**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Assessing Your Progress at the Mid-Point of Your America's Promise Grant, Part 2**

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GRACE MCCALL: At any time. So without further ado, I would like to introduce our moderator today, Greg Scheib, America's Promise federal lead, U.S. Department of Labor, OWI, Division of Strategic Investment. Greg?

GREG SCHEIB: Great. Thank you very much, Grace. It's really nice to be with you all this afternoon, and thank you for joining us for this second part of this two-part series on assessing your progress. We really do appreciate all your help and participation in this, and we hope that if you found this is a good opportunity to stop, take a look at where you're at, and where you guys are headed over the next two years of the grant.

We have a great session today. We have three great speakers from different parts of the country, and we also have our TA coach, Bruce Rankin, who's going to be facilitating and sharing some of the trends that we've been seeing with the self-assessment that we just concluded. So I'm just going to turn it right over to Bruce, and take it away.

BRUCE RANKIN: Thanks, Greg. I'd like to welcome everybody back to part two of our mid-grant assessment process and quickly revisit what the original goals were and that was to capture a snapshot of each of your progress through the midpoint and then use that information to guide planning and any necessary modifications to get you through to the finish line.

In the process we've identified a few areas of common interest, and on that point, as Greg just mentioned, invited three of your peers to present today. We hope that this webinar will be somewhat conversational, and with that in mind, as questions come up during the presentation, please feel free to enter those into the chat box down below.

So joining us today we have, again, three America's Promise grantees and their project leads, Lexi Mason from the America's Promise grant in city of Springfield, Missouri. She'll be talking a little bit about their challenge addressing a projected shortfall in their participant numbers, Gary Sulski from the Brevard Workforce Development Board in Florida talking about how they're improving the inter-staff engagement, and Greg Goloborodko of WorkSystems, Inc. in Oregon talking about program design and increasing their degree/credential attainment.

So before we turn to our presenters, just a quick sort of high-level assessment of what we took away from these – the process. Again, what we were hoping is to capture quantitative and qualitative data both to help you and the coaches better understand what your needs are in the process development gap analysis needs assessment, again, directing the technical assistance that we provide, and then ultimately, aggregating that data and making sure that that aligns with the larger TA plan that we've developed. So we took a look at this again from two different perspectives, the quantitative and qualitative metrics. So what did we learn?

We took a look at the highest level in terms of the number of participants served and the grantees – again, these are aggregate numbers across everyone that reported – that the number of participants served, you're pretty much in line with your goals.

Within that data set, in terms of other populations served and incumbent workers, we found that that was a pretty common challenge across almost all of the reported data. The next three areas, participants enrolled, participants completing training, and credentials awarded, we're seeing there that those numbers are roughly slightly below target. So those are areas that we want to focus on in a little bit.

But the silver lining in all this data in terms of the employment placements, while they aren't quite at the goal on an aggregate level, proportionally speaking, those numbers are higher than what we're seeing in some of the other metrics. And these are details that vary obviously between the grants, but overall, what we're taking away is that you folks are focused in the right areas, the right sectors, in-demand occupations, and for the folks that are getting through training, that they are finding employment in these sectors.

On the qualitative side we went ahead, and we took a look at these across the six success factors. The first two factors that are on this chart focus on organizational design and operation. A common theme that we saw had to do with case management and using that data to monitor progress. In the first example, a promising practice was sharing the information across the training provider staff, highlighting best practices and success stories.

In the second we found several examples of grantees seeking feedback from participants and employers on the effectiveness of the training and then using that information to refine their programs. And under sustainability, this is almost consistent across the board. We understand the importance of strong partnerships, and that led to the grants that are in place and to sustain these initiatives, continuing those partnerships into the future.

The second three, on employer engagement we understand, again, that's central to the success of the America's Promise grants. And the example of the grantee here is continuously monitoring their labor market to gauge demand for their training graduates and engaging employer partners to build awareness of the program, in essence, creating a pipeline for their graduates. Other key partners include workforce education, economic, and community-based organizations.

