**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**YouthBuild Series - Listening Session - Strengthening Technical Assistance with DOL YouthBuild Grantees**

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LAURA CASERTANO: Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's webinar. And if you haven't done so already, please introduce yourself in that chat on the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. If you joined a little bit late or that you just haven't had a chance yet, please introduce yourself in that chat box.

With that, I'm going to move on – turn things over to your moderator today, Jenn Smith. She's with YouthBuild. Take it away, Jenn.

JENN SMITH: Thank you, Laura. Welcome, everyone who is joining us. Good afternoon for most of you, but perhaps good morning for a few of you. Happy to see you all here. All right. We're going to go ahead and get started. I'm going to give some brief remarks and then I'm going to turn it over to the core presenters for this webinar, which are Consuela Greene with YouthBuild USA as well as James Hills with YouthBuild USA.

And if you've been to any of our recent technical assistance events, one of the big topics we're going to be discussing today, you will have met these guys and hopefully their faces look familiar to you. So just to highlight for you guys what the goals are of today's webinar this one is a little bit different from some of the things that we've done in the past.

Being the end of the year and everybody's starting to think about what's going to happen in the next year and planning for our priorities and our strategies and what we want to get done, we thought this is a good time to perhaps be a little bit reflective and provide an opportunity to share with you guys some of the information that we've gained from you as well as from other sources about the TA that matters to you and then also giving you guys an opportunity to provide some feedback to us.

So we're going to share some of those highlights from what we think are sort of the TA priorities at large for 2018, what we've been working on, as well as 2019 what's coming down the pike.

We're going to talk about those recommendations and feedback that we've received from you guys as well as some feedback that we've gotten from coaches and then we're going to very informally create an opportunity for you guys to provide feedback on what we're sharing as well as any specific TA topics or approaches to TA that you feel like we need to hear more about that we aren't doing enough of or also great to hear about what is working, I will say that as well.

So as I mentioned, we're going to keep this pretty informal. We want to make sure that you all feel comfortable using the welcome chat feature you see here. We'll turn to a general chat box which will give you an opportunity to provide feedback by typing into that box any questions, thoughts, etc., but we also really want to encourage you guys to make use of the phone line.

At various times during this presentation, we'll offer the opportunity for you guys to unmute your lines and talk directly with us and we understand that's not for everyone, but it's certainly nice to hear your voices out in the field and we have a relatively small group today. So we hope that you will take advantage of that when it's offered.

So that being said, while you are waiting on the welcome chat and introducing yourselves, we asked you guys to fill in a quick poll about the role that you fill at your YouthBuild program. So Laura's going to pull that up for us so we can see what the results look like. And if you haven't yet had a chance to fill in that poll, please take the opportunity now. So what are we seeing?

It looks like – oh, there we go, it popped up and it came back. Thank you, Laura. It looks like we have a majority of you are program directors, that's very much the biggest category, great to see that, but also a couple case managers, fantastic, a couple of executive directors, even a job developer, that's wonderful and then some people who put other. While we have a moment, could I ask what some of those other roles might be?

I mean, I see Charles Modiano (sp) is on the – is on this chat feature. So I wonder if perhaps maybe other is potential coaches or others who fill a supportive role in TA, but if not, if you're in another role staffing at a YouthBuild program, we'd love to hear what role that might be. So let's take a quick moment to see what we get there. I see Chantel, who is also a coach, is typing in right now. Wonderful, thank you, Chantel.

Anyone else who wants to let us know what they meant with – oh, someone else is typing. We'll just see this really quickly and then we'll dive into the meat of this presentation. YouthBuild manager, I wonder if that's similar to a program director. I wonder if it's sort of a similar role or maybe you mean construction manager, not sure, but again, all are welcome and all will have the opportunity to provide feedback and good to have different perspectives.

So thank you, guys who are able to join us. So first thing I want to talk about just briefly is sort of, as I mentioned, what is the point of this webinar, how do the TA services that are provided help support the grantee's success and how do we sort of view the TA services that we are providing as well as the feedback that we get from you guys? So what I would say about that is that it's a little bit of a push-pull.

TA, at its best, is a combination of both the opportunity for growth and new ideas as well as the need for looking at the basics of your model and ways to improve that; right? So I think that we try to do a lot of interplay between technical assistance that helps you guys think about moving the needle toward new innovations, but also making sure that we're meeting the needs you have for just ensuring that you have a strong basic model.

You know, those may be things such as fiscal capacity and need, ensuring you have good staff development, thinking about sustainability and how that can support your overall program model.

So we really try and look at both of those buckets of work when we think about how we're going to provide TA to you guys, but also one of the most important things is hearing directly from you guys and what I refer to as advocates, which would be coaches or FPOs or even other program office staff here in the national office or other YouthBuild USA staff who work in technical assistance.

Those are all also ways that we hear about a need in the field that we might not know about otherwise. So there's a lot of ways that we gather that information.

One of the things you're going to hear about from James Hills in a little bit this afternoon is the TA assessment that we sent out to you guys just as an optional opportunity for you guys to give us feedback on how the TA that we're providing is being received both the types of TA products, the way it's delivered to you and also the content of that TA and whether we're getting to the right things that you guys have a need for.

Another way we do this is when we had in-person events or even webinars as well, we try and provide opportunities for you to give evaluation feedback on the content that was provided and whether it's the right feedback. Another thing that often happens is when we do regional peer-to-peers, federal project officers will reach out to their grantees and ask what they see the needs for as being in the field.

So those are some of the main ways that we try and hear back from you guys. Of course, I would say anything is an opportunity to share. Like I said, sometimes it may come from just informal conversations you have with your coach or with your federal project officer. You know, sometimes we hear directly from grantees who write program office staff and share a need for something that they feel like isn't available yet.

But there's also the fact that TA delivery occurs in a lot of different ways and you're going to hear a lot about that this afternoon as well, some innovative strategies that we are already using to deliver TA or strategies that we're thinking about using more going forward, but not everything is going to be an in-person event or a key deliverable. Sometimes we get at some of the TA delivery in other ways.

