**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**The Future of American Job Centers**

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JENNIFER JACOBS: Again, we want to welcome you to today's "The Future of American Job Centers" webinar. And if you haven't already done so, please introduce yourself in that welcome chat.

And now, without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Charlotte Harris, workforce analyst at the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE HARRIS: Thanks, Jen. Well, greetings, all. And welcome and thank you for attending today's webinar. We are excited to share with you the work of this cohort that they've been working on for the last few months. And as Jen mentioned earlier, if you have not done so, please introduce yourself in the chat and please identify anyone else that is with you this afternoon.

As you see, we have a full agenda today. We have a full agenda, and there are five objectives that we want to accomplish with this webinar. First, we want to review the purpose of this cohort, what this cohort worked on, what it was about, the future of American Job Centers. Then we want to talk about the process that the cohort participated in to help you get a better understanding of the basis of their work.

Then we want to discuss the current challenges identified by the team, along with some solutions that they recommend or offer as possible options for this session. And based on the challenges they identify, we will explore three focus areas that the cohort identified as the top three they want to focus on as we look at designing future American Job Centers. And then, you'll from your peers. There's going to be a panel discussion at the end, where they share their experiences and some lessons learned.

Here is your cohort team. As you see, there are several states that make up this cohort. Out of 27 applications that were submitted, eight teams were selected to participate, and each of the teams represent a diverse cross-section of state and local level staff. According to the cohort, they represent both required and additional workforce partners, and we are excited to hear about what each member brought to the team, their own expertise along with some innovative ideas they were already presenting to the table. But we're going to talk about information technology, customer engagement, and some other things that this cohort brought to the table.

Now this cohort model is different with ETA. The cohort method involved a lot of team time. And you'll hear that when you hear from your peers about how they worked together, the work that they did, and how they came together to collaborate with the end goal being to solve a problem.

Some of you may have been involved in other cohorts that ETA is currently working on. There were five additional cohorts, and just for those who had not heard about the other ones, one of those cohorts focused on youth. There was another on business services, another cohort on WIOA Title I programs partnering with SNAP and TANF programs. There's a co-enroll – I mean a cohort on co-enrollment, and then there's this one looking at the future of American Job Centers.

The objectives of the cohort, just so you can know what they were asked to focus on, this cohort focused on how we might re-engineer services based on the needs of job seekers and businesses in light of all the new and emerging technologies, which may improve the way that we serve them. At the same time, we kept our eyes focused on the future as we also explored the ways technology is impacting, and sometimes disrupting, the industry sectors we serve in the respect of American Job Centers. The cohort team members are here today to share with you what they learned.

The cohort was supported by our program lead, or cohort lead, Tim Martin out of Region 1 along with support from Leo Miller out of Region 2 from ETA and myself out of the national office here in D.C. The team also worked with our technical assist group, technical assistance providers Christy Montgomery and Matt Musante of Maher & Maher, along with Geoff King of the National Governor's Association.

I'm going to turn it over to Christy and Geoff now to provide you with some insights into the process the teams follow. Christy?

CHRISTY MONTGOMERY: Thanks, Charlotte. So Charlotte, you did a really good job of giving that background on the cohort, since this TA was different. And I will also mention for this cohort, during the application process, teams were asked to provide up to 10 members from their team, and they had some requirements for core partners.

Each team really came to the table with a robust membership of their group. It was very diverse, lots of different partners of the American Job Center served on the team. So just wanted to mention that on the forefront. As you're hearing the ideas that were shared, they were really looked at under the lens of those who served targeted populations, those from business, those board members who were also able to participate.

And I have the job today of kind of giving you a little bit of the baseline information of where we began on this cohort. When you think about something as vast and broad and unpredictable as looking into the future, it's important for us to figure out, where do we get started? This is a really big task to take on.

And even if you just google the future of work, lots of good resources come up. There are lots of great subject matter experts and organizations working on this. What this cohort was after, really look at it through the lens of how does the future of work impact the services that we are or should be providing in our American Job Centers?

So we asked the cohort. We gave them a few bits of information at the beginning and I'm going to share them with you. And we asked them not to just accept them at face value. We asked them to do further research and see if things were valid or see if they came up with different viewpoints.

But one of the things we started with is – there's a lot of different resources for this. I'm showing you one from Forbes Magazine in 2016, where they're predicting by 2020, 50 percent of the U.S. workforce will be freelancers. So that's around 53 million Americans. And we had some thoughts as a cohort about that, and as we read on about some of things they're describing. What they're really talking about is on-demand work that they – the elements of the gig economy, which are taking place, the ability to be an independent professional who's using a mobile app or another form of technology to perform a service.

So think about some of your friends maybe driving for Uber at night, or they might have a catering service that they're, that they've just sort of started up and they're doing that on the side. Lots of skilled and also craft trade. We see them starting to form more of this independent freelancer.

So we started with that as a baseline, and not in the sense that we had the bullet, but that we were going to explore more. And we asked ourselves, is this really going to come true by 2020, a freelancer-dominated economy? What would AJC look like if that came true? What services would we provide? Would we incorporate shared workspaces for entrepreneurs, the services that we're currently offering to help entrepreneurs? What does that look like? And what skill sets would we need to teach?

One it seems we use in our curriculum is bits and pieces from Rohit Talwar, who is a futurist economist. What he really does is he looks at how humans and technology work in collaboration. And he has a theory and he has great books and lots of videos if you ever want to YouTube or google search him. He talks about a Star Trek economy, and what he's talking about is really an economy of abundance.

And some of the things he outlines are things like 3D printing, food chain transformation, energy reservation, robotics and drones, brain uploading, healthcare transformation, things like synthetic biology, blockchain technology, immersivity, mixed reality living, hyper-connected internet of humanity, nanotechnology and automatically precise manufacturing.

And those aren't all that he mentions in his material, but if you're like me, when I first was reading through this list, there's a few that I'm maybe vaguely familiar with. But I wasn't myself personally sure how that they were really impacting industries. And so, as a cohort, we asked ourself to really look at what's changing in industry? What are these things and how is it impacting the skill sets the workforce needs?

A few examples that he provides really have the potential to disrupt normal work processes and the way that things or manufacturers may be transported. Or, it's this hyperloop technology. And this hyperloop is currently being tested and available in other countries, but in essence it's a 700 mile per hour supersonic train.

If you've seen the movie "The Hunger Games," it's very similar to how they travel in that movie. It would take you from San Francisco to L.A. in 30 minutes and currently it's being tested. It's in the prototyping stage in California and early indications are that it will cost a fraction of normal rail service.