A number of grantees described how they coordinated with their partners to open up new recruiting channels and to provide feedback on the effectiveness of their training. In this example there's a liaison coordinating activities between the training providers, again, ensuring best practices and lessons learned, to improve the quality of their training.

And then the last factor with effective participant engagement, we're seeing in a number of locations where it's a challenge to recruit participants in such a strong economy. This example I like the grantee's emphasis on career counseling and instilling the importance of lifelong learning to advance their careers. In this case, participating in this training may help enter – participants enter a high-growth in-demand field.

So that's a real quick high-level snapshot of the observations that we've collected, and as Greg asked, we want to hear from the grantees. So first up, we've got Lexi Mason from the city of Springfield in Missouri, and Lexi's going to talk a little bit, again, about the challenges that they faced in a projected shortfall in their participants. So, Lexi, I'll turn it over to you.

LEXI MASON: Thank you, Bruce. Our grant is based in Springfield, Missouri, as Bruce said, where we're housed in the career center here, and we are working with partners with the WIOA youth program and our WIOA adult program to get some people into the pipeline. Our sector is healthcare. We're focusing on training 372 individuals in healthcare-related fields by 2020, and our problem was that we had two long-term programs, the associates of science of nursing and the associates of science in behavioral health.

And both those programs are pretty long programs, over nine months long. The behavioral health program was five semesters long, and we realized pretty early on that we weren't going to get through the number of completers that we needed to get through in order to reach our grant goal.

So we decided to submit a grant modification to add some short-term training programs. So we added four new short-term training programs. Those are certified pharmacy tech, certified phlebotomy technician, EMT basic, and certified medical assistant. And we wanted to get these programs up and going pretty quick. So we had about two months to get them implemented, and with our partner is Ozarks Technical Community College, they kind of had the classes already in place and we needed to recruit people to get participants for the programs.

So we partnered with WIOA youth programs and got a lot of participants to get in the pipeline that way, and we also went on the local media. We got on the radio, and we got on the news and had a tight deadline to meet but we got – we recruited over 400 people within two months and we've got our short-term programs off and going. They all started in January and February, and we've got people in all those pipelines ready to go.

And we're currently training them and we're back on track to meet our goal numbers and we're actually offering more sectors in healthcare for different types of interests. And I think we've been really successful in getting the grant back on track and I am looking forward to success in the future with our short-term programs and our partnerships that we developed and I'm confident that we can meet the goal numbers. So that's pretty much what I had for you.

MR. RANKIN: Great, Lexi. And we're just chugging along here. The one thing – and I hope this resonates with everybody out there but just the number of 400 individuals recruited in such a short period of time. You mentioned the media blitz, and that's great.

But I think the other thing that I just wanted to highlight, maybe give you a second to address, is just the close coordination you have with your employer partners, that you've created these four new strands but really the success is just having those employers lined up where they've established their desire to bring these folks in and have – (inaudible). Sorry. I can't talk and read at the same time. Anyways, there's a question, but if you could just touch real quickly on the employer partnership and how that's really been instrumental to the incorporation of these four new short-term programs.

MS. MASON: Yeah. We partnered with the area hospital. So we have Cox Health, Mercy Health, and Citizens Memorial Hospital. And they've all expressed a great interest in needing especially pharmacy technicians in the hospitals, phlebotomists in the hospitals as well, and then we've had a great partnership with Burrell Behavioral Health to get our behavioral health students in jobs pretty quickly.

And we've had a – we had a shortage of nurses in the area. So we are needing all these community partnerships to get people into jobs and they are working with us closely and they've all supported us greatly and they've hired a lot of our graduates and they're excited to get more of our graduates because a bunch of them have been made aware of the programs and they've been promoting it within the hospitals, getting some of their own people through training so that they didn't have to pay for it.

It's been a great partnership with all those entities, and we look forward to continuing the partnership with them and getting our people employed once they're graduated.

MR. RANKIN: Super, Lexi. And the question that came in, I just – I'm going to practice. I just don't do enough webinars, but the question was raised through our chat about just revisiting those four short-term programs again. And I think you may have mentioned it but just talk about the duration of that training. Just very quickly recap the four and how long it takes to complete.