So for instance, we have a coaching training once a year where we, in the national office, work directly with YouthBuild USA in the contract of coaches to talk about the TA strategies and plan for the year, what we see as the needs and providing information to them to make sure they have the right and accurate picture to provide good technical assistance to their sites.

We also do this through a monthly call that we have with our federal project officers where we talk with them about some of these priorities, answer questions that they've hearing from the field and make sure they have access to information resources that are under development or have just been developed that can help them when they're working with grantees.

Another thing we've thought about or are starting to use, some of you have definitely seen this if you've been at some of the more recent MIS trainings which have gone to a more virtual platform, also what we're on right now, webinars. This is a virtual platform. So that's another way that we try and deliver TA. We also really want to encourage grantees to use a community of practice.

And I was kind of excited that I saw that one of the additional pieces of TA need that one person put was how do we use the community of practice better. It's a great question. It really is a peer-driven resource. It's really up to you guys to kind of share content and use it to try and gain information through peer resources or through other parts of the community of practice that may have information that's beneficial even if it's not the YouthBuild community of practice.

So those are things to keep in mind. And then of course, we do have those in-person events, which the biggest pieces of those are probably our new grantee orientations and the peer to peers that we have every year, but it can also be some of the construction trainings that we offer and perhaps other in-person events that come down the pike based on opportunity and resources.

So that's just a little bit of food for thought. One other thing I also actually just want to point out that's a brand-new opportunity for you guys to provide some feedback to us about your needs or the challenges that you're seeing is a few months ago we put out the newly required template for your quarterly narrative performance reports.

I know that they're a bit onerous, I know they ask for a lot of information, but that's because there are a lot of stakeholders across the department of labor and out in the field who are really interested in hearing from you guys about what you are doing and it's a good opportunity, when we only get those performance reports every three months, to hear some details about what you're up to, many of the things that don't appear in a quarterly performance report; right?

There's a lot of qualitative contextual information that you can share with us in that narrative report and certainly, it's a place where you can also share challenges or TA needs that you have. So we have a report that'll be due in February. That'll be the next one that's due. So just something to think about as you're filling out that report. And again, I'd also say it's never too early to fill out that report knowing that it can take some time.

You know, start thinking about it now and think about what are some areas for TA needs or challenges you'd want to put in there. But again, the core thing is that you're going to hear about some of what you guys have already said you guys need now and you're going to have the opportunity to give us more feedback at the end of this webinar. So that being said, I'm going to turn it over to Consuela who's going to dive into that part of the presentation.

CONSUELA GREENE: Thank you, Jenn. Good afternoon, everyone. So it was really – it's been a really exciting year. I would say both we've taken a real opportunity to listen and hear from you all in how we think about the way we collect information from you.

So as Jenn shared, there's been a variety of ways that we've been able to listen and learn from the field and some of the major pieces were one is the sort of technical assistance feedback questionnaire and we were really pleased with the results of that questionnaire. A lot – it had gone out earlier in the year and then we had done another push to get more responses and we had over 100 responses to that questionnaire.

And it was really helpful, because it helps us to think about topics and how to shape some of the priorities for live events, for webinars and even for coaches as they're working with you on sort of the day-to-day program design operations for your grant.

The other piece of information that we definitely always look at, which I know if you've been to a live event and we are like, please complete your evaluations, we use a lot of your open-ended responses and even those questions of like what more would you want to see or hear from technical assistance to really begin to shape some of the future work.

So your training evaluations and your participation in evaluating some of the different modalities you participate in really do help to shape some of the feedback that we hear from you all. And then another area in which we are able to identify technical assistance needs really come up to the sort of technical assistance team either from federal project officers and from the technical assistance coaches.

So we try to think about TA, both what the individual grantee needs, but also are there any particular trends across the field that we should be thinking about and starting to connect the dots either for grantees or for the field in general. So with that said, I'm going to get ready to turn it over to James to just share some of the feedback that we've heard from these variety of vehicles to hear from you and some of the key areas that we'll talk about this afternoon.

And so I wanted to give you a sense of how the listening session is going to go. We'll share what we heard from you for a couple of elements and then we'll take a pause and really open it up for you both to share some reactions or even suggestions or strategies to build on or strengthen TA in those areas, but the key areas that we have asked you all questions for or themes that we've heard in terms of technical assistance needs, one, is around grant guidance and compliance, the other is sort of organizational development or program development strategies as well as when you think back to WIOA, the 14 program elements.

So we asked a number of questions and have heard a number of TA needs in a couple of different areas and that includes education, case management, mentoring, life skills and behavioral health, occupational training, so that's construction and Construction-Plus, career pathways, placement and other program design topics that have come up based on your feedback.

So with that said, those will be the areas that we'll be continuing to want to listen to you and listen to some of your needs, but also for today's listening session, those will be some of the topics that James will walk through what we've heard from the field and you'll have opportunities to both add to what we've heard or suggest some strategies for how we can support you to address those needs.

So with that said, I will turn it over to James.

JAMES HILLS: Consuela, thank you and thank all of you for filling out the questionnaire. We are going to turn to Page 13 on your –

MS. GREENE: (Inaudible) – I got you.

MR. HILLS: Thank you.

MS. GREENE: I moved it too fast.

MR. HILLS: I got it. Here we are. The grant guidance and compliance, you see the areas there and the number one area that you gave feedback on, 75 percent YouthBuild performance objectives and outcomes. The second top area is WIOA and national updates and the third area is grant modifications. You can feel free to look at the other areas as well.

YouthBuild program organizational development strategies, the number one area there was effective tools and methods of recruiting, engaging, parenthetically attendance and retaining participants. That was 64.36 percent. The second area at the bottom was sustainability and the third area was data management. At this time, we'll pause and see if you have any feedback and ask you to keep these questions in mind.

Do you have anything that you would like added – or add based on your program needs around grant guidance and compliance and program organizational development strategies, ideas and strategies for technical assistance in these areas? What are ways to elevate best practices in these areas? And this is the time for you to offer feedback.

