here. The first link that you see on the slide is one of those, so I'm not going to try to redo that today.

But I'm only going to mention two of the showcases on the website that give you some samples of what you'll find. And showcases are one of the ways that we organize some things on the site to make certain things easier for you to find. I mentioned that there are two kinds of resources on SkillsCommons.

There's curriculum and there's kind of how-to resources like the apprenticeship tool kit. And to get an idea of what kind of curriculum you can find, you can check out that open courseware showcase after we're done here for curriculum related to manufacturing, healthcare, IT, energy and more. It's all there for the downloading, so go get some and tell your friends.

To gain an idea of some of the resources available specifically related to apprenticeship, you can check out the apprenticeship showcase. This showcase is brand new and will be further developed over the coming months. Also, we're talking today about healthcare and manufacturing apprenticeships, but really, any curriculum on SkillsCommons can be used to help develop an apprenticeship program.

If you're developing an apprenticeship program in underwater basket weaving – actually we don't have that one. But anyway, if you did find curriculum here on that, you could use it for an apprenticeship program. Just because somebody else hasn't used it that way so far doesn't mean that it wouldn't be applicable. So whatever curriculum you find on skills commons might be useful to you in that way. Or, if you're not trying to do an apprenticeship program in a specific thing, you might find it beneficial for that as well.

I also noticed that about half of you have some – or maybe a lot of experience with apprenticeships, and about half of you are new to the idea. So I wanted to just say a couple of things about work-based learning and apprenticeships.

Briefly, work-based learning refers to a whole variety of different training approaches that offer learning opportunities at a work site. Anything from an internship to an apprenticeship. One form of work-based learning is apprenticeship, which is a pretty specific form and has some – has a lot of specificity to it.

The apprenticeships are arrangements that include a payed work component and an educational or instructional component – sometimes called the classroom component, although it can be on line – wherein an individual obtains workplace-relevant knowledge and skills, resulting in an industry-recognized credential.

So a long-established form of apprenticeship is called registered apprenticeship, which is the type that our two grantees will talk about today. President Trump, in an executive order last year, directed the secretaries of labor, education and commerce to significantly broaden the types of apprenticeships available – to broaden that beyond registered apprenticeship. We will keep going with registered apprenticeship, but we want more options as well. So there's a lot going on in this arena right now. So we're really excited to be able to share some of the innovations going on the apprenticeship world today.

Today we will hear from – as I said – two folks from Montana – two individuals who were involved two different TAACCCT grants that both happened to involve apprenticeships. First, we're going to hear from Valerie Piet, who works for the state of Montana, but is also the healthcare program supervisor for the HealthCARE Montana grant led by Missoula College. And that is a grant that is currently wrapping up.

Secondly, we're going to hear from Matt Springer, who is the TAACCCT grant project director for strengthening workforce alignment in Montana's Manufacturing and Industries, a.k.a. RevUp Montana. Thankfully, they had a shorter title than that. And that one was led by Great Falls College – part of Montana State University. So that grant has ended, but we really appreciate that Matt is willing to come back and tell his story.

So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to Valerie to tell us what she can tell us about starting an apprenticeship program in Montana.

VALERIE PIET: Thank you, Cheryl. Again, my name is Valerie Piet. I'm with HealthCARE Montana, our state's TAACCCT round IV initiative aimed at addressing healthcare workforce challenges. As you can see on the right side of your slide, I have two logos. That is because I work for the Montana Department of Labor and Industry as a sub grantee on the TAACCCT IV grant.

Our agency houses the Montana Registered Apprenticeship Program, which oversees apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs that meet the quality standards for registration with the state. So while this is a TAACCCT webinar, I am coming from the workforce perspective. But I have the amazing advantage of built-in relationships with our two-year college system. I oversee a small team of dedicated healthcare apprenticeship staff throughout the state supported by HealthCARE Montana.

You'll see on the left side of the slide the partners on the HealthCARE Montana grant. As I mentioned, I have a built-in partnership with our two-year colleges as 15 of them are signed partners on this grant. We have less than 20 two-year colleges overall in the state, so this encompasses most of them. The Montana Department of Labor and Industry is a partner as are the five regional area health education centers, the office of rural health and over 100 employers. One key thing to recognize here is that college and labor are in the same game with regards to apprenticeships.

On the right side you'll see a drastic oversimplification of the arms of this project. One component is workforce coordination. While most college programs have advisory boards, we wanted a more substantive way for our employers to impact the decisions of this project. Apprenticeship is one small component of workforce coordination – taking some of the onus of workforce training directly into the arms of employers and facilities with our help.

Other objectives were to increase distance education, which – in a rural state like Montana – is absolutely essential. For many healthcare occupations, there are only two or three programs statewide to offer that training. That means that for any facility in the state to have someone licensed or trained in that job, they must either recruit an external worker or send someone from their community to live and train elsewhere under the promise of coming back once they've completed.