And some of the things that have come up – this is still being prototyped – is things like motion sickness and moving humans as a form of transportation. Perhaps they will figure out solutions to that as they go forward, but if you just look at it from even a standpoint of moving things like water, fuel and food, would having that disrupt the current distribution system for transportation and logistics?

We also looked at driverless cars. The UK is currently allowing driverless trucks on the road, and how they operate is there is one lead driver who's at the front of a convoy and the remainder of trucks follow that driver. And we know in the U.S., up to six states have made driverless vehicles legal. We're seeing lots of prototyping and driverless cars on the road, and Pittsburg and different cities are starting to really look at this as a transportation option.

Even the construction industry – in China recently, built a 30-story hotel in 15 days. And if you – I had thoughts about and I was reading this information about how quality structure – what can it withstand? And they reported that it can stand a magnitude nine earthquake. And it makes – they make everything in a factory and once they get in onsite, they put it together much like Legos. So if this becomes a trend, if this becomes something that we need to train our future workforce for, how does that impact us?

So also, key bits of information around the future of aging. And so if you look, we found (confused ?). We found lots of information about how this aging phenomenon is impacting even human resources. Currently, if you look in the U.S., the 65 to 69 age group is growing the fastest. It grew by about 30 percent. Why is this important to us? Well, one of the things we learned is if you're now under 50, you have a 90 percent chance of living to 100 years old.

And if you're living to 100, your work span is much different than it has previously been in the past with shorter lifespans. You're seeing things like millennials, who are perhaps taking a little bit longer to get into the jobs, fill the industry of their choice. They may be doing a little bit more exploration, and in the beginning, they also move jobs frequently. If you're looking at the course of a lifespan of working 60 years, you may have different jobs along the way.

Also, there's some things said about drugs such as metformin, which are typically prescribed for diabetes. And they're finding it has the side effect of an extended lifespan.

So in terms of – we really as a cohort were trying to think about this – how do we train for someone who may have multiple jobs throughout their lifespan? There's a lifelong learning. They're also competing with technology that's changing.

And how do we put people at the center of the story? How do we make sure we're not just relying on technology to make improvements, but we're really focusing on the customer and making sure that we're providing them quality services that are going to help them be successful? What are the broader social impacts? And how do we truly look into the future of AJCs when so many of these things are moving quickly?

They're being prototyped and developed, but some things are still pretty far off. We talked about as a cohort how do we execute now, how do we make changes now to improve the services and the customer service in AJCs so that we really plan for this long path approach for the future?

And one of the things that you'll hear your peers, who were part of the cohort, talk about in their reflections is that you really can't do this without human interaction. You cannot remove all the human interactions that humans naturally have, to just replace it with technology. You have to enhance those things.

And we deal quickly with – we also looked at the changing environments of business and going less that it's hierarchal policy based, but looking at someone like Uber, who's hiring 22-year-olds and they're making them the directors of countries. And they're asking them to sign up 100,000 drivers in one year. Now that's a different business model than we're used to seeing. We're used to seeing long-time research and development before something's deployed, but what Uber's telling there these young directors is, go for it. We will help you if you make a mistake. Just go for it.

So we looked at some of those things that were happening and we thought about passion. How do we drive passion within our organizations? Are we seeing clashes already among those who are tech savvy and those who have more traditional skill sets? And we want to take an inward look at the strategies and opportunities we've put in place to allow your team to look into the future.

So how do we create organizations that are not solely focused on the future? But while we're providing services in the now, we're still looking to the future and we're having conversations and we're focusing on this so that we're not reactionary, but we're proactive.

We looked – that's a lot of information that we started with as a baseline. Well, our curriculum was really to look at a few key pieces that we felt were important to AJCs. We wanted to look for outside information from private industry. So one of the first things we did is we asked the cohort members to go into private industry. It could be somewhere they typically go.

Some people visited their auto dealer because they were having car repairs. Some people did this while they were doing their haircut, or they were going to dinner with their family. But we asked them to really go into private industry and observe intentionally and take photos of, how are they providing you services? What technologies are they using to engage you or enhance your experience? What's human interaction look like?

We also had the cohort and cohort team sat down with a industry sector representative from one of the sectors that they serve, and find out how technology is influencing their future work processes. And then also, how do they then train their staff for these changes? And we got ideas and lots of inspiration from them. We felt like if we looked outward first, we would not put ourselves in the box of just thinking about what we know about how American Job Centers work. But we'd really allow ourselves an opportunity to look outward and think outside the box and be inspired.

We then came back and we examined effective practices currently employed at AJCs. And Geoff, a colleague from the National Governor's Association's going to cover this. The cohort teams interviewed each other. They talked about their challenges. They also shared some successes that they're currently having with innovative technology so that we could establish a baseline of current innovations that others may wish to take advantage of.

And then finally, we looked at the current customer experience. We did a process – this whole process was founded in elements of design thinking and customer design, and each of the cohorts did (members ?). The eight states did an inward look at processes they have from the customer's perspective. Some of them did observations. Some of them did interviews and surveys. Some followed up with and included their front-line staff. And they got lots of good feedback about things that they could potentially improve now.

And then after they completed that, we creatively and collaboratively brainstormed innovative solutions through a virtual innovation lab. Your peers are going to tell you about that. We're really excited for them to share their experience. Remember they did all of this in about 14 weeks, so that's even more impressive that they were able to cover such solid ground and make so much progress. And I'm excited they're going to be able to share with you today.

I'm going to turn it over to Goeff now, and he's going to talk to you guys about some of the themes and patterns that we saw as a peer interaction.

GEOFF KING: Thank you very much, Christy. So again, this is Geoff King with the National Governor's Association center for best practices. And just wanted to thank both Department of Labor and Maher & Maher for including us in this work. I know it's really in line with a lot of the work that we're doing with states. I know this is a topic that comes up very often, and governors always focused on how to make their systems more effective and efficient and anticipating future trends. So really appreciated being part of this process.

And as Christy mentioned, there was a lot of great interactivity between the different participants in this and brainstorming. And so I'm going to highlight just some of the themes and patterns. As Christy mentioned, there was a sort of a peer interview process, kind of coming up with both some of the challenges and some of the initial solutions that people are at least thinking through at this point. And I think the format worked really well in kind of having a lot of in-depth discussion before we went into the ideations sections.

So with that, I'm just going to hit quickly on some of the challenges that were identified through the cohort. I think to many of you, these will not be shocking, but I think it was really helpful just to sort of start to catalogue if we're going to start coming up with some creative solutions, what are some of the challenges that we need to make sure we're addressing?

So obviously, resources. In many cases, our financial resources have and continue to shrink over the years. And there are always challenges with working across partners in the workforce system and figuring out how to best leverage these things. And so, not surprising. Our demand for services is not going down, and I know we talked a lot about that there's a whole universe of folks that workforce systems probably should be serving but aren't necessarily reaching as well, too. So again, just thinking through with resource constraints, how do we do this work better?