MS. GREENE: And you can either do that in the chat window or Laura, this could be a moment where they could unmute their lines and I think it's \*6 to unmute.

MS. CASERTANO: Yeah. If you want to ask a question verbally, you hit \*6 and that'll unmute your line.

MS. GREENE: Great. Thank you.

MS. : Good afternoon, everyone. This is Kelly Mumfree (sp). How are you all doing?

MS. GREENE: Hi.

MR. HILLS: Hi, Kelly.

MS. SMITH: Hi, Kelly.

MS. : Hey, guys. So just as an FPO, I do hear a common theme from my grantees really like strategic practices. Now, construction instructors or construction trainers help interact and engage with the YouthBuild participants.

So while there's a lot of training and strategies around recruiting, retention and those things that we discuss in peer-to-peer, what have you, but I'm hearing now that they want some training or some strategies specifically for their construction trainers that deal with this population, like either 40 or 50 percent of the time. So I just wanted to share that, if you all have not already received that.

MS. GREENE: OK. Thank you. Any other – when you think about sort of the – go ahead.

MS. : How do I mute the phone again, just put mute?

MS. GREENE: Press \*6 again.

MS. : OK. Thank you. Sorry about that.

MS. GREENE: Any other areas of sort of – when you think about things you may be grappling with within your own program and managing your own grant, any other areas around grant guidance and compliance or sort of program organizational development strategies that we want to lift up or ideas for how we can better deliver technical assistance in those areas for you would probably even be the better question to ask?

I will take the pause as you all are thinking and we'll have a couple of other pauses in the walk-through of what we've heard from you all and more opportunities for folks to share ideas and strategies, but I won't belabor it. I see someone typing. So at this point, I'll turn it back over to James to walk us through a couple of other topics.

MR. HILLS: Consuela, thank you. The next area is under the YouthBuild program elements and the first area is education. The top area under this element is integrating occupational training and education curriculum or curricula. The second area – I'm sorry, that area received 65.26 percent where grantees felt they wanted more support.

The second area is at 52.63 percent teaching and learning, creating a learning environment using universal design for learning as an education program design model. The next element area, and this has been something that's been key across evaluations and throughout the survey, is case management. The number one area of – well, in this area, we're talking about case management and mentoring.

In case management, the number one area is around retention and follow-up strategies for case management. The second area was case management best practices and again, this has been something that's been central through evaluations and also the assessment responses.

The mentoring area, the number one area was mentoring as a support for placement and retention, 72.53 percent and also developing mentor partnerships was the second area and that was 59.34 percent. The next area, again, this has been central across evaluations with grantees wanting more information in training, life skills and behavioral health. The number one area there, 68.69 percent is trauma-informed approaches to programming.

The second area is supportive services to increase participants' success and the third area, which has been popular across evaluations as well, is mental health referral services. Given those two areas, we have another opportunity to pause here. Would anyone like to give feedback or suggest strategies around education, case management, mentoring or life skills and behavioral health?

MS. GREENE: And I'll definitely add, David, I see you had typed into the chat the training staff on trauma-informed care practices and one – and this has come up in many other spaces, what will be really helpful for this discussion and when you think about the time constraints and everything else within your program, what would be some ideas that you – or strategies you all have for how we could deliver something like training on trauma-informed care practices given not every staff comes to an event or some of those pieces, but any ideas or creative strategies for how we can continue to build the capacity of staff around some of these content areas will be helpful to hear.

Thank you, Gabriela (sp). So creating partnerships with other agencies and organizations that provide mental health and behavioral health services. Virtual peer-to-peer events. And from a program management standpoint in this area, there's also – when I think about the staff that's attached to some of these program elements, their time constraints are embedded in there.

Any suggestions or thoughts you all have for how you can support your case managers or your academic instructors and some of those other folks on your team to access some of the technical assistance resources?

MS. SMITH: A lot of people typing, that's what we like to see.

MS. GREENE: Yeah. I love to see it. David, plan self-care activities. That's really important; right? So how does staff support themselves so that they're also modeling self-care for students. Oh, awesome, so position-specific support groups, whether it's conference calls or online platform.

And as you all continue to think, we'll keep going through some of these other pieces, because there'll be another moment where we really are wanting to partner with you in thinking about how we get to some of these pieces.

As Jenn said earlier in our intro, there's some core pieces of our technical assistance that we've been doing for years, but we're continuing to try and think about more innovative ways to continue to engage staff beyond the program manager level to address some of these technical assistance needs that you all have identified. So with that said, I'm going to turn it back over to James to walk – this is me, never mind. I will not turn it back over to James, this is my part.

So a couple of other areas that we ask for feedback from you all in terms of technical assistance needs and the needs that we've begun to see in terms of trends in the field, so around occupational skills training, some of the major areas of need were identified around the Construction-Plus model and practice.

So how to take from idea to design and process and I would say even continuous quality improvement in that area as well as connecting to industry associations and apprenticeship sponsors in both construction and other Construction-Plus industry sectors.

And a big piece of this work, you've seen some technical assistance stuff come out over this year, but this is definitely an area we're continuing to want to listen and grow with you all in terms of strategies to support you in your implementation. The other area that we asked for feedback is around career pathways. So in both of those areas, both engaging with the American Job Centers as a way of supporting career pathways for students as well as career counseling.

And in addition, as the Construction-Plus framework came out the middle of this year – and a number of you, if you either joined us for the webinar or participated in the plenary workshop at any of the peer-to-peer events this year, we've been talking a lot about the Construction-Plus framework.

And another stakeholder group that helps us to think about what technical assistance should look like is also our coaches that work with you all in your program design in day-to-day challenges with your program and some key areas that came around Construction-Plus specifically, sort of top sticking points for C+ grantees, one is identifying the – your – the C+ model that youth will be interested in and support.

So sometimes we write the best proposals and then young people are like, yeah, not that interested and then struggling with youth retention – sort of recruitment and retention in that area. So what does that look like for youth engagement around identifying C+ models as well as securing strong employer placement. So really having strong relationships to industry became another sticking point for a number of C+ grantees.