Neither of those strategies work particularly well. Distance education allows those in Montana to embrace and grow your own strategy. As we know, not everyone has the resources to lead the workforce and their families to advance their education.

Through our TAACCCT grant, nursing and allied health curriculum went through significant updates to streamline credentials and create more cohesion between schools. Finally, there were aspects of student support built in.

I know a lot of folks attending today are from colleges, so (of note ?) I've also presented further on ways to incorporate apprenticeship in a college setting, so please come back at a later date and watch the recorded webinar linked on the bottom of the slide.

So my team were tasked with developing registered apprenticeship programs as the state workforce agency in a state where there had never been a successful registered apprenticeship program in the healthcare industry – ever. Because it had never been done before, we had a significant learning curve to address.

This learning curve included our HealthCARE Montana partners who – on paper – were onboard with the project. But we still needed to overcome that barrier with them and other parties, including industry associations (life assistance ?) boards, and every single healthcare facility in the state of Montana.

To show you what we've done, I'll pointe you to the map on the right side of the slide, which represents the entire state. For perspective, it takes about 12 or 13 hours to drive from the left side to the right side and seven or eight to get from the top to the bottom. Each of those blue map indicators represents a location where we have a registered healthcare apprenticeship sponsor.

Three years ago there were no blue dots on that map. From a baseline of zero, we have escalated to close to 200 individuals registered as apprentices, with 50 employer sponsors and 20 occupations. Those numbers are listed on the bottom right of the slide. To do a little arithmetic – that makes an average of four apprentices per sponsor.

I point this out to highlight – we're not running cohorts of 20 or 30 apprentices at a time as other states are able to do. We are addressing targeted, local workforce challenges. We also see an average of 10 apprentices per each occupation. Again, I point this out to show you can really get a lot done in a variety of occupations. We're also just on the tip of the iceberg in terms of availability.

We utilize a wide variety of strategies to grow apprenticeships in a new industry – listed on the left of your screen. My familiarity is mostly with healthcare and apprenticeship, but those strategies can be applied to any work (defined ?) or apprenticeship effort.

First, we needed to start from scratch on developing relevant materials to address the learning curve, and that's what we're going to talk about today. Second, we utilized employer outreach and labor market information to identify in-demand occupations. As mentioned previously, our strategy is to partner with education.

In healthcare, there are strict licensing and educational requirements for many jobs, and we learned that we needed to approach registered apprenticeship as a way – that it wasn't a way to shortcut or work around some of those licensing requirements – but we were going to incorporate existing standards.

We view apprenticeship as a way to augment existing requirements – facilitating completion and better fit training for apprentices – by having employer sponsors and mentors rather than to create drastic changes. The office of apprenticeship has some great materials on return-on-investment for employers and I recommend that you check those out.

About 25 percent of our apprentices are in programs that are degree-bearing or credit-bearing programs. Some of the examples are surgical technology, pharmacy technology, practical nurse, and medical claim.

What I mean by "give options" is that from a workforce or non-profit perspective, if there is an education requirement, present both a classroom and distance education college option for an employer. If there are multiple distance options, present both. We tend to have our preferred methods of education, but it works well to present a variety of options in all formats available, and ultimately let the employer make the choice as to what works for them. With apprenticeship being as flexible of a training model as it is, we can introduce flexible structuring of programs such as frontloading to create whatever program structures work best.

There are examples in the tool kit of some of these materials needed to present multiple education options. We've also been fortunate enough to have great state-level leadership support in Montana. Governor Steve Bullock has shown incredible leadership in our state-wide efforts to grow work-based learning and apprenticeships annexed through his cabinet and state agencies. And of course, we are always trying to support state-wide scaling and sharing best practices, which is reinforced by the development of a strong focus.

And without further ado, here is the healthcare apprenticeship implementation tool kit, housed on SkillsCommons. This page includes everything that we've used to develop apprenticeships in a new industry over a relatively short amount of time. When someone says, "I'm interested in apprenticeship. Where do I start?" Something like this.

There's a lot of overlap with materials the office of apprenticeship puts out, but these have a little of our local Montana with them incorporated. The link to the tool kit is on the bottom of the slide, but if you click on that now, please don't get lost in the 67 total documents that are listed there.

There are a few categories of what's included in here. First up, there is general information about our project and highlights of our work in our media, but also general information about apprenticeship.

Next up we have outreach materials. We've found that in this type of work, it wasn't sufficient to just have one trifle apprenticeship brochure. We really needed to craft outreach materials specific to each audience. These sort of act as apprenticeship myth busters. For college campuses the question is, "How is apprenticeship different than internship in general?" For employers, questions like, "Do I have to pay apprentices?" For workforce partners, "How well are we incorporating workforce programs and apprenticeships?" And so on. We want to make apprenticeship as easy to understand as possible for everyone involved.