Data issues – we talked about a few different aspects of this. But again, just kind of the ability to better track referrals across partners and get information on where people are going after they get through different touch points. Looking at longer-term outcomes to really understand what is and isn't working in our system. And then in terms of technology, I'll talk a little bit about some of the initial solutions that some of our participants were incorporating.

But they also just talked about that obviously, in addition to being a financial issue, there's a lot of new aspects of technology that current staff may not be particularly comfortable with and may need training on. Also, customers in some cases. We talked about some being slow to adapt and also some being possibly quicker to adapt than we sometimes give them credit for as well. So again, just thinking through those issues.

Awareness and marketing of services I think we talked a lot about, that there are many folks who just are not aware of the workforce system at all. And even those that are sometimes have fairly skewed views of what it is that you all do. So that was another key challenge.

Effective coordination among one-stop partners and services. As I mentioned, again, just the piecing this all together, having staff that know about each other's programs that are working in the different partner pieces of the workforce system.

And then, Christy hit on this obviously in her opening remarks, but the gig economy too. How, as different work relationships are out there and different ways of tracking that or, in many cases with a gig economy, a lot of difficulty in tracking. How do we both prepare folks for those opportunities? How do we make sure that you're getting credit if you are engaging with the gig economy?

And then, in terms of strategies and innovations shared, I'm just going to hit these at a high level. But I thought there was some really interesting things that came out of the cohort. We've listed just a few of the states where some of the solutions were at. And I think we don't have time to go in depth into a lot of these, but I think there is some really interesting work that's already being done. And so just highlight a few things quickly.

There was definitely some level of virtual career services that are being provided. We talked about how there are some workshops offered in American Job Centers that are broadcast to different locations so that you can have a wider audience that's reached with those, for instance.

Coordinated business engagement services, there was discussion of having that type of work coordinated with economic development officials, with our partners that are administering TANF programs and vocational rehab. Obviously, a lot of different pieces of the workforce system where different providers may be working with businesses. And so again, thinking through strategies for connecting those. And so, there were several examples where they did have working groups or specific individuals that were able to engage businesses with more than just one lens.

Use of social media to engage customers are things like automated reminders for appointments, outreach on Twitter, Facebook, other platforms. Reaching people where they are, not just through our traditional means.

Mobile one-stop services or apps were also brought up. A few different things on this, but in some areas, obviously there are physical bands or trolleys that actually go out into different communities, particularly in rural areas in some states to provide some of these services. I know a lot of folks were interested, too, in New York's live chat function. They have a functionality to actually enable their clients to interact online and on their phones and chat with representatives to help connect to the right services.

Also, just a kind of – addressing some of the challenges we talked about in terms of staff that don't always know what's happening in different parts of our workforce system, having some more focused cross-training efforts of core agency partners. And making sure that you can have sort of a no wrong door approach and that people are able to access the services they need.

And then also, and this kind of goes along with a common theme that came up in this discussion, a dedicated resource for, in this case, UI claimants. But in a broader sense, we talked a lot about, are there certain things that are kind of more standard, low-hanging fruit that could potentially be assisted with either some form of FAQ or some more basic online chat function to free up your staff to provide more in-depth services?

So again, UI just one example there. There was definitely a lot of talk of, are there things that we can standardize and make more readily assessable? And then have our staff really focus on value adds.

OK. And just real quick, I got a question through the chat here on what is the gig economy? And so, Christy, I know you covered this a little bit, but do you want to just share the definition we were working with this group?

MS. MONTGOMERY: Sure. So the gig economy is basically this transition of workers who, if you think about the word gig, if you think about a musician might get a gig or an actor might get a gig, there's an economy out there that's really based on on-demand work. So it's looking for workers to come in and do one job now.

So if I'm a graphic design artist, I may have my own company, but I may not work for a traditional company in that I have a full-time job. I have different gigs I work for, so I may work for 12 different employers and each having a gig. But they're, especially based on technology, there are lots of ads.

Think about ads for house cleaning services. Those are traditionally things that you may think of, but in terms of general work that we normally are training for workforce staff in our programs and AJCs, a lot of the jobs that are typically taking place as school time equivalencies across industry are now being hired out on demand in what term in this gig economy, so that they're not working for a company full-time until their retirement. They're really coming in and doing this set of work now.

So that's where we were looking at this from and we were really exploring this gig economy and how it's impacting the training that we're providing to see in different areas of the country, how much of this 50 percent of the workforce is going to gig economy? We saw differences across the board, but we definitely noticed that it is becoming a trend that everyone, and the cohort agreed that they're starting to begin to see. Hope that helps.

MR. KING: OK. Thanks, Christy. And so, I'm just going to take us through a few of the other strategies and innovations shared before I start to turn things over to our participant speakers, who will have more to share on the ideation sessions. So using one-stop certification process to kind of implement some more standardized processes and some innovation across the system was one thing that the Illinois team brought to bear.

And I know we have MASS Hire listed here. I believe our colleagues in Pennsylvania and a few other areas that we worked with on this had some level of common branding and talked about how the ability to market around a common brand was helpful in terms of reaching more clients.

New Jersey had an interesting model that they shared with the group on leveraging libraries to provide one-stop services. So really not just relying on one-stops or a mobile unit, but really having other access points that are already in a number of communities, where at least some level of AJC services can be built in as well as adult education in New Jersey's case.

And the final key items listed here really relate to using additional technology, Burning Glass for LMI analyses, Aztec literacy for New Jersey. But I will say just a common theme generally that kept popping up, too, was sort of, are there things states and regions are already doing in terms of use of technology?

Are there ways to leverage those technologies across programs? Are there certain pieces of technology that may actually be either open source or free or relatively low cost? There was a lot of interest in just kind of thinking through a number of different options on this.

And we did find that several of the participants in this cohort were able to do some pretty innovative things around just connecting with customers online and providing some unique services for a relatively low cost and leveraging different resources for that. So also an interesting part of this work.

And so finally, looking toward the future. So you know we had these conversations in the cohort about what the key challenges were and some of the strategies that are already in place, but as Christy laid out in the process, the idea was to really use this as an opportunity to do some creative brainstorming and thinking through. In a perfect world, where would we be going? What would we be coming up with to really meet the needs of our clients at American Job Centers?

And so, based on the groups discussion and some consensus, we identified three areas of focus for the ideation portion of this. And so, accessibility, mobility of services, so again just thinking through how clients are able to access services, making sure that clients of all backgrounds, those that may have disabilities or other access issues, that we're thinking holistically and meeting their needs.