MS. MASON: Yeah. Yeah. Phlebotomy and pharmacy tech are about both a semester long. They last about four months. EMT basic is also a semester long. That one lasts about four months, and then the CMA, certified medical assistant, that one lasts nine months and it's just a little more comprehensive but, again, shorter than our – some of our – our behavioral health program. So we can get people in those programs pretty quickly, at least less than a semester and get them out within about four months working.

MR. RANKIN: Thanks, Lexi. And I have to admit that Lexi's one of my grantees and they're very modest but their other programs are – they have wait lists and the placements have been great. So I expect sort of the same results with these.

So just a quick reminder to everyone that, if you have any questions or even afterwards, one of the things that we are hoping is to promote peer-to-peer interactions. So if you do have interest in trying to replicate what they've done in Springfield or see some parallels with your grant, either you can let us know through the chat today or reach out to your coach. But we really like what these grantees have done. See them as best practices and would like to see those replicated. So thanks, again, Lexi.

So next up, we have Gary Sulski, who is the IT sector strategy program manager at the Brevard Workforce Development Board in Florida, and he's going to talk about their improving their inter-staff engagements. So, Gary.

GARY SULSKI: Thank you, Bruce. I appreciate you allowing me to present today. So as he indicated earlier, I am in Florida in the heart of the Kennedy Space Center, and we have huge rockets going off all the time. Similar to you seeing a plane going overhead, we have these big rockets. I'm the IT sector grant participant, and our organization is a workforce office. So my role as a sector strategist basically challenges me to understand IT and the training in all of the different sectors.

For example, network and computing are the ones that stand out most, but we have aviation aerospace, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, even software engineering. So we have a large number of DOD contractors here, and I'm dealing with some real knowledge experts in the industry.

My internal staff is – consists of about what we call business liaisons, those that work with our local employers to post and fill jobs and provide our training resources, and our career counselors, and they work with our unemployed, underemployed, and employed participants.

Our challenge was basically to create a better inter-staff engagement with each other, meaning between the career counselors and our business liaisons, and our partners. So as it relates to increasing the APG participation, let's review some of the goals from the slide here. Basically, to improve intake processes, participant assessments, conduct group role playing, have one-on-ones with staff to address personal needs, whether you're a career counselor or a business liaison, and provide monthly update meetings on performance goals and IT trends.

So here's some solutions that we came up with for each. For improving intake process, we had expected our staff, meaning our career counselors, to understand a pretty complex and changing technology like IT. That was a bad idea. So what we had to do was step back and look at our assessment tools.

So we used TABE and CareerScope. They basically helped these career counselors identify whether this participant is capable of even stepping into this industry. We gave them some general knowledge about the industry. It was pretty deficient on the front end. Again, it's a very changing, complex technology. So it's hard for people to keep up with it, even if you're in the field.

What we added to that to be more accurate was CompTIA, which is one of the main certification testing organizations for the IT industry. They provided us free their assessment test. So basically, it was tied specifically to the IT industry versus general test – assessment test tools. We created resource information, including occupations and corresponding training for each, key IT occupation pathways, quantitative information about the current openings in the area and which – what employers were hiring, and general information about the IT field.

So we found these resources through a number of different places. We found them with other APG participants. We reached out to our local workforce office – well, in this case, our facility, but you can reach out to your local workforce office. We talked to colleges and even the department heads within the colleges for your specific sector; obviously, meeting with local companies, talking to associations that are tied to your sector, in our case IT, even societies, clubs that pertain to the sector.

Local libraries had information, and even our chambers and EDCs helped us gather some of that information. So in the end our career counselors became more confident in being able to speak about the industry in general, and it allowed them to ask more probing questions of potential participants, which improved the assessments.

Next was our connected group role playing. Role playing has been around for centuries. I had to do a little research on this. I'm glad to provide anyone with an outline, if they want to create this kind of scenario in their location. With our career counselors, we had them facilitate their own role playing, taking turns as a jobseeker and a career counselor and taking ideas from scenarios from the audience, which were other career counselors.