Finally, there are a large amount of materials we consider occupation specific. In apprenticeship, we use something called a trace schedule to outline the structure of a program. This includes the approximate time frame, the associated instruction, and an outline of on-the-job training competencies. In apprenticeships, swapping training schedules is like swapping trading cards. However, for all the other partners involved, a training schedule doesn't necessarily get the whole idea across. I have had partners tell me there are too many words on this page. So we have listed multiple other types of documents, including an at-a-glance, place of view (sp) and apprenticeship structure, outlines of education (acclaiments ?) options – as I mentioned on a previous slide – and others.

Please keep in mind as you're going through the tool kit that each material for each occupation is listed under the same number – as in 10A, 10B, 10C, etc. Some have A through E; some have just one material. Also included are registration documents to give a complete, one-stop look at apprenticeship. Some of the materials are consistent across all states, but states have flexibility in work-based learning and pre-apprenticeship, so we have our state-specific guidelines included. We also have one – and soon to be more – full related curriculum posted on SkillsCommons.

So this is an example of an at-a-glance apprenticeship outline. This example is for a Licensed Practical Nurse apprenticeship program, which is a relatively complicated apprenticeship structure. And I say it's complicated because it does include a full LPN program from a partner college in the state. We have partnered with City College, MSU Billings, to provide the related instruction. So this is an abridged version of how we structure this apprenticeship program.

You'll see on the columns – those represent different time points in the apprenticeship and the rows represent different aspects of an apprenticeship program. So the blue column is the pre-apprenticeship where someone completes the pre-requisite programs and gains admission to the PN program. And then as you go across the columns, there are different aspects of the program. The link to the LPN at-a-glance model is on the bottom, but it you use control-F and search on the tool kit, you'll find at-a-glance models for search techs, pharmacy techs, registered nurse and others.

We have also used non-credit modules as education options for apprenticeships. This particular program is for restorative care. It aims at the level of Certified Nurse Aid. Around 10 years ago there was a pilot program from the U.S. Department of Labor in certified nurse aid specialty programs such as restorative care and dementia care. That idea really resonated through employer outreach with our Montana employers.

However, once we got all that interest, we realized we didn't really have any curriculum that was suitable to supplement for apprenticeship programs. So through the TAACCCT grant, we developed some non-credit modules that are available on SkillsCommons. The restorative care curriculum is posted now. Dementia care, patient center care, and others are forthcoming.

I recommend that these be utilized as stackable elements of apprenticeship or other work-based learning programs. So restorative care curriculum has been enormously successful with over 25 percent of our healthcare apprenticeship programs utilizing this curriculum. Some further details on how to implement the program are listed in the tool kit and also on the left side of your screen.

The last material I'm going to highlight right now is this competency checklist. This is an example of materials we've created to help employers design and implement their apprenticeship programs. The goal for us was not just to have a facility sign on the dotted line to present – to create an apprenticeship program and then we check back in in a year or two. We really wanted to be active participants in helping them create and administer their program.

So this example is for an assisted living facility administrator, which is a pretty unique outline of the related curriculum. It includes visits with state agencies and attending conferences. So we created this tool to help apprentices and the facility keep on track with what that curriculum is. Since we have so many different types of parties on the line today, I wanted to highlight that this is really a tool that you can use to help create successful apprenticeship programs.

Colleges can help a business build their apprenticeship competencies. If their using your coursework, give them an outline of the course objectives and then brainstorm for each competency what the next step would be in a successful apprenticeship program. State agencies and non-profits can utilize resources from other companies and states doing that same type of training and do that as a starting point.

To wrap it up, you'll find our tool kit and other materials on the apprenticeship showcase on SkillsCommons. If you're still a little shaky on the why or how of apprenticeships, please use this resource to keep going because apprenticeship is worth it and the information's all here. With that, I'll turn it back to Cheryl. Thanks.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you so much, Valerie. You gave a lot of information in a short period of time there, so I wouldn't be surprised if people have questions. We have a couple of questions that have come in. But if other people have questions, please put them in that Q and A box and we'll take as many as we can. We'll take a few now and we'll take some after Matt talks, and then we'll have a little bit more time then to take a few more if we need to.

The first one I'm going to ask Valerie is – what occupations are included? I know you mentioned a little bit about that, but can you say a little bit more about that?

MS. PIET: Sure. As I mentioned, we have 20 different occupations that have been registered as health care programs right now. A lot of them are in certified nurse aids and the different types of specialty programs for nurse aids such as dementia care, restorative care, and medication aids. We also have medical assistant, medical scribe, medical claim, which is for an insurance company.