So we had the group brainstorm around that topic, technology, both challenges and advancements in that and opportunities to effectively leverage that in our work. And then finally, agility and flexibility of services in response to some of the future of work trends like the gig economy, different forms of automation in our economy, that sort of thing. Again, just thinking through as our economy changes, how does the workforce system respond and how are we quick to do so in meeting those needs?

So these were kind of the key areas where the group was asked to focus their efforts, and we'll transition now to a couple of members of our cohort, Bradley Burger from Pennsylvania. He's the president/CEO of Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies. And Jeffrey Turgeon from Massachusetts, the executive director of Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board. So they're going to talk through some of the ideation process, the how-might-we questions that the group engaged in, and some of the very creative responses that everybody shared and brainstormed out on this. So I'll go ahead and turn things over to them now.

BRADLEY BURGER: Thanks so much, Geoff. This is Brad. And I'm really glad to be with everyone today and share some of the great insights that we've gained through this process. I (think there are skills ?) every day right now can really sense that there are some changes occurring.

And there was this headline that really caught my attention was just recently, where we see that Netflix is now worth more than Disney. Disney has almost 200,000 employees and Netflix has 400. So we're seeing these changes occurring in the economy that are really impacting how, when and where we provide services.

And so, what we were able to do is to use a method that is used. It's already been adopted by big data companies like Google and Facebook in the past decade through design thinking framework, where we really are able to brainstorm multiple possibilities that can occur and how we address solvable problems. And we start that with the phrase to elicit these responses with how might we. And so each of the ideations is around this concept of how might we.

So the first one we took a looked at was how might we design future American Job Centers that are fully accessible to all customers, including services that are mobile? And so, we spent time really looking at what are some of the things that we're doing now and what are some of the things that we could do in the future? And I think a lot of us, from an accessibility standpoint and being able to connect with customers, have traditionally started with the phrase, where will it be?

And really looking at where are we providing services from? But I think our challenge now and to the future is not only where are we providing it, but what does it look like, and more and more, what will it fell like to the people that we're serving. So I think in the future, it's going to be more important that not just where we are, but how and what it feels like for that participant.

We have to really focus on going to the customer and going beyond the physical constructs perhaps that we're doing right now, and really embrace the concept of agility over stability and that we are as agile as the destructive waves that come in. Begin to influence how we serve people and where we serve people.

We have some great examples already on how we can do that. As Geoff said earlier, we have connections. Some of our providers are out there providing services in the libraries and correctional facilities, partnering with schools, and then really looking at, is there part of this that needs to have that retail feel?

And looking at shopping malls and other places like that. And we know that some providers are already out there, do that through their centers. And that will be a critical link as we move forward. So it won't necessarily be how we utilize our brick-and-mortar resources, but maybe distributing them in different ways and using them as, using technology as a bridge to them, not necessarily a replacement for them.

So technology is going to play a key role here and my colleague, Jeff, is going to go into great detail on the next how-might-we section here. But we did take a look at can we have more self-service kiosks for folks that aren't able to access technology, or in areas where there's limited broadband. That would be key.

But using point-to-point, real time video conferencing. One of the things that we're seeing right now is the use of telemedicine, and some of the populations that we're serving that may not be as interested in using technology are actually very apt to use telemedicine because they're getting a higher-level service in some remote locations. So we can really piggyback on things like telemedicine to provide some staff facilitated services in remote areas.

There are a myriad of different apps that be put on phones, and you can see that more and more of that is occurring. And that we can also provide on-demand content that can be really self-service. But our job will be to keep it current, keep it accurate and then be ready to engage our customers when they need help.

One of the ways that we looked at this is through a virtual assistant called SARA that was developed at Carnegie Mellon University. It's called a Socially Aware Robot Assistant. It's basically an avatar, and the avatar has an AI running in the background and can handle some basic functions of directing customers, answering customer questions. And so the idea is that, not to minimize the importance of the human contact, but actually amplify it by allowing the staff to be able to spend more time on other, higher-value types of things.

So we looked at design and format redesigned for accessibility and looking at the concept of are we able to engage environments, both with the amount of hours that we provide and where we're providing and how we're providing services, that we can work towards a zero barrier approach, that we can eliminate language barriers, physical barriers for people with disabilities.

And one of the major things, and a lot of the country's doing this, is how do we serve rural areas? How do we serve a senior in a rural area with limited transportation and limited broadband as they go through these different life phases of careers? And to leverage that in different ways to be able to solve these traditional barrier problems as we really create these individual petri dishes of learning throughout our system.

And then, looking at the digital literacy of our staff and clients, and that will be a key element moving forward here. We know that we have these individual native populations that have just grown up in the digital world. And we generally thought that those folks would be able to adapt better to this changing environment, but the fact of the matter is that they still need digital skills also.

A Brookings study just published said that 71 percent of all jobs now will require medium to high levels of digital skills. And that, if you look at things like health care, where perhaps a nursing role was using traditional paper, now has moved to digital content. In the construction industry, all these different industries, the e-logs used by truck drivers today, so it's really permeating every different industry.

We have to make sure that folks are ready for that. There's things like the Northstar System out here that assesses digital literacy. There's other systems out there that assesses digital skills, and really making sure that our folks are ready because the amount of digital presence in the environment is going to only continue. It's not going to decrease.

In short, I think that we need to focus on technology to amplify our human interactions and not to replace what we're doing now. And now, over to Jeff in more detail on how specific technology tools will be able to help in our AJCs.

JEFFREY TURGEON: Hey. Thanks, Brad. As you and Geoff before you had mentioned, a lot of the cohort's discussion was focused around technology and really answering the question, how might we adapt and take advantage of advancements in technology to better reach and serve future American Job Center customers?

So we'd identified a number of technology-based services. Again, things that similar to what's been mentioned previously here. But really the first one was that use of, greater use of artificial intelligence, or AI systems.

And this is one of the good things like chat bots, which can automate routine or repetitive tasks, which would then allow staff to spend more time with high-need customers. So when you think about it, it's a little bit paradoxical that using technology more would actually create a scene where you would have staff that are able to interact in person more with people.

And when you think about it, retail these days, whether it's gas stations, supermarkets and other places, that idea of automated or self-service is now much more common than it was in the past. And so, I think customers in general are just much more comfortable with these technologies now than they used to be. There's also this emergence of blockchain applications, which I don't claim to be an expert in, but these are things that could really be driving greater use of AI and the leveraging of secure data.

And we can see more use of virtual job coaching or employment apps, which would include things like connecting partners in real time through video conferencing to case manage a shared customer.