Basically, situations they had come across. I basically sat in the background to coach when necessary, and the idea for me was just to make sure they were drawing on the resources we gave them so that – to help guide that participant. And this also helped – you have a turnover in staff. This helped the newbies to get on board, and we even encouraged them to seek out their best practice leaders within their group.

Next was one-on-one with staff. This is a tough one because you have to be careful you're not implying you know more about their role than they do. You're just sharing information and how they can use it.

So in order to get our teams working together, our career counselors and our business liaisons, I've had to sit down with and coach them individually sometimes in their personal communications but mostly to show them how they're a part of that success or the outcome, how they can work together, pass the baton back and forth between a career counselor that's working with a jobseeker and a business liaison that's working with the employer directly.

And then from there we provided a monthly or set up a monthly update meeting on performance and goals and things that we could share about the IT industry trends. We created individual goal tracker for each one of them. This includes follow up to address individual challenges. If they came across something that they couldn't handle, we strategized for better success for each team and team member and just address each of the individuals' needs.

In the end we've started to see a rise in the number of participants – excuse me – pretty significantly. Additionally, we incorporated our complete staff into our consortium, and our consortium grew from our original partners, which were 14 organizations, to now what is between 75 and 100 people.

And we meet quarterly, and these are IT companies and knowledge experts, all of our educators in the area, both secondary and postsecondary, our EDC and chambers, local chapters of, in our case, IT associations, societies, staffing organizations, basically anyone that's involved with improving the workforce in this area.

When we have our career counselors and business liaisons networking in these consortiums, they get to make new connections and ask questions and find out firsthand about the industry and occupations and trends. And that is basically it. Thank you.

MR. RANKIN: Thanks, Gary. I just had one quick question. When you talked about the role playing, was there resistance to incorporating that, or did everybody buy into that as a strategy and an approach?

MR. SULSKI: No. Everybody bought into it. It's easy when you're asked a question, you can answer it extemporaneously versus having to prepare for something. So we just created scenarios. We either threw them out from the audience. I had a candidate that said this or I came across this, and we just let them role play. And then we helped them draw from that information that we gave you. Look at the occupation pathway. That's a good tool.

So basically, we coached them where we could, but it's an ongoing process. We do this regularly. So it's – it will never end, and they get more confident as time goes. The key for them was to go through the information. Read the information we gave them. We wrote it in a way where they could really understand it because, again, IT field can be a complex one, and when these career counselors are dealing with all different industries, we're trying to help them understand the IT one.

MR. RANKIN: So just real quickly, I think you mentioned here before and I know when we talked through the dry run that you might have a handout or a resources that's associated with that. If that is something that you could share, we can put that on our community of practice because it is unique. I don't know that we've seen that at any of the other feedback.

MR. SULSKI: Absolutely. I'll forward that to you.

MR. RANKIN: That would be great. Thanks, Gary.

Now, we've got Greg – now, I've got to say it again – Goloborodko from WorkSystems, Inc. up in Portland, Oregon, and Greg is going to talk about how they're expanding their degree/credential attainment pathway. Greg.

GREG GOLOBORODKO: Thank you very much. I appreciate the time to present today. So I'll just get right into it. My name is Greg Goloborodko. I work for WorkSystems. We're the local workforce board for the Portland metro area. Our system design is a little unique in that we partner with two additional workforce boards. So we cover about six or seven counties within the Portland metro area, stretching all the way up to the state of Washington to serve the participants in the Vancouver area.

One of the challenges that we had was really how do we integrate all the programs that were available at the WorkSource centers, our One Stop centers, and make sure that we're really capturing each and every participant, each and every candidate that has been identified that has an interest in the healthcare sector.

Our grant exclusively focuses on the healthcare track. We're serving both adult, youth, as well as incumbent workers. For our region we had some very lofty goals with respect to performance outcomes, and we wanted to make sure that there weren't any participants that were kind of falling through the cracks with respect to eligibility for our program and that we could serve really any and every candidate that walked through our doors.

So when we designed this program initially, we had four access points to it, and those included the incumbent workers. There was a youth component, or there was a partner agency, which was the other workforce board, and then we also had a healthcare grant that we layered onto that we were expecting a lot of participants to be funneling into our grant from.