We have a licensed practical nurse, pharmacy tech, surgical tech, assisted living facility administrator, long term care facility administrator. We've been very involved with the development of curriculum for emergent occupations like behavioral health and community health worker. So almost all of that is listed on the tool kit, but I'd be happy to share about any other occupations you might be looking at.

MS. BERG: Thanks, Valerie. This is Erin. One of the questions that we've gotten is – is transportation an issue for any of these individuals? Did you have youth entering the program and if so, how did you address that problem?

MS. PIET: That's a great question. That's not something that I have been really directly involved in. Coming at apprenticeship from the state Department of Labor and the registration agency, I'm not actually involved in sort of on-the-ground issues like that. But we have been partnering with our one-stop centers and job service offices to provide a little bit more of the on-the-ground support for those sorts of things. And apprenticeships do qualify for different types of assistance programs, so we would love to turn those sort of issues over to the partners who can help with that.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you, Valerie. Let's stand back a little bit and say – somebody asked how long did it take to establish the apprenticeship programs in Montana?

MS. PIET: That's a great question. As I mentioned, we've been involved in this effort for about three years now. I would say it took maybe six or eight months to really understand our approach. As I mentioned, we had a dedicated team that was focusing just on this. But we really had to overcome all those barriers to figure out where we wanted to go and how we were going to do it. So it took about six to eight months to sort of get the ground work going.

And then, within another year we really had programs across the state. So for other parties it probably wouldn't take that long if you're doing a more targeted, local effort and you're utilizing resources such as the ones on the tool kit. But if you're trying to do a big state-wide effort, that was what I – it took about.

MS. MARTIN: Erin, can you take the next question?

MS. BERG: Sure. The next question on the list is – in recruiting employers, what were some of your biggest challenges and how did you overcome them to get by it into the apprenticeship program?

MS. PIET: Absolutely. We spent a lot of – what we like to call it affectionately – (win field ?) time at the early stages of this program – going out and meeting with employers face to face to develop relationships. It really did take talking to dozens of facilities state-wide to understand what it is that they wanted and how we could help. We had to spend a lot of time exploring different types of occupations, but really once we understood what occupations they were looking for, apprenticeship kind of filled itself.

There are benefits of apprenticeship that vary depending on the type of facility that you're looking for. Incorporating distance education in rural Montana was a huge sell for us because apprenticeship makes the things that they learn on an online or distance program make more sense – if you can back it up by on-the-job training at a facility. In terms of some of our larger communities that return-on employer investment was such a great sell. So it really depends on the type of facility that you're working with, but we had to go out there and develop a lot of relationships one-on-one.

MS. MARTIN: All right. Thank you, Valerie. We're getting questions pouring in here, but we're going to pause right here and turn to Matt because we want to make sure to have time to hear from him and then we'll have some more question time after that as well. So keep your questions coming. But let's turn to Matt and let's hear your story.

MATT SPRINGER: Yeah. Thanks, Cheryl. First, I'd share that standing in the same state but outside of the project – Valerie really deserves a lot of credit for the expansion of health care apprenticeships – in particular in Montana. If you can just find someone passionate and dedicated and supremely smart, that's a good first step in apprenticeship expansion.

But – as Cheryl shared – I was the director of a $25 million workforce development in Montana. We were focused more on manufacturing than other industries and that project wrapped up last year. Initially, our project had very little to do with work-based learning or apprenticeship. So what I want to show you today – a little bit – is why we ended up focusing a significant amount of our time and effort on apprenticeship, share with you some of the workforce challenges that we were facing, and why apprenticeship became a good answer.

Before that, I'm also going to narrow down in on one employer that I think exemplifies the story the best. Go on to share a little bit with you about some pivotal research we did in terms of – that led us more and more towards apprenticeship and work-based learning. And lastly, share with you a little bit of the step-by-step process that it took to put together the model of apprenticeship that I want to share with you.

So delving a little bit – as Val shared – Montana's a little bit unique in terms of the space between people and colleges – and employers are spread out as well. And that decreases the opportunity for specialization and sort of deep expertise. As Val said, there might be one or two colleges that have a specialty program, and that creates some challenges in terms of meeting business needs across the state. Our businesses are also pretty small, and so 93 percent of businesses in Montana have less than 10 employees. That being said, they are competitive on the international scene and have the same workforce needs as other business as well.

To give you a little bit of sense of the overall workforce in Montana – it's about 500,000 people. One of the biggest challenges we're facing at the moment is 130,000 baby boomer retirements in between 2015 and 2020. So a significant portion of the workforce is retiring. And also, the nature of jobs has changed, as it has everywhere. We're now 61 percent of jobs in Montana will require some sort of post-secondary education.