Also, having web-based systems that have accessibility built into them, similar to how some of the health care industry folks or other industries are doing now. And of course, all these changes would require buying in from senior management and a fair amount of staff training to allow them to happen smoothly.

So, one of the other trends that we thought needed to be addressed was the rise of mobile phones and the fact that so many people have smartphones now. And so using that to deliver services in real time, and that would include video workshops, career education classes, testing. So the other thing too is that career center staff can now, they can send customer text messages through their computers to their customer phones.

We also want to make sure that our websites are mobile-friendly and that we can make use, greater use of location services. And in short, just the need to make our technology more user-friendly and accessible by mobile phones, which would include, as mentioned before, on-demand staff chat windows or FaceTime or other face-to-face video conferencing that could be done right there with someone on their mobile phone.

Another concept is using game-like technology or virtual or augmented reality to drive greater customer engagement and deeper engagement. If you think about the popularity of Pokemon Go, people on the cohort, we kind of felt like, gees. If people are getting excited about finding Pikachu, maybe we should be able to figure out a way to have people advance their skills in a fun way that would drive that continuously.

We were also realistic in noting that with resource reductions sometimes require us to find more efficient ways of using technology to overcome those loss of resources. And it also spurred discussion of potentially outsourcing some of the work that we're doing that's outside of our core strengths, and the fact that there's probably a lot of tech tools that exist or could be brought to bear with workforce systems that we're not even aware of. And so maybe bringing in tech companies to talk about what their ideas might be, which spurred new thoughts about innovation and use of their technology in our work setting.

Continuing on, we thought there was – the new technology requires new technology-facilitated processes. So the cohort also discussed things like automatic, automated job matching functions, which could generate more real-time job leads for our customers, either directly to them or through the staff that are recruiting to fill job vacancies. Virtual job shadowing for job seekers to really see what a job is like.

Webinar training modules – I mean if you think about how many folks out there today were able to take part in the webinar because it was offered through an online platform, as opposed to having to be somewhere in person.

And we also identified the potential for greater use of single sign-on or one-time data entry systems that could share that data across WIOA partners. So add to the convenience, add to staff, greater efficiency for staff if everything was able to securely travel with a customer as they navigate multiple WIOA partner systems.

We also looked at technology investments and policy considerations that would be necessary. And we thought maybe the creation of a national platform for data and creating more standardized tasks would help us to establish a greater cost savings from the economy of scale that we would gain with that.

Noting also that any kind of commitment there really should be, or when we're developing new technologies, we need to look to maintaining them in the long term. And so, having a national system, data system that's integrated locally would probably help that long-term commitment on a national level.

Some additional thoughts, we definitely feel like we need to make sure that our workforce development system leaders themselves are educated in technology and have a comfort with bringing that technology into their local systems.

And the fact that we can't forget that there's still access issues for some, especially out there in more rural areas. And so maybe greater use of satellite technology might be an approach to take. We also noted that a lot of municipal and state folks are having or establishing broadband initiatives themselves. And a good example of that was noted down in Chattanooga, Tennessee. And the idea of having, maybe utilizing American Job Centers in these areas as Wi-Fi connected hubs that could serve as that resource for folks to get to and utilize would be helpful as well.

And that brings us really to the third question our cohort addressed. How might we be both agile and flexible in our service delivery and structure in creating a system that's responsive to new economic and workforce trends, such as the gig economy and other trends out there on the horizon?

So again, some of the policy changes or high-level support we looked at included the need for federal partner support, and I'm sure a lot of the local folks out there that are listening and state folks could attest to that; that the idea that we need to make sure that whatever we're doing aligns with our federal partners.

What I did was to form interdisciplinary panels of experts, for instance in science, technology, demographics or economics, to help us sort through which trends are really response-worthy and to really hone in on which changes or proposals would be important across these disciplines.

We also see the need for greater flexibility in performance, both in terms of being able to get "credit" for services that are delivered in new ways, as well as the fact that using innovative programming sometimes does come with risks that, at least in the short term, outcomes might be lower while you make that transition. And so, sometimes innovation, you are doing something new.

Sometimes things don't pan out, and that shouldn't be a death now for an area or project, and really kind of incentivize folks to stay away from trying new things if that were the case.

And that's even more prevalent if you're dealing with services provided to higher need or higher risk populations, for instance the reentry population. And so we don't want to make people risk averse when it comes. By being so outcome-driven, we don't want to create that risk aversion to trying new ideas in program design or program delivery or in surveying those most in need of our services.

And that does bring us to some of the need for federal partner process changes. So if we think about allowing more flexible pilot projects with quicker turn around approval times, that would allow for accountability, while also allowing for greater innovation. In a similar way, we hope that there'd be greater flexibility in federal grant implementation around spending categories and eligibility as it relates to these innovative programs and projects.

Again, we want to take away fear of trying something new with program design or reaching those harder-to-serve clients. And this would really need to extend also, not just along with our fellow partners. The folks that are interpreting grant regulations and implementation rules and doing the auditing for those projects, to make sure they understand where those innovations and flexibility and use of creative ideas comes into the picture.

So along with all this, we also looked at our staff model that might need to be addressed. And one of the ideas was for American Job Centers to create a new staff position that's really, primarily looking and focused upon the service delivery model changes that would need to happen to adapt to new demands that are out there. So really, someone that's looking at, hey. What trends are out there that are affecting us locally, and then what does that mean for how we are staffed and the way that we're delivering services at our job center? And this might include things too, like center staff providing onboarding services, professional recruiting services or incumbent worker training for businesses, and aligning that work with the folks at the career center that serve the job seekers.

And last in this section, the cohort feels that when you're planning new changes, front line staff should be consulted. They're going to have a lot of great ideas that could be brought to bear. They understand the work directly. They could be really kind of helping to drive that planning process. And then, of course, they'll have greater buy-in and it would probably help them, to give them more confidence as you go ahead and enter the implementation phase of the change overall.

So at this point now, I'll hand it back to Brad to discuss professional development and a few other topics related to this third question. And thank you, folks.

MR. BURGER: Thanks, Jeff. You know, I think Jeff just framed it correctly with the staff. The staff are the heart of what we do as we reach out to serve our employer and job seeker customers. So we really need to be mindful as leaders in how we interact with staff. And one of the first things I think that we need to do is really create education awareness with our staff about, what are these changes occurring in the greater economy and how we adapt service approaches to best serve more people and more places better.

And so, one of the things that we were able to do here locally was really to have our own ideation session, and really bring our staff in a room, put the brown paper up on the wall and say, listen. If you had no constraints, what would it look like for us to serve? So we did our own how-might-we session.