And then sort of opportunity to strengthen the work – the sort of hands-on work experience. So sometimes in certain industries, it's hard to find meaningful work experiences consistently for every cohort and every young person that may need it as they're going through the training.

Limitations of partnerships, and I heard that on both ends, both the limitations for the YouthBuild program, but sometimes even the organization or agency that the YouthBuild program partners with. That partner may have limitations in what they can do or can't do, what their flexibility looks like. And so really being able to identify some of the challenges around those partnerships to design a high-quality vocational training in your chosen Construction-Plus track.

And then the delivery of the model and staffing; right? So if you're outsourcing your C+, sometimes if it's a community college or another sort of skill-based trainer, they're not as invested in the overall YouthBuild model and it may be harder to have them integrated into your overall program design. And then the lack of program or partner readiness to implement.

So how the planning period is used and how the prep work happens before that first cohort and what it looks like when you finish your first cohort, if this is your first time doing Construction-Plus, to really learn from that process and you and the program and the partner really think about ways to strengthen implementation. And then employers and partners want youth who are further along than YouthBuild students are.

And what we heard there was at times, even for certain industries to even qualify for the credential, as an example, you may have to have your high school equivalency credential done before you could start the training and that may be a barrier or challenge for our YouthBuild students, because in our program, they're working towards that, as an example.

So sometimes employers or industry partners have expectations that don't quite match up to where YouthBuild students are at the time of active programming. And then the lack of integration of full career and work-readiness programming into the program.

So if you have a training partner, they say, I'm preparing them to test for this credential and it requires the YouthBuild program to really then wrap around program design that would include career and work readiness programming, that supplements what a training partner is providing, as an example.

And I'm not going to walk through each of these questions, but some key questions that have come up from Construction-Plus grantees that they felt like if they could kind of get some resolve to it in their program design, it would help them both strengthen their Construction-Plus program, but really be able to also take it to the next level. And some of the key pieces really align with partnerships.

So how to develop stronger partnerships that will support both hands-on training and job placement. So sometimes you find a great partner that will hire our young people when they're done, but then you may be struggling to find the hands-on training opportunities. So how to create more diversity in your partnership pool for your Construction-Plus track becomes really critical.

And some of the other pieces that are really connected to this is identifying the sort of best options, both meeting student interest, but also local industry demand when you're identifying sort of at the planning – at the beginning, the proposal development stage when you're identifying the C+ industry track or training program, really being able to identify something that's kind of a match-up with both, what your young people will be able to successfully enter in and programs have also talked about sometimes there may be a demand industry in maybe healthcare, but if you also are in your recruitment strategy, really trying to work with young people that are in reentry programs, as an example.

The healthcare industry may have its own built-in barriers for a young person that may have "involvement", as an example, but really being able to think through all those pieces become really critical for a strong Construction-Plus program, what are the barriers that you can anticipate and how can your program support young people to address those barriers to enter that career pathway.

And the other piece, I would say, is also just around the training and credentialing selection; right? So identifying the appropriate training structure and strategy that really supports young people to learn and to be able to successfully gain the credential.

Ultimately, we're looking for young people to find success in our vocational training opportunities and not preparing them to run against – you know, run up into walls that they don't feel like they can gain the credential at the end. So many programs have done things, like really being strategic about the stackable credential plan; right? So what's that foundational credential that still meets the expectations and standards for department of labor?

But you may have students entering at multiple skill levels and they could get the – that sort of what I call the starter credential that everyone gets plus they may be able to get a more advanced credential during active programming, but really thinking that through and engaging with training partners and industry partners to really think through the training and credential selection.

So these are a list of a couple of key questions that have come up from grantees and that I would say these questions really also guide and shape some of the targeted technical assistance related to Construction-Plus. I'll talk through a little bit of what we heard around placement.

In particular, some of the big areas of technical assistance needs is – as stated in another slide, is really having the range of employer and industry partners to really offer employment placement opportunities that match up with both demand, but also student readiness and interest. And then the other piece is how does the on-the-job training that you integrate in your hands-on work experience component of your program really prepare young people for placement?

And so the work readiness part of our responsibility during YouthBuild, how are we being intentional about that in our program design and really supporting young people for success? So with that said, I'll take another pause to stop talking and open it up both, for feedback or questions or additional areas that you think we should be thinking about from a technical assistance standpoint and ideas and strategies to support you in your occupational skills training.

So construction and Construction-Plus as well as career pathway development within your program and during the follow-up phase of support with students as well as placement. So ideas and strategies for technical assistance in these areas we'd love to hear from you. And I'm catching up on the chat here. Hi, Sarah. So the idea of position-specific support groups or learning communities or something like that as well as this notion of how do you create that.

I would say this will be one of those pieces, like when we try some stuff out, being able to get real feedback from you all about how to create access to your – like how does your staff access some of these opportunities if we were to create them.

And what do you all need as program managers and program leaders to create opportunities for your staff to participate in something like, as an example, a position-specific support group or learning community? I see people typing. And if anyone wants to unmute their line to chime in, they definitely can as well.

MS. SMITH: Are you still out there, Consuela? It suddenly got very, very quiet.

MS. GREENE: I am.

MS. SMITH: OK. I want to make sure just to make sure we didn't lose you.

MS. GREENE: No. I was – (inaudible) – paper. So I muted my line so it wasn't a distraction.

MS. SMITH: Got you. Yeah. We do have a lot of people typing in, but it is true, always speak with your voices if people want to –

MS. GREENE: OK. Thank you, Rachelle (sp). So roundtable discussions with employers, interesting. And then TA and staff and informing employers of the roadblocks we come across.

And if any folks on the line have done anything like this – so I do know there's a number of YouthBuild programs that do either industry councils or employer partnership councils and they meet with some regularity, either quarterly or monthly where there's an opportunity for the YouthBuild program to talk about what – things that are going on within the program and for industry partners to share what's going on in industry and being able to have some of these conversations that Rachelle just shared and her feedback.