What we see a lot in Montana is the growth of businesses is stagnant – stagnated by the lack of the ability to bring people into keystone positions. In other words, those positions where you – if you were able to find somebody qualified – you could then expand and higher another 10 to 12 people that those folks would supervise.

And so that was really the issue that we were looking at – was how do we get a critical mass of people trained for 21st century jobs and meeting the unique needs of employers? And how do we do that quickly? And what we discovered was really that the incentive was off. To get new employees into the system, to get them trained and really encourage them to be looking at these new jobs – the existing system was simply too costly and it took too long to get folks into those positions.

So I'll show you a little bit about Spika Manufacturing – that's in the little town of Lewistown in the middle of the state. It'd be a little bit hard to see on this slide, but basically, it's right in the middle of the state. As you cross the Rocky Mountains, you end up a windy, blowy and wintery expanse of the Great Plains. And Lewistown is kind of this crevice in the middle of the state where you might find shelter in the middle of a blizzard. That's the kind of place it is.

But surprisingly, in Lewistown there is a thriving manufacturing hub. And a number of innovative businesses hunker down there, and they actually have a really active sector partnership. It's kind of overseen by the owner of Spika Manufacturing and Welding – Tom Spika, who also has been the chair of the Montana Manufacturing Association in previous years.

And what they found is – in Lewistown – I'll share a couple of their challenges with you. They found that young people that left Lewistown to go to college didn't come back. They've found that recruiting people from out of town – they were certainly able to get them there. But folks would stay for about a year – do their hunting, fishing, exceptional skiing – and then they'd take off again. And they also had exceptional in-house talent, but didn't really have a consistent way of determining exactly what skill level those folks had, and didn't have a consistent way of upskilling them – of raising their skills up.

So the folks in Lewistown raised their hand and said hey, we need a little bit of help. We want to figure out a way to introduce middle and high school-aged students to manufacturing and get them interested in these careers early. We want to figure out a way to take folks with zero skills in manufacturing – take them from zero to hero, get them upskilled, get them trained on-site so they can contribute to the businesses. And also, we want to figure out a way that we might be able to take our existing employees and begin ratcheting up their skills so that they're contributing at a higher level as well.

So we began looking at different models of potential training. And what we found – we began looking at college programs initially – and found that many of the colleges had very similar programs. Sometimes the sequence of training modules changed; sometimes the instruction changed; the quality of those programs differed; the equipment sometimes differed. But by and large, folks in college programs were teaching to the same standards – were trying to teach the same skills and competencies across the board.

Some of those colleges, interestingly – and I'll go a little bit into depth on this – had begun breaking down their curriculum into industry-recognized credentials. We're seeing more and more of this grow in different industries. Health care – I think – has had it figured out a little bit longer than other industries. And we're seeing it in technology. Manufacturing is certainly coming along. And what has happened is national association groups have begun breaking down training modules and occupations into their specific competencies, and then tying credentials to those.

I tend to think about these as building blocks or – I often use the term Legos. Right? These building blocks of education – they're small and tied to a specific competency. And those competencies – those individual Legos – are able to signify that an individual worker has a specific set of skills.

And what we heard from industry is that's really useful to know. It's a little less abstract than a degree. So our colleges had begun tying their curriculum into those industry-recognized credentials. We found that they were able to explain to industry a little bit better what their students could accomplish on the work site. And that was interesting.

We also found that stacking those industry-recognized credentials could get an individual sort of to that same finish line – at least in terms of technical skills that the college programs were to able to as well.

In addition to that, we looked at some of the existing apprenticeship models and sort of found the same story – that the apprenticeship programs differed a little bit from college programs and differed a little bit from each other. But by and large, it was the same sort of competencies that were included in those programs, and people trying to get folks to the same sort of level of competency overall.

So more or less, everyone was focusing on the same skills and they were signaling those achievements in different ways. In other words, folks in apprenticeships were being given registered apprenticeship credentials, folks in college programs were giving degrees and the industry-recognized credentials – such as someone being given a credential for each skill or competency that they were able to gain.

What we found was that there were pluses and minuses to each of those models. At the colleges, students had access to great instructors. They generally had more access to practice equipment and academic support and financial aid. But on the other hand, they were paying a lot for that opportunity. And generally, the college programs were more or less one-size fits all – sort of the downside there.

And apprenticeship programs – we found that the earn while you learn model was certainly a better return-on-investment for students, and the work-based learning approach and the hands-on approach was really beneficial for many students as well. But there weren't the same benchmarks or quality controls and sometimes the outcome – folks had limited employment opportunities on the other end of those apprenticeship opportunities.

With industry recognized credentials – again we found that those were great signals of skills that workers had gained and there was a great opportunity for benchmarking existing workers against those credentials. In other words, they may have already had some of the skills that those credentials could show. But the industry-recognized credential moniker – at least in Montana – wasn't quite true. Not many industry folks were using those – outside of a few examples.