After about a year and a half, two years of program implementation, we realized that there was a lot of opportunity for us to align our programming a little better to capture some participants that maybe weren't going through those access point doors. And so what we did was we reviewed what our system structure was like, and this graphic that is currently up here, this kind of shows all the access points.

So the one on the far right is the WorkSource Portland Metro. This is our new fifth door access point. This is kind of the catch all. We incorporated two additional career coaches into our system that would be serving those participants that wouldn't be able to access the grant through any other means or resources. We also had them really focus on some very unique cohorts and partner with additional programs that were in our region that they could specifically work with and kind of be the conduit between their resources and the services provided through our grant.

All of these grants still receive mentorship support from our mentorship provider in our region. We thought this was critical from the standpoint of really getting some hands-on activities and connecting those incumbent workers as well as new workers funneling into the healthcare sector in order for them to receive kind of some career exploration as well as guidance in terms of what a day in the life of this kind of career would look like. We are exclusively focusing on the healthcare track.

So we made sure to incorporate some shorter-term trainings that we could also support our participants for because what we were finding was our target audience was found in the most barriered populations, same as I think the other grantees have. And unfortunately, those are also not the candidates that are best suited for some of our training providers with respect to being how competitive those training providers are.

So one of our challenges was that we were looking at some for-profit schools and some non-traditional training providers in order to provide some of those longer-term trainings, but they were costing us a lot of monies just based on their overall cost. So we wanted to make sure that we were still going to hit the outcomes, the performances that we were contracted for, and so we wanted to look at what additional short-term trainings we could provide to our participants while they – while not all of them may be able to complete a longer-term training.

So we added tracks such as EMT, which I believe Lexi touched on earlier. We have vet tech, and we're also doing some very short-term trainings like peer wellness specialist. All of these trainings are really designed to be completed within one to two terms, I think three at most for any of our programs within our region. So we are able to provide services to those very targeted populations within our region.

The other component of this was really providing better communication to our system about the alternative shorter training options. We have liaisons within our WorkSource centers that are also connected to another healthcare grant, and we're leveraging the expertise that they have in order to provide this information to our Northwest Promise participants because a lot of our grant targets were really designed with kind of overlaying onto that grant, and we wanted to make sure we weren't excluding anybody and that we were being as inclusive as possible and providing as much of that institutional knowledge to our system as a whole.

So this for us was really how we were able to kind of get more effective participant engagement and really get folks into completing shorter-term trainings and then continue on to longer-term trainings, should that be a choice that they wanted to make.

MR. RANKIN: Thanks, Greg. So one thing that I did want to ask you about and you sort of touched on it in your presentation, you were talking about the focus – the emphasis, if you will, on kind of what I would call workforce getting people into employment and then maybe even training afterwards.

And I know, just having been able to see everybody's numbers, your employment numbers are spectacular. You're beating your goal widely. If maybe just talk a little bit more about that and how you're lining your participants up so that they are finding employment and doing as well as you've been.

MR. GOLOBORODKO: Sure. I appreciate you pointing that out. So I think for us it was really just the open lines of communication, leveraging the system that we have. We have four targeted sectors in our workforce development region, healthcare being one of them, obviously, and we have a healthcare lead that is very intimately connected to our industry partners.

So a lot of our placements actually do come through that channel. She's actually responsible also for the incumbent worker component of our grant. So she works with local area hospitals. So when we have incumbent workers that are going through those trainings, once they complete those trainings, once they receive that industry-recognized credential, they are moving into healthcare occupations within those sites.

And we're also utilizing the system at our local WorkSource centers with our business services team. These are staff who are dedicated to specific sectors as well, and they work with those healthcare providers. So having those natural warm connections, warm handoffs has really been very beneficial for our system to make sure that we're addressing both the participant needs and grant outcomes but also just as critically as the employer needs.

MR. RANKIN: Super. Again, very, very impressive numbers. And I'd like to thank all three of our presenters. We really appreciate hearing directly from you and sharing these strategies. Again, I would encourage our participants today, if you do have any questions for these folks, feel free to type that into the chat window or if there's something – a longer discussion that you'd like to follow up on, coordinate through your coach. But again, we're all about trying to create these peer-to-peer interactions and share some of these successful outcomes.