But if there are any folks on the call that also are – that have instituted those kinds of advisory boards or councils, would love to hear from you about how that has gone or what technical assistance could look like to help programs do that at the local level. Oh, Gabriela, I see your question. I will say I've spoken to grantees that do both. So either quarterly or monthly and I would say both, the – it's a lift to plan a meeting.

And so it would be both – it would be determined by what your capacity is within your program and how big the advisory council or advisory board may be to figure out the planning of that, but I would say to start off with quarterly could be a really great beginning and then let the group decide how regularly they would be able to kind of meet consistently.

But what we found is when YouthBuild grantees have a space for employer partners or career pathway partners and program leadership to be able to come together and talk, it has been a win-win in both directions.

YouthBuild program is able to help employers better under the students that we serve and employers are better able to help YouthBuild programs to really think about what work-readiness looks like and what it means for them when young people get placed into either advanced training or job opportunities. I see lots of typing, awesome. Thank you, Sarah. I see your feedback, that construction trainers need their own track for professional development.

If there aren't workshops specifically geared towards the work they do, it's hard to justify bringing them to a conference, I agree. And then creating bridge-type opportunities with employers and bringing – and being a support to the employer, then that, what Joanne (sp) just shared, has definitely been some areas that we've seen programs do really, really well.

Like I know you probably have heard us say or seen some PowerPoint slide that says even creating MOUs with employer partners; right? And one of the reasons for that is kind of saying, this is what we will do, here's what we're hoping you will do while a young person is placed or in their hands-on training at that particular employer and it allows for real feedback loops and being intentional about that and being able to name that.

So being that bridge, helping employers understand that young people will have support from your program for 12 months during their follow-up period, as an example. Those become value-adds that employers are really looking for. And then I see, for example, there's a case management webinar that might be helpful for multiple staff, including vocational staff to participate.

So that's really good advice, too, of sometimes there's a webinar and maybe the program manager is on the webinar, but then you could use that same webinar as an in-service training opportunity.

You could add it to your staffing – a staff training plan; right? So everyone kind of either listens to the webinar or you do a webinar together and then have some real reflection and action planning built into your program planning time could be a really great opportunity to really build on some of these areas of need.

I'm going to move us, because we have a couple of other things before we move into the part of the conversation that I'm really excited about, which is really thinking – continuing to think about new ideas and new strategies to create the how part.

So in this part of the discussion, it's the what, like what's needed, what are the topics of interest and then the later part of our conversation is really the how, like how do we deliver technical assistance that's meaningful and helps to address some of these needs? So with that said, there were a couple of other sort of program design topics that were shared, both in the questionnaire and in some of the open-ended questions on evaluations.

And some of them included things like cultural and religious differences, creating opportunities for students to gain better insight, both about themselves and others as well as doing that within the workplace and what does that mean as a person that's getting ready to go to work or ready to go out into the world that is diverse and different. Barrier buffing, sort of integrating youth-led program practices.

So how are we engaging young people in some of our actual program strategies and practices and then looping back to sort of the stackable credentials and sort of the best bet model of career counseling. So there's a variety of platforms and I know a number of you used different things to help young people do career pathway planning, but really identifying some of those as topic areas of need.

Recruitment, career pathway design within a local context as well as mental toughness program design, curriculum, building culture and best practices, there's tons of resources on the community of practice, but this becomes an ongoing area of like how do we kind of just design something that we feel like really helps us to select young people appropriately, but young people to really test out what they're ready for with the YouthBuild program.

Some of the other topics included, YouthBuild programs as affordable housing developers and what does that mean from a program design standpoint and how are you seen in your local community as a stakeholder in that affordable housing space. Trauma-informed approaches to behavioral management geared towards construction staff.

So I definitely have heard, in a lot of the feedback, like there's some real opportunity if we can create some targeted professional development for construction staff, because everyone – the 50/40/10. So they're with young people a good chunk of the program period time.

So how do we provide the right support so that they have the balance of skill trade, how do I teach the skills needed for that trade, but also some youth development skills to support them to really meet the needs of students? Training on the YouthBuild community of practice and how we can better use it as well as maintaining a positive work environment amidst adversities.

I had done a workshop with a couple of other colleagues at the regional peer-to-peer that happened in Atlanta and we did a couple of workshops on burnout and we definitely know that it takes a lot to do a YouthBuild program. And so thinking through some additional ways to integrate some of that PA and then creating a program manual and then soft skills and career assessment strategies.

I'm going to move us, actually, into the next part of our discussion and I'm keeping track of things that are coming up. Oh, wow, Gabriela, I like that question. So at what point do we move our program towards being youth led?

And I definitely feel like there's that balance of like how do you engage young people in both creation and design of programming, but also engage young people in creating a feedback loop so that they're helping to drive program improvement can be a really important piece to consider for that. So in this next section of our discussion, as I said earlier, this is where we're getting to the how do we do it part.

So we've talked about some topics and if there are other topics or things that you didn't see kind of captured in some of the feedback that we've heard that you want to name, I definitely encourage you to add that to the chat conversation as well.

But now I'm going to provide a bit of an overview of sort of the overall technical assistance that we provide as well as some of the priorities and then get into the like ideas for how we can continue to strengthen them. So when we think about the technical assistance collaborative priorities, they're broken down in a couple of major areas. One is to enhance YouthBuild pre-apprenticeship program design.

So thinking about construction and Construction-Plus, using the framework to really look at your program design and see where there's some areas of opportunity to strengthen what you're doing and really become a strong pre-apprenticeship YouthBuild program. The other piece is strengthening construction and Construction-Plus training and pathways.

So really thinking through what are the ways that the YouthBuild program, as a training arm in the workforce system, is helping young people move towards pathways in these various industries and building strong bridges to apprenticeship and industry partnerships as well as supporting stronger placement strategies and outcomes.

And last but definitely not least, as we all know, the performance reporting, it's where the data tells the story and continuing to see this as a major priority area from a technical assistance of both performance reporting and the new case management system training and the ways in which the MIS help desk support you all in doing this.