All right. So simultaneously we've begin doing kind of a deep dive into return-on-investment within our traditional college programs. And this is a really neat outcome of Cheryl's TAACCCT effort overall.

We were able to align some longitudinal data systems that allowed us to look into – really – the labor market impacts of college programs in a way that we hadn't been able to do before. And what we did was we took data from 2001 to 2015 and looked at how much – in wages – students tended to give up in order to be in college. In other words, what was the opportunity cost for them to enroll in college programs?

And there was some good news in there for sure. And that was that the story that we commonly hear about college is that folks will exit those programs with much higher wages than their counterparts that never partook in post-secondary. We found that to be true, with graduates earning over $7,000 a year more than folks that hadn't entered college.

But we found a couple other things on the other side of that research that weren’t as promising. One was that the majority of students weren't graduating. So this is 60 percent of folks that were entering those college programs were exiting without a degree. And basically – with a degree it's all or nothing. It's not very helpful to go to employers and say, "I've gotten some college." What we saw for those folks is about a $1,000 a year bump in wages.

On the other hand, we were saddling those folks with about $9,000 in costs on average. For graduates, then – the 40 percent of students who were able to get through – what we found was that it would take them about three years to do that. And in addition to fees and tuition, those opportunity costs added about another two thirds of total costs to that college experience.

At the end of the day, the highlight of the current system wasn't providing sufficient incentive to folks. It was taking 13 years – basically– to improve someone's standard of living once they entered college programs.

I don't want to beat to much on colleges. I think it's a challenging road that our two-year colleges have to hoe. But it was kind of a unique and startling look at the return-on-investment piece of this.

So with that in mind we just began asking questions about – is there a way that we could attain the same benefits of college, but look at work-based learning and apprenticeship as a way to get to that same endpoint, and maybe decrease some of the cost to those students?

So we looked at a number of different models, and some of the ones that Val has talked about in terms of students spending – splitting time between a traditional college experience and an on-the-job training experience. We looked at some of those. I won't go too much into the ones that we looked at. I want to focus on model three in my thoughts here, but I wanted to bring this slide up. This is what we found that really kind of brought apprenticeship to the forefront of our project.

If we look at the far right column there, the overall cost that we found for a student – on average – to attain their AAS degree was about $57,000 in cost. And again, that's tuition and fees, but the majority of that is the opportunity cost – the wages that students are giving up while they're in college. As we built these hypothetical models of apprenticeship – in comparison, students in a full apprenticeship model would end up butter-side up – about $40,000. And so the difference between these two is almost $100,000 in terms of how much – where a student is going to end up in an apprenticeship model verses a traditional two-year college experience. And now it's compelling for us.

So we began digging a little bit deeper. And at the same time sort of had a big a-ha moment, and that was through our work with Spika Manufacturing in Lewistown. Great Falls College, MSU – where our project was based – was moving in the direction of taking their welding curriculum and aligning that with the Canadian Welding Bureau and industry-recognized credentials. At the same time, Spika and Great Falls College were working together to create an apprenticeship that would be built from the same building blocks.

And the second part of that was that their existing workers might be able to use that same framework – the same Legos – to begin upskilling their current workers. And we realized – we're looking at three different program models – one traditional college program, one apprenticeship model, and one incumbent worker-focused training – that were all using the same competencies – the same frameworks – and were, in fact, using the same instructors and assessors to get to the same finish line.

At the end of the day, we said, "If we're getting people across that same line, why can't we give them everything? Why can't we give them industry-recognized credentials and apprenticeship and a degree at the same time?" That led us then to ask the accreditation facilities if that was possible. I can see – with my time running short, that I should – long story short, they said yes, that's possible; we can do that. There's two caveats.

Apprenticeship has to be part of a series of courses registered for it. It has to be overseen by a qualified instructor for an accredited college. There's a couple different ways that could be approached – either through periodic assessments by a faculty member traveling to an offsite location, or a college could hire a qualified adjunct instructor that was a supervisor already at that location.

So why would we look at this? We've talked about this a little bit, but for employers – it'd be good for an employer like Spika – they're able to grow their own – like Val was talking about before. They have a two to three year test drive of employees before they're actually hired. They get to get directly involved – create and customize a curriculum to their exact needs.

And in this way, it can really help them. Students – we talked about a $100,000 difference there. I don't need to go much further than that. And for colleges, it's really a way to maintain relevancy in this career and technical education space from a revenue standpoint. And then also, just in terms of public interest, it seems like a good way to go.

Potential downsides to this model – it asks employers to play an active role. And I'm seeing some questions already around cost. And I think that – that is the downside for employers is that they have to get actively involved. For students, they're going to miss some of the opportunities associated with post-secondary – (KEGS ?), civic elements, things of that nature. That may be important to their experience there. And for colleges this – creating an apprenticeship that is also a college program – has some paperwork elements with it.