So we're going to move on now and just, again, if I didn't say it clearly at the beginning, these are very high-level results. We know you'll be driving – drilling down into your details data and other goals with your FPOs coming up, and we'll also have the upcoming data-driven decision making. But we did have a couple high-level take-aways from this.

And the first, outreach and recruitment, and to put a finer point on that, leading to enrollments, completion, and credentials, that's the one area where, if we do look at the aggregate data, we are below goal and trying to look at strategies that will improve the folks that you're serving moving into the training, completing credentialing and so forth and obviously leading to employment.

The other that we saw across a lot of the qualitative comments along the success factors had to do with management systems and structure, putting monitoring systems, case management tools, data tracking tools, and so forth. As a result of this, I've already connected two grantees or two coaches where one coach had raised a question as a result of completing the template about successful practices in case management and monitoring tools like dashboards and have connected that coach with another coach who has an example that's extraordinary. And so hopefully, that will lead to other peer-to-peer interactions.

And the last has to do with partner engagement. I think just using Lexi's example early on, as they expanded their program one of the critical elements to making that successful was knowing that they had the employer partners with the demand for those workers that they were training, that having that in place really helped facilitate that program. So those are the three high-level observations. There are plenty more, and our program is jumping ahead.

So just quickly on the process, again, what we were hoping this would do, certainly from the perspective of the coaches, is what – how this would help us better understand what your needs are and at the same time perhaps raise some issues, challenges. When you shine a spotlight, sometimes you see some areas that need attention.

What we're hoping is that that was the case, but if you could just take two seconds and let us know if this did help you in management of your grant. And if it did uncover an area where you might need some additional technical assistance or you as the grant manager are just thinking about, okay, we need to go back and revisit these strategies, if you could share that with us in the text box, we really appreciate it.

And while everybody is scrambling to type into the chat box, we just want to take a couple seconds here and talk about next steps and some of the things that are on the schedule looking ahead. We do have all of these results aggregated. They're being shared with all the coaches, also with Greg and the ETA staff, and we'll be taking a look at those again to see if there are other areas that we need to highlight. And we encourage you, again, to use this as part of your ongoing planning for the next two years and, again, seeking technical assistance from the coaches.

So with that we do see somebody's typing, but questions. Again, we encourage you to provide any feedback on the process. If you'd like, we'd even be happy to receive your comments on how well this worked.

Again, I know from my perspective, having looked at everybody's assessments, I was both impressed with the time that was invested but also saw areas that perhaps might not have surfaced if we'd not gone through the process. So I don't know, Greg, if you had any other comments before we talk a little bit about what we have coming up on our team. So let's move ahead.

MR. SCHEIB: So this is Greg again, and I hope you found that interesting. I really do appreciate Lexi and Gary and Greg taking the time to share some of their experiences with us. We do have some – in a sense, it's almost a follow -up to the series that we've just been talking about today.

We are going to be doing a data-driven decision making webinar towards the end of April where we're going to have an opportunity to look at our grant outcomes across all of the grants and give you a better sense of how the program is doing as a whole and maybe break down some of it and see where some of the things we can tease out based on some of the data that we are getting from you every quarter.

As you know, we recently sent out the infographic templates that we hope you have been finding useful but that is certainly really just for your use and we hope that that is a way that you can help share your story in a quick and easily digestible way to your stakeholders and in your local community.

And finally, we always encourage you to go to the community of practice. It is updated on a regular basis, and we've got a lot of good resources out there that we encourage you to just keep track, and if you haven't create a WorkforceGPS account, we encourage you to do that so you'll get notices when new material is being posted.

The only other thing, I would just remind everybody that we do have the PowerPoint today. We do have a copy of the assessment tool itself and also a short summary on the success factors, which were sort of the grounding for that self-assessment, all available, and you can download those directly from the file share screen on your – on the webinar today. But thank you all again.

MR. RANKIN: I think that's it. Again, we appreciate your