So if you'll notice, there tends to be some buckets of work that you'll hear pushed from a TA perspective and they tend to align with these priorities. How do we help you strengthen your program to really be a class of sufficient sophisticated pre-apprenticeship program and how do we help you think through partnerships to apprenticeship and industry to support placement strategies for young people is a major focus for technical assistance?

And when we think about the key roles of technical assistance, it's really thinking about sort of, at the department of labor level, your federal project officer. That's your, both first point of contact, it's the person that you go to, both from a grant compliance standpoint, but also to identify and lift up technical assistance needs that you may have as well as the department of labor national office staff.

So YouthBuild USA works closely with the national office staff and in partnership with your federal project officer to really design and lay out technical assistance priorities. And so within the technical assistance work, YouthBuild USA is the technical assistance contractor and we have a TA managerial staff as well as coaches that work directly with grantees for the first two, two and a half years of their grant period.

So coaches are a combination of YouthBuild USA staff as well as contracted consultants. So I'd say the mix of these groups of folks make up some of the major roles of the technical assistance collaborative. And very similar to young people their outcome is for the work that you do and we wanted to lay out at least some of our – what we believe are the outcomes of technical assistance.

So long-term the impact that we're hoping TA will have for local programs is to really increase the number of high-quality YouthBuild programs among grantees and in addition to that, really increase the diversity of industry training in terms of both Construction-Plus and strengthening what you're doing with your construction component and then really increasing the number of youth participants with positive outcomes.

So it's not enough to have a program that runs and staff that are doing their best, it's also that young people are really hitting the outcomes and the targets that we set for them and with them. And then our short to medium-term outcomes for technical assistance is really focused on grantees design and implementation of an effective YouthBuild program.

So really thinking with you, both about program design and being able to help you align your program design with the outcomes that you're aiming for and then establishing really solid program foundation to support those outcomes as well as grantees demonstrating really continuous – some strong continuous program improvement.

And a lot of that is it's are you continuously asking yourself what's working, what's getting in the way and what do I need to do differently to improve my program and to improve the outcomes for young people? And the hopes of technical assistance is that we're guiding and facilitating those processes with you and that we're providing resources to address the needs that come up.

Some of the ways that we deliver technical assistance coaching, the MIS help desk and support around your data management, the electronic resource management, so the community of practice WorkforceGPS and the resources that go there and then creating learning opportunities, so webinars, such as this and webinars that you have attended that happen monthly, regional trainings or peer-to-peer training, new grantee orientation and construction credential trainings.

And the other area, and it's usually like if you get at this latest and greatest thing just came out, a lot of that gets created around the content innovation and the partnerships piece of our technical assistance service delivery. And the feedback that we get from you all and FPOs and coaches around where there are needs or challenges tend to help to shape and drive some of the content that is created annually as a technical assistance team.

Some of the different resources that you know are on the WorkforceGPS. So e-learning videos, tip sheets, newsletters. Make sure your staff are getting access to the range of newsletters that are available.

So the monthly MIS newsletter, the monthly program newsletter and encouraging staff to get onto the community of practice and access toolkits, manuals, tip sheets and other things that are available, that may meet some of their sort of role-specific technical assistance needs as well.

And the part of the conversation that I'm excited about is really thinking with you all about some of the creative ways that we can continue to strengthen how we deliver technical assistance to you and some of the – and we'll talk about a couple of different areas and some examples of when we've used it and ways that can we continue to strengthen it, but this idea of virtual learning communities and sort of e-learning courses, so building on one of the suggestions earlier around sort of role-specific support groups or learning communities, this could be a TA strategy.

And some of the ways that we've done this in the past is in 2017, I just gave a couple of examples, we did a Construction-Plus course with a partner, Jobs for the Future, and they really helped us think about how do we strengthen a Construction-Plus program design and with a pre-apprenticeship lens?

So the framework came out this year, but we had done this course that we opened it up to Construction-Plus grantees and there were a few grantees that participated. We definitely were like, we wish it would have been more, but we learned a lot along the way about how to do a course like that differently and some of you that are actually in this discussion joined either for a session or two or for the whole course.

But this was one of our attempts. We knew there was a need and we wanted to create a virtual opportunity for people to learn and share together.

And then another example where we've done sort of a learning community, the Ohio State Department of Education changed some education regulations and there was a real opportunity to work with Ohio grantees to look at what they're doing in their education component and how they can both learn about this – the education regulations and its implications for the YouthBuild program, but also how they could work together to strategize around program design.

So these were some examples of how we've done that, but what I would love to hear from you is what would inspire you to participate in a virtual learning community or some of the things that you think would be important for your staff to be able to participate in a virtual learning community or e-learning courses. Oh, Amber – yes. Amber was one of our participants for the C+ course.

Oh, great, thanks for sharing, David. David shared that JFF also does great work on improving attainment of post-secondary credentials and that's a really important piece. Like when we're thinking about placement, it's always the reminder that placement is into employment and advanced training or apprenticeship opportunities and finding folks in these sectors to really help us build those bridges for young people.

I'm going to – as people are thinking about this one, I definitely am encouraging us all as we try to create to be responsive to these needs around opportunities for role-specific staff to engage with other peers and helping us think about how we can offer those learning communities or virtual opportunities and encouraging your staff to participate will become key as we move forward with some of the ideas and suggestions that have been shared.

I'll move to another sort of innovative TA strategy that we have used and will continue to think about how we can use it in the future. So one is sort of the small cluster pilots and one example – some of the more recent examples are in the Metro Atlanta area, there was an apprenticeship pilot.

So the local Metro Atlanta grantees partnered and collaborated together to learn and engage with industry leaders, both from the office of apprenticeship as well as some of the different trade councils and unions. And out of that, they developed MOUs with some key partners and they've been really creating some direct intentional pathways for young people into apprenticeship.