I will share that those paperwork elements are things that we discussed in great detail with the accreditation facility, and Val Martinez at NWCCU was a great partner in this project for us – kind of locked up with us in terms of looking at this model and its potential, and really encouraging that it was possible, and providing us with a step-by-step process through which colleges could attain this sort of model.

So I won't go too much into the step-by-step process – that's something that is available on SkillsCommons. And it will be available in the resources section as well – when we get to that point. But really, the main steps that colleges need to take is to describe to an accreditor why and how that model will work – how they will maintain a quality control over and pay an apprenticeship program that's based at an employer.

And then there's a traditional process of gaining access to financial aid – and at that point – there would be a process of getting the state-recognized apprenticeship approved as well. But really, that's based on being able to demonstrate that benchmarks and assessments and instruction is all there. So that should be pretty easy once the others have been taken.

With that, I'll wrap it up. I imagine there might be some questions and we'll go from there. Thanks, Cheryl.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you, Matt. Thank you so much. I know both of you had to cram a lot into a short time. And we're going to cram a lot of questions into the short time that we have left here first.

So first I'm going to ask a couple questions to Matt that relate to employers. So if you can bring those up, Jon. Your program is geared toward creating an apprenticeship for companies. They'd get the qualifications first, and then they'd recruit for that specific person. Is that the case and – sort of a two part – did you find that there was a need to develop multi-employers together in order to provide enough training for apprenticeships to acquire a reportable credential?

MR. SPRINGER: Yes. Those are great questions. I think – to address the second one – first, a critical mass would definitely be helpful in terms of a college going through this process. It may not make sense for one apprentice, but the reality is that's what our business in Montana were needing was one or two employees. And generally, those were folks that were coming in with very little background or skills. So again, kind of a zero to hero model that they were looking to grow. Many apprenticeship programs start people that have existing skills, but this was more looking at people with very little skills.

So I would say that critical mass is helpful, but not necessary – particularly if a college is running a program that's very similar in their traditional model. So like I said, the Great Falls College was using industry-recognized credentials already in their traditional program. It was easy to transfer that over to an apprenticeship model that was going to be assessed in the same way – and in this case – by the same instructor.

MS. BERG: This question is for Valerie. But also, Matt, if you have anything to add to it, feel free to jump in. But there's a question asking – do you offer any types of apprenticeship programs for youth 15 to 18 who have not yet completed high school. And if so, what credentials are they able to receive at their age?

MS. PIET: That's a great question. There are a lot of options that are available for youth – particularly 15 to 18. In Montana, 16 year olds are able to enter apprenticeship programs – full-blown ones – as long as licensing requirements allow them to do so.

There is also pre-apprenticeship, which incorporates most of the components of a full registered apprenticeship program, but may be missing one or two of the elements. It's getting kids involved in understanding different career pathways, but they might not fully be paid.

In an ideal world, a pre-apprenticeship will segway wonderfully into a full registered apprenticeship program. And the kids that completed a pre-apprenticeship might get some sort of credit in terms of their on-the-job training competencies or related instruction. In health care, we are exploring this by partnering with different high schools and utilizing dual credit and dual enrollment to segway students into full apprenticeship programs. The types of credentials that we use in Montana include Nursing Aid, Emergency Medical Technician, Construction, and Welding.

MS. BERG: Thanks. Great question.

MR. SPRINGER: Erin, I can just – a little bit that – I think one of the things that came up for us was when – in a competency-based model – it isn't necessarily how or when an individual has gained the competencies that they have as long as we can assess those. When that became apparent to high schools, they were able to see that if students were trained in high school and arrived at college or at an apprenticeship with existing skills that could be assessed, then they would have a good head start. In some ways it was a lower-hanging fruit than overlapping an entire course or an entire dual credit opportunity to just embed elements of industry-recognized credentials into their existing curriculum.

MS. MARTIN: Thanks Matt. And thanks Valerie. Valerie, a question came in asking – does the tool kit give timeline or step-by-step guidance in how to proceed through this process of building internships or apprenticeships?

MS. PIET: Short answer is yes. We have two elements on the tool kit that are considered step-by-step resources. Item number four is a startup and checkpoint guide that is aimed towards employers who are implementing apprenticeship programs, and item number 10 is a very long set of 12 step-by-step resources that we used. There's a lot of specific partners listed that we used in Montana, but you can absolutely adapt that to your organization.

MS. MARTIN: All right. Great. Thank you. Couple more questions here before we wrap. One is with respect to apprenticeships being payed, and I'm going to hand that one to Valerie at the moment. Are these – go ahead.