And I think that the very process of going through that gets the staff more comfortable that change is going to be constant now, and that we're going to go through these cycles of innovation and maintenance faster and faster, and that in fact, we will, as Jeff said, we will have failures. And – [technical difficulty] – ideations are over and over again in these cycles.

So the other thing that should be driving that is definitely feedback from our customers. And we have through technology, like it or not, you are probably getting feedback, whether you're requesting it or not. And so, that world has changed also. For those – I'm sure many people out there, before you go to a new restaurant will probably look at Yelp or some other online ratings for services or for that particular restaurant.

Well, our customers are starting to do the same thing. So we not only have to do our in-center customer feedback forms and get that information, but we need to also be monitoring the online space out there. And at the same time, engaging our customers coming in, asking for their input to be able to serve them better. I think that it's very important that we don't underestimate the impact of negative feedback right now. I think we need to hear what our true feelings of our customers are and begin to adapt services to it to adjust those to be able to serve them better in the future.

Clearly, technology will play a big role. But we have a growing number probably of our customer base that's going to need, actually, more face-to-face time with our staff. And so being able to leverage the technology in appropriate ways is going to be key to be able to serve people better. And our customer feedback is just critical for that.

Back to the gig economy, also known as the agile economy. And this is really where a lot of work will be occurring. The space is growing. The traditional infrastructures needed to run organizations are now available in different ways, and because of that, people are not as reliant on traditional corporate structures to be able to perform work in different ways. And so, this is a great way for us to engage a new emergent population in different ways to be able to do that. The ways we can do that is, can we bring in an expert who's already living in the gig economy and have them work with people that are interested?

When I think of a gig economy, I also think of entrepreneurship and I know a lot of us are trying to build entrepreneurship with the folks that we're working with. Well, this is really entrepreneurship. It's really folks taking charge of how they work and the way they work with different organizations. And of course, at the corporate side is driving this also.

As Christy said earlier, the other part that's driving this is that in some of our materials that were presented is this concept of a three-stage life, and that you kind of go to school, you go to work and then you retire. And what we're finding is that is not the case any longer, that kind of as a younger population, they're trying – the younger folks are trying different things, doing more exploration, taking a longer time horizon to do that.

And then on the senior or retirement entry population, folks are leaving the workforce or traditional workforce and they're also trying different things as they go out there. Maybe they want to start their own business. Maybe they want to do some consulting. Maybe they do want to do a complete career change.

And so, how do we adapt our services to be able to support these folks as they go through these life transitions in non-linear paths now? And one of the ways that we can do that with our younger folks is to really get involved with our school counselors and teachers.

Engage early, engage often, and really help create awareness there because they really need our support too, because we are often the conduit to the employers to help the school staff understand what is occurring in the external environment. So the more that we can create education awareness for all of our stakeholders about how these destructing ways are influencing the workforce and how we prepare the people that we serve to be able to be agile and adjust now and into the future will be critical.

Thank you very much.

MATT MUSANTE: All righty. Hey, everyone. This is Matt Musante. I was also on the cohort support team with Christy and Geoff. Just want to say thank you to Jeff and Brad for your presentation about the ideas and solutions, recommendations that this cohort came up with. Now we're going to move to a panel, and we're actually going to introduce two other cohort members that are joining us today.

We have Gretchen Evens from Oklahoma and Katie Geise from New York. And we're also going to include Brad and Jeff in this conversation, but because we're just being introduced to Gretchen and Katie, we'll start off by asking them to reflect a little bit on what their cohort experience was like, both with the larger group and for their individual team. Would Gretchen – or Katie, are you going first?

GRETCHEN EVANS: I can go first. This is Gretchen.

MR. MUSANTE: OK. Great.

MS. EVANS: Thank you so much. It has been a pleasure to be a part of this cohort. It's been a wonderful experience, and some of the things that I really enjoyed about the cohort is just having the opportunity to learn from our experts around the nation and be inspired by some of the innovative ideas that they brought to the cohort and in our conversations that we've had.

Also, we've done various activities and assignments. Some of those assignments included interviewing private sectors, which gave us another perspective on how to service our customers because, with us being a part of the AJC, we know that all of our services that we're providing are job seekers, are based on what the business customers are requesting.

So hearing from the business customer and finding out how they have implemented award-winning customer service methods, we could take those methods and incorporate those into our AJCs and make, enhance those AJCs to be better to serve our customers.

Also, just engaging our peers. Not only the nationwide peers, but the peers in our actual cohort. There are hidden talents and subject matter experts that we were able to tap into and just utilize all of those strengths and those ideas to make our local areas better. And this helps us to take our AJCs to the next level. And just being influenced by the national conversations that we were able to take part in.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thanks so much, Gretchen. And Katie?

KATIE GEISE: Yes. Hi. Good afternoon in most places. I'm not sure. It might be morning in other places, but this is Katie Geise from New York. And I echo everything that Gretchen just said, and I'll just highlight a couple of areas where I, in addition to what she said, also found some really great benefit.

Number one, it was a very intense experience as you can see from all of the work that's been highlighted in the presentation today. Over the last 14 weeks, we have been extremely busy, both doing individual assignments as well as having sessions online, and then also meeting with teams from other areas.

And that was one of the highlights for me is hearing from all of the other areas like Gretchen said, but then also having a couple of opportunities to work closely with a team from another area. And what was really, really cool about that for me was hearing that a lot of the same challenges that we're facing in our state are the same challenges that most people in other places are going through too. It might be a little bit different or tweaked a little bit, but the same nonetheless.

Also, some of the work that we did around really thinking about, and we actually had the opportunity to view some videos and then also do some reading about really thinking about how do we engage customers? And when I say customers, I think of our three different customers, our job seekers, our businesses and our partners.

So how do we engage each of those different partners into our service delivery model design work and really make sure that we are answering the needs of all of them? And not ever thinking we're going to always be able to figure out a way to be everything to everyone, but at least knowing what, in general, those different customers are looking for so that we can hopefully stay pretty close to the mark with that.

The other piece that I thought was just really great was being able to give feedback, but then also get feedback on what we were all thinking. And one of the things that sticks out to me is when we really were talking about, and it was highlighted by Jeff when he was talking about the need for being rewarded for being innovative and creative and having fully-funded programming as well as having that funding be as flexible as possible, so that we can get creative and really try to answer the needs of our customers and make the American Job Centers as helpful as they possibly can.

I'm from a very rural part of the state of New York. When you think of New York, you usually think of New York City. I'm as far away as you can get from New York City and still be in the state. I'm from a very rural community, and so I kept making sure that I was having a voice or being a voice for my community and talking about the lack of broadband that still exists in parts of my county, and how we can make sure that we're meeting the needs of customers, regardless of where they are.