And there's a – they just did a webinar last month in November about some of that work and there's a fact sheet, I think, that even may go live this week or may have just gone live around sort of what we've learned from that pilot. But this is an example of where a group of grantees have gotten together with an intentional focus to strengthen program – some program improvement area.

And so that's one example of a small cluster pilot. And then another pilot that is – that will be launching in early 2019, it's with the National Restaurant Association and Education Foundation and it's really a Construction-Plus pilot program for C+ grantees that have C+ training in the restaurant or culinary arts field and we're looking to identify some key grantees to be a part of that pilot project and that'll be another sort of pilot opportunity for us to do intensive focus technical assistance in an area really with the goal to strengthen program design and training, but also being able to help leverage and connect to industry partners in this particular pilot as one of the goals.

So again, the question is how could this be used to develop and implement innovative approaches and partnerships in other key areas of your YouthBuild program? I don't see anyone typing. So maybe people are just thinking.

So this is definitely, I would say from a TA – how to deliver TA strategy, our hope is to continue to lift up what we learned through these various pilot opportunities, but also to really help shape some of the different work that people are doing across the field. I'm going to go to the next area of innovation and one is – and another one is sort of using technology to demonstrate best practices.

And some examples of how we've used this – and it's been in sort of more in the coaching space, but we have worked with programs to either, in a live-like classroom or a recorded demonstration – I'm just using this as an example of a classroom practice or some kind of program practice where – because sometimes you could read something on a fact sheet or a tip sheet and you're like, yeah, but I just need to see it, I need to see what it looks like.

And there have been some opportunities over the last couple of years where we've used technology or Skype or a number of other vehicles to be able to lift up those promising practices and be able to demonstrate those so other folks can learn from them. So how could this be helpful for program staff to improve program practices and strategies?

And if you have participated – and it may not be in our direct technical assistance, but in other learning opportunities.

If you've participated in things where technology is used to demonstrate best practices, we'd love to hear from you, because this is an area that we would love to explore more and create more opportunity to do more, but would love to hear if this is something that would be of interest as well as any feedback if folks have participated in things like this or questions you may have about what this could look like.

I don't see anyone typing, I'm feeling lonely. I'll move to the next one and this is talking about some of our more traditional technical assistance strategies, which is sort of our in-person trainings and some examples of those are our new grantee orientation, the construction credential training that we offer as well as the various peer-to-peer trainings that have been offered.

So when you think about a training that you attended that inspired you – because this is the piece that inspired you go to back home and change how you do your work. What was it about that training that helped you to change your practice? I see some folks typing. Oh, it's – (inaudible), attendees are typing, I love it. And folks could also feel free to unmute your phones, \*6, and talk as well.

Sarah said, concrete examples of what to do, worksheets, etc. to integrate the concept into our practice and then knowledge gained during the feedback circles during the mockingbird training is an example of something that was helpful.

Valerie (sp) says, "We have always appreciated the peer-to-peer trainings and many times they have inspired us to return and implement new ideas. We have also appreciated coaches with specific expertise who have brought their training to our staff locally."

David, "Peer-to-peer or small cluster pilots related to programs working to implement specific C+ training tracks, such as healthcare or IT." So what I'm hearing in that is like if we were to create some small learning communities very specific to those individual tracks, that would be of interest.

Amber, "Specific action steps provided or time given during sessions to plan so we're ready to go once we get back to our sites." So really intentional action planning that's built into the training.

Valerie says, "Yes." And I would say some of what you all are sharing is both things for in-person training, but also as we think about these sort of smaller learning communities or ways that we use virtual training opportunities to support TA. I see some more folks typing.

So as we get ready to close our discussion today, I want to continue to encourage you all to think about the how part of technical assistance, but even more importantly see this discussion as a reminder that there's a collaborative effort between your federal program – or your federal project officer, the department of labor's national office as well as YouthBuild USA through coaching and other vehicles of TA to really be able to meet and address some of the TA needs.

And the how part is where we really are looking for both your continued engagement, but also continued feedback on how we can continue to strengthen and create more opportunities for staff to engage and address some of their different technical assistance needs. So with that said, I will turn this back over to Jenn to get ready to close us out.

MS. SMITH: OK. Thank you. Sorry, I've got to readjust my earpiece here. Hopefully you can all hear me. Thank you. I have to admit, I think this has been a really great conversation. I find myself getting really excited just thinking about some of the things that you guys are giving us feedback on.

And the great thing is we get a report of all the content that was in this webinar so that we can really start using this as we are already planning for our 2019 TA strategies and kind of piecing these out between like what are the ones that we need to really focus on versus how can we start lighting some fires under you guys to do some of these, that it seems like you really could kind of take and run with yourself.

I mean, I know how busy everybody is and obviously, I think it would kind of start with our messaging, but I think there's a lot of great stuff here and it's super helpful to hear and it's also great to hear some of the things that you guys have said have been helpful that we've done. I'm thrilled that peer-to-peers have been helpful and I'm thrilled the JFF pilot was helpful.

And there's definitely more in that vein that we are focused for – focused on in 2019. So thank you, guys for all of your participation. It's a small but mighty group today and we really appreciate it. And always remember that you can feel free to share the feedback at other times throughout the year as well. So that being said, we just wanted to share one brand-new resource that Lisa Reddy with YouthBuild USA put together for us.

This is sort of a great summary resource document, it's like three or four pages, and it kind of provides some key highlights about things to think about within some of the big buckets of work, whether it's like WIOA and performance, whether it's staffing for success, whether it's sustainability, placement ideas, specifically Construction-Plus or specifically apprenticeship, it kind of is a shortcut that has links to some of the different resources, deliverables, events and like guidance and TEGLs and TENs that we've put together that tie into those different areas.

So hopefully that's a bit of a shorthand for you and you can find a link here. It's also in the community of practice course. So rather than doing extensive list of resources, we're just kind of giving you that big summary document for you to look at that kind of references a bunch of the other stuff and remind you of everything that we've covered in the last couple years through some of our TA resources, though, it is hardly an exhaustive list.