MS. PIET: Yeah. So apprenticeships are payed. That is one of the hallmarks of apprenticeships is that the people that are learning are payed employees. The goal that we ask an employer is, "What is a full-time permanent employee going to look like?" And then we build the apprenticeship program on how to get there.

Now with healthcare, that means we do need to get a little bit creative because there are some requirements where students in certain types of educational programs cannot be paid. So the way that we've approached that in this state is that all clinical rotations that are part of a formal program – we lump that all into the related instruction. So then they are – we don't have to worry about that. But – then those people are working and still being apprentices outside of that formal curriculum.

So we utilize what we call a (set down roll ?). So for a practical nurse apprentice, that person is technically working and on the books as a certified nurse aid or a medical assistant. Then we use a rule called the delegation rule – which we have in Montana – where, as that person progresses through their formal LPN program, they're able to do more and more skills on the job as they learn them in their program. So that's what makes it a real apprenticeship versus just working while their going back to school. And that was something that we came up with through our Montana Board of Nursing.

So there really are – those sorts of things are – on paper – a barrier. But you just need to figure out a way to make it work for all the facilities involved. And there is a lot of oversight that has to be done on behalf of the employers, but if these facilities are still willing to engage in this, then they're doing a great job. Good question.

MS. MARTIN: Yes. Good question. Here's another good one that relates to funding. So what were all the funding sources that were involved in the Montana health care apprenticeship and – perhaps – also in Matt's program? And does the grant pay for the apprenticeship? When does the industry begin to pay?

MS. PIET: That is a very good question also – a long question. But our HealthCARE Montana grant did not actually pay for any apprenticeships – either on-the-job training or tuition. We were able to get all those parties involved just based on the benefits of apprenticeship in terms of better trained employees, better culture, better skill sets, and return-on-investment. There – that's a huge testament to the value that apprenticeships can give in a facility.

Apprenticeships do qualify for the GI Bill and other workforce programs like the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Within the course of this project, we also passed an apprenticeship tax credit in Montana to allow $750 per apprentice per year – up to five years – and that amount is doubled for veterans. But other than that, we don't really have an apprenticeship textbook that we just issue out. We work with other partners and apprentices. They pay for themselves. So that's a great question.

MR. SPRINGER: I would just add that it is a uniquely bipartisan issue – that folks tend to get behind it. So it's one of the areas where we've seen some legislative advancements, even in the current circumstances.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Great. And I know we're running out of time here, but I'm going to get one more question in because it has to do with the rural nature. And I know both of you addressed that just a little bit, but can you say a little bit more about whether rural towns were more willing to engage than metro – or anything else that you think was unique to being in a rural situation because that is one of the unique things about what you all have done with apprenticeship.

MR. SPRINGER: Val, I can jump in. I know that this is really critical to health care, so I want to make sure Val gets a chance to offer. But, for us it was a way to serve folks in rural areas in ways that we couldn't serve them through colleges.

As I talked about, the return-on-investment for students just gets even worse if they have to relocate in order to attain training. So for us it was a way that we can offer training in ways to get people significant levels of skills that are needed in those communities in a way that we couldn't do through a traditional college program.

MS. PIET: Thanks. Yeah. For health care, it definitely was easier to get the rural towns engaged. It was sort of lower-hanging fruit. Adapting distance education with apprenticeships really made sense to make the distance education tangible for their employees. It's not to say that the larger areas didn't have workforce challenges. They just tend to be a larger cohort, and something that's taken a little bit more time to get involved. A lot of our larger areas are – have been very involved in medial coding and billing programs in the recent months.

MS. MARTIN: All right. Well, thank you. I know we got more questions than we were able to answer. I apologize to those whose questions were not answered here. But there are a lot of resources that are available, both about Montana's program – you see them here on the slide, and again, this kind of repeats some of the other things that you've seen before – and also about apprenticeship in general. That apprenticeship showcase might be helpful to you there as well as – and in the apprenticeship showcase, there's some links to the Department of Labor website about apprenticeships.

There's also an organization – the DOL or sort of – it's called the Registered Apprenticeship College Consortium – that you can join through DOL. You can just put than in to your browser and find it that way probably – if you want to be sort of on the cutting edge of knowing all the information about that – at least from a college perspective.

I am going to – I also – some people mentioned that there was a link that didn't work for an overview flyer for SkillsCommons. We added that to the links box here. There's a lot of links that are in there. And then – that should work for you there.

I'm going to end by reminding you that we have one more workshop in this series that's going on June 6, and if we're lucky and you are too, we'll maybe extend the series and add a few more webinars – perhaps next fall.

So for now, though, I'm going to hand things back over to Jon and tell everybody thank you so much for joining us. We really appreciated it. And a huge thank-you to Valerie and Matt for being with us today and telling – sharing your stories with everybody on this call. Thank you so much.

(END)