And so with that, I think we're going to move on to questions. But I'll give it back to Matt.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thanks so much, Katie. And great point when you referenced how, when we were exploring what the challenges you face now with AJCs and also what we may be facing in the future, a lot of those – [technical difficulties] – the cohort teams, which are – they range from across the country, urban areas, rural areas. – [technical difficulties] – Different industries were prevalent for different teams. Some of the challenges – [technical difficulties] – our ways. So I think everyone benefited from – [technical difficulties] –

MR. TURGEON: – utilizing responsive design, which basically means that, no matter what type of device people are checking out your website, it'll format appropriately and be accessible, so whether it's a smartphone, computer, or tablet, it would resize and the links would work and all that. You know, the other thing is making sure that when you're offering tech tools, that things like large print or JAWS is enabled for folks with disabilities to be able to access them. Where appropriate, having language options – [technical difficulties] – make sense?

And then also –

MR. MUSANTE: I'm going to ask you another question and this one is not for any one particular panelist. I'm just going to open it to all four of you guys. I think this is in regards to the gig economy and emerging trends.

Also, what Christy referenced about how people are living longer and there's an older working population than there ever has been. Is there any thought given to the unique problems facing the under credentialed, older workers whose jobs are either being outsourced or automated, and some of that's through technology? So anything that we discussed as a cohort or you guys are working on with your own teams, or the result of the work of the cohort. Just open up to you guys.

MR. BURGER: Hi. This is Brad. I can give you a little bit on that. I think one of the key aspects of that that's going to be important for us in working in the AJCs is to make sure that our employer services or business services staff is staying engaged, both with the employers and also what's occurring in the greater economy. And what we talked about a lot with this was trying to work with incumbent workers before a possible displacement occurs. And I think that was the common theme when we heard this was to try to catch them before they become dislocated.

MS. GEISE: This is Katie. I can come in a little further on kind of what's happening locally. This is again back to my comments of trying to be everything for everyone, because you've got your millennials, you've got your older workers, you got just the full gamut. And what we're trying to do is we've tried to work with our staff to identify when they have a situation where they have one or a group of similar job seeker customers that are facing a challenge such as the one as is illustrated in this question. And then provide as much possible training and opportunities or reach out to some of our colleagues to find out what they're doing with a similar cohort, if you will.

And so, what we've tried to do is do some job (qualms ?) that are grouped with individuals in a very similar situation such as the one described. And because a lot of times, the answers to one person's question is going to be the answers to another person's question.

But then also, they all start to work together and talk together about solutions that they've found or job openings that maybe somebody found a job that their skills were very transferable to that they never even thought of, and it gives other people hope in other opportunities. And so, it's a guided conversation, but it's led by staff. But you are – whoever asked that question is correct that this is one of those pockets of customers that it's very difficult to know exactly how to help them out.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thanks so much, Katie. Who asked another question? I think this one's directed at Gretchen. "Is the virtual job shadowing that you referenced currently available?"

MS. EVANS: Yes. Absolutely. Here in northeast Oklahoma, we have trained our staff to present the virtual job shadowing to our customers and that can be found at careeronestop.org/videos. And the reason why we wanted to do that, because we all realized that we are working with low funds. And in order to present training to our clients and it be a viable training that will yield sustainable wages, we want them to be employed in high demand occupations.

We want them to be well-versed in the occupation that they're wanting to get into or the training they're wanting to get into by doing the virtual job shadowing. Those videos are only like one to two minutes long, and you can look at various virtual videos for whatever occupation you're interested in.

We also share this information with our consortium partners that we meet bimonthly, so that they'll be aware to share this with their customers as well, or the people in their circle because we want everybody to be well versed that there are job shadowing out there. We do not want to waste time and money for someone to go into a trade to where – pay for it, or we pay for a trade that, once they've completed, there are no jobs out there because we are also a rural community and we have to be very strategic how we present or how we fund training.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thank you, Gretchen. All right. Next question is for Jeff, but I invite the other panelists to chime in as well. "Can you give us an example of client feedback you have received and used to proceed with putting a solution into action?"

MR. TURGEON: Sure. So we had used the ideation process, which does include customer feedback upfront, to look at how customers felt about getting their communications from American Job Center staff through text on their phones. And so, we found the response was very positive from them in those focus groups, and then found a system that was real cost effective for staff to use their computers to send messages by text. And it can be done.

Basically, they go into their case management system and they can pull their, whether it's the entire case load and the phone contacts, or if they're doing any individuals or one-by-one or however they want to do it. So either as a group or as an individual, then they can type up a message on the computer, send it out to them. The client receives it on their phone.

The nice thing is, if it is a group message, they still only see themselves and the sender at the career center and not everyone else's number. So it's all – privacy is all protected that way. And then they respond by text that goes as an email to the staff person. So the nice thing is we don't have to worry about staff using personal phones or getting them phones to do this. It's all done on the computer.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thanks, Jeff. And while I'm giving the other panelists a minute to think about that question as well, we do really encourage you guys to continue asking questions. Those are great questions. Put them in the chat and we'll do our best to address as many as possible. Before I move on to the next question, I wanted to just give a second to see if any of the other panelists wanted to address that question about customer feedback and taking that into account.

All right. Well thanks, Jeff, for that. Moving on to the next question. This one's for Katie. How do you address the criticism that gig economy programs promote part-time jobs over full-time jobs?

MS. GEISE: Sure. Actually, this was the criticism that, during one of the sessions, we all talked about because we had similar criticisms as a group. And one of the things that we talked about wasn't even just the part-time versus full-time, although that was one of the concerns.

But what we're finding on the ground and in the front lines is that individuals who are involved in the gig economy, while they love the flexibility of it, typically they're working from home and those types of flexibility pieces that make it really desirable. They're also really struggling to be able to pay for health insurance because those types of jobs don't offer health insurance. Sometimes the hours are very sporadic, and so while it might start out really great, then it isn't so great.

And so, how I handle that criticism and how I think the system could potentially handle that criticism is that this is just one option. But that we need to make sure that staff on the front line who are working directly with job seekers who are considering the gig economy as an option are thinking about those other pieces, and that we know the right places to refer them to maybe answer their health insurance needs or other things such as that. So I think it's not – gig economy is not perfect. It's just one option, and I think that we have to be very honest and upfront about the positives as well as the negatives of being somebody that decides to work in the gig economy.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thanks so much, Gretchen. I think this one may be based off what Christy was talking about when the beginning of our cohort, when we were examining trends, specifically the gig economy, aging, how other public factors may affect the workforce system. Based on the information provided, is our AJCs looking to expand to become the technology center for both rural and urban regions? So that'd be a broad focus question, but I think Katie, you offered to answer that one?

Katie, you may be on mute.