So keep that in mind. We also just wanted to let you know about some of the upcoming events that we have. We know this is definitely short timing as it starts next Monday, but if anybody was still daring enough to try and get their construction trainer into the NCCER construction certification training, we have one spot available for the NCCER training right now.

So it's pretty well attended, but we had one person who I think had to back out at the last minute. So we do have availability if anybody wanted to figure out a way to get themselves to Tampa, Florida to attend this training. And then a couple of events with a little more forewarning, as I'm sure you all know, we have – we expect to announce the 2018 YouthBuild grants before the end of this month, hopefully in the next couple of weeks.

And so what comes on the heels of that announcement is usually the first thing we do is that pre-NGO webinar series, sort of the basics to get grantees familiar with what they need to know as they gear up during that four-month implementation period.

The new grantee orientation, in whatever form we're going to have it in this year, usually comes a couple months later, because of course, we want to make sure you guys have time to get all of your staff onboard, plan for getting the approval to do the travel, etc. So this is sort of our first blush. And while these are obviously geared toward that idea of being a brand-new grantee, we are not limiting these webinars to only the brand-new grantees.

I think if you have staff turnover or if you need a refresher, there's a lot of information in these webinars that could be beneficial for – to anyone, whether you're getting a new grant in 2018 or you're a 2016 or 2017 grantee.

So please be aware the first one will be understanding your grant award and that's just sort of walking through the grant award package, talking about conditions of award and sort of the expectations of what has to happen early on in the grant to plan for success.

The next one on February 4th will be the planning and program requirements for YouthBuild under WIOA and a lot of this is really sort of thinking about at the different stages of your grant, what do you need to get done in that four-month implementation period if you have to use it?

You know, hiring of staff, planning for partnerships, finalizing that MOU with your American Job Center, what do you want to do in that first year, how have some of these thoughts maybe changed under WIOA as you plan for performance outcome success under WIOA? So those are all things that I think could be good refreshers for anybody and that will be February 4th.

And then finally, we're doing our Construction-Plus framework webinar February 12th. This will be a new webinar, but it will certainly build on the previous Construction-Plus framework webinar that we did.

So again, if anybody still has questions they're grappling with, they want to try and dive a little deeper into some of the things that were brought up earlier in this webinar about feedback from coaches about some of the sticking points from Construction-Plus, this could be a good one to attend. I'm assuming many of you are aware that with the 2018 grants, we really expanded the eligibility for who could apply to do Construction-Plus and we definitely saw a huge uptick.

So we're really, really looking at that as a big focus area going forward. So if it's something you're interested in, you're already doing it and you want more thoughts about how to do it well or you're thinking, this is it, when I apply in 2019, I need to do Construction-Plus, this could be a good webinar for you to participate on. So just keep those in mind.

Obviously, the registration links will be coming, but mark those dates. Do we have any other outstanding questions? We still have about 13 minutes. I see Amber Palmeria (sp) is typing. So this is your chance. Again, you can \*6 and unmute your phone or type in your questions or thoughts here in the main chat while you still have an opportunity. So I'm going to wait a moment and see what pops up in the chat fields.

Q: Along the lines of calendar planning, any info. on the 2019 notice of funding release?

MS. SMITH: Yeah. So we – I know that many of you probably noticed we were a little bit behind schedule in 2018 for what we find ideal. I will tell you that we – way before the 2018 funding opportunity announcement even closed we were working on the funding opportunity announcement for 2019 and we have a solid draft that is in clearance right now.

So I will just tell you, anything could happen, but I'm going to keep my fingers crossed and say that we hope to get back on track with the 2019 FOA and hope to potentially release that in the spring. So it shouldn't be too far from now. So hopefully nobody has FOA application fatigue, because there is more to come, but of course, those of you who get awards in 2018 will not be eligible for that one. So you could have a break. I see we're getting one more question.

Q: Any – (inaudible) – dates for the NGM?

MS. SMITH: That's a complicated question, Sarah. I would say at this point, we're looking at most likely sort of a mid-March timeline. Given when we're funding – when we're announcing the awards, there's no great time, weather-wise or otherwise. And again, we don't know for certain if this is going to end up being an in-person event or a virtual event.

There's a lot of sort of things swirling here in the national office that we're working through. So I don't want to put too much information out there that's going to steer you guys awry, but we are definitely well underway in terms of planning for the event, whether it's a virtual event or an in-person event.

We are looking right now at March dates and that's probably about all I can say and obviously, as we get more solidification around that, we will make sure you guys know as soon as possible. Sarah's typing one more thing. And so David's typing something. I will just move to the next slide.

We obviously still have more time, but just if anybody wanted contact information and didn't yet have it for any of the three of us, although you probably do, we're in a lot of emails, but – so here's where you can reach us. Again, I do just want to remind you again please don't think this is the only opportunity you have to give us feedback about TA, it really does matter so much.

We want to make sure that we're hitting the mark with what you need. I also do want to point out one thing that may or may not have been said earlier, I know sometimes that it probably looks to grantees like you give us feedback on the types of TA you want to receive and then you get to an event and it's not any of those things that you put on your list.

I do want to be really clear that we do look at all of it. I think I would go back to my earlier comment about how sometimes it's the – it's balancing that sort of big-picture innovation that we're looking for with what we sort of think of in needs of the field in terms of just the day-to-day operational kind of stuff and also, again, thinking very thoughtfully about different ways we can get that to you.

So some of that TA may be coming to you in ways that you're not thinking about it through the work with your FPO, through the work with your coach, through hopefully in the future, maybe these peer staff support opportunities. It's through the community of practice.

It may be entrenched in a deliverable product, like a toolkit or a fact sheet that we put together, but we are always trying to think about what we're hearing from you guys as the needs of the field and trying to figure out different ways to give it to you where it doesn't necessarily fit into an in-person event.

So please keep that in mind. I'm not seeing any more comments popping up now. So Consuela or James, I don't know if you have anything else to add, but if not, I would say thank you and I'm going to turn it over to Laura.

MS. GREENE: No. Thank you, everyone.

(END)