MS. GEISE: Yep. Nope. Sorry about that. My phone – my button wasn't working. I was pressing it.

MR. MUSANTE: All right.

MS. GEISE: I think that yes. We are looking at American Job Centers as expanding to become technology centers for rural as well as urban regions. And I think in rural regions, it's more critical than urban because, again, of the lack of broadband in so many parts of our community. I know that that's hard to believe if you're somebody from an urban area or even a suburban area, but it's definitely the case in a lot of parts of the rural areas.

And so, I think that it will create even more urgency showing the importance of our American Job Centers as technological hubs to help our job seekers as well as our businesses access technology as they're looking to fill their positions or if they're a job seeker that's looking for jobs or training opportunities.

MR. MUSANTE: Excellent. Thank you, Katie. Now I want to open it up to all four panelists here. Overall, we came up with so many different ideas, many of which you many use, many you may not want to use in your own local AJCs.

But I want to ask all of you, what were your base takeaways? Is there anything you learned throughout the process that you're already implementing now, whether it be bigger or small?

MR. TURGEON: Could you go ahead and repeat that? I'm sorry.

MR. MUSANTE: No problem. So what were your base takeaways? Anything in particular that you learned throughout the process that you're already implementing at your AJC?

MR. TURGEON: This is Jeffrey, Massachusetts. And I mean, one I was struck by – part of the process was we teamed up with other states and had kind of an in depth discussion around where we were and where we were headed and thoughts on those challenges and opportunities that we saw. And I was struck by how similar we were with other states that are out there, and the other project teams. And I also realized that in some ways, we're ahead of other teams and in some ways we're behind. And it was neat to see where there's opportunities. You know?

We were really struck by even some of the small things. Like I believe it's New York that's been using with their UI system those chat windows. And I can't tell you how many times we've had folks that had a simple question that, boy. They could – instead of having to come down to the career center and work with a UI navigator, they probably could have just entered that question just work real time through a chat window. So we're working to implement some of those little ways that others are using technology.

And then of course, we had some big picture discussions that really kind of almost more globally or societal trends that are out there and happening and how it's going to kind of affect us. And unfortunately, there's no great answers to some of those, like the gig economy and what it means to the positive and negatives of that. But I was really struck again by how similar my colleagues had and how much I could gain from them and share with them.

MS. GEISE: This is Katie. One of the big takeaways for me was in our own New York team approach. And our team was made up of everything from front line staff to state-level Department of Labor staff and it gave us an opportunity to really work together on a project. And it's something we haven't done in a long time and I think we've all wanted to do it and so it really started this way of approaching a project on a state-wide level that we're hoping to continue.

I was a co-lead along with my colleague, Vicky Grey (ph) at New York state Department of Labor and we, it was so helpful to the two of us to kind of bounce things off of each other, work together to pull the team together, work together to get team projects done and we're already in the process of developing a timeline to have follow-up meetings with the team to talk about exactly what I'm describing and that is continuing the momentum and continuing to tackle situations, issues, service delivery models, you name it of the American Job Center as we move forward. So it was a great opportunity that really helped us kind of launch this kind of state-wide team approach.

Gretchen Evens: Hi. This is Gretchen, northeast Oklahoma. Some of the takeaways that I can elaborate on and some of the things we're implementing now, we are partnering with the libraries as well to provide services to our job seekers. For an example, we – most of our libraries have the Polycom system where they can allow a library in another area to receive tools, job fairs or whatever kind of services we would like to provide. So in this area, we partnered with several libraries to offer a job seek, job search workshop. And we're also doing mock interviews, virtual mock interviews. I'm sorry.

Another thing that I would love to share, we are – any planning session we have, we make sure that we are engaging our employers or at most planning sessions we're making sure we engage our employers so that we can get buy-in from them. And as a result, they are stepping up. They have implemented in this area some externships, where they allow teachers to come in and for four to six weeks they will work an eight-hour day and they will receive a stipend.

This helps the teachers to understand, mainly in the manufacturing field, what's available out there so that when they're teaching their students, they're sharing with them that there are good jobs out that are high-paying. And we want to kind of negate the negative impact that teachers are having on students when they tell them, if you don't do well in school, you'll end up working in a factory. That sector is really a strong sector in this area and we want our teachers to be aware of this.

So our employers, based on the information that we've received from them, they are allowing their – opening their doors for internships. Not only that, but they are also opening their doors, or they're allowing their staff to take on the rolls of an adjunct instructor in order to provide contextualized training to a workforce that they are recruiting so that they can still address a deficiency base that they're having in their businesses.

Also, one of the other things we've done as consortium partners, based on hearing from our employers and from the deficiencies they were seeing, where like computer or technology needs, based on that our consortium partners got together, and they created a computer lab, a mobile computer lab. And the employers are asking, in some areas they've asked for that computer lab to come and train their incumbent employees on how to utilize the computers.

MR. BURGER: Hi. This is Brad. I just wanted to also mention one of the things that we were able to do here locally was to do a broadcast webinar out on the future of work and how we see it impacting our job seeker and employer customers in the future. And we also recently did that same presentation to our workforce board. And so, I think that way we have nice continuity from the policy level all the way to the front-line staff that are engaging our job seeker and employer customers.

MR. MUSANTE: Great. Thank you guys so much. And I'll just open it back up to you guys. So many of these ideas may require approval from the board or other leadership or additional funding. How are you introducing these concepts to your board or leadership? I know you just touched on it, but what about everyone else too?

MS. EVANS: This is Gretchen, northeast. Fortunately, our board director and a couple of members from our board was on the cohort, so we had buy-in right there. Not only that, but during our board meetings, we share some of the activities with our board members so that we can get buy-in from them because of course we would love to implement some of these ideas in the future, and we'll need support from that board. But we shared this information as well with our consortium partners under the direction of our board directors. So we already have buy-in and I appreciate that in this area. It's needful.

MS. GEISE: This is Katie. I'm actually the director of our workforce development area's board. And I work closely with – we have a committee that it works on one-stop services and reviewing our operator contract and one-stop center. I guess American Job Center. I should use the right term. Services and the service delivery being used. And so, we are on a regular, ongoing base of having those conversations and engaging our board in those so that as changes are needed, it's usually not a surprise. It's something that they're already aware of and we try to keep them as informed as possible as things change.

MR. MUSANTE: Thanks everyone. That was a great discussion. And we're just hitting the 2:30 time now, so a good time to wrap it up. To everyone in the main chat, all you participants who joined us today, thank you so much for joining. We hope you found this insightful. Have some lessons learned and you can take some things back to your own local AJCs.

I'll just take it back over to Jen Jacobs, who will introduce a few standard poll questions for you guys.

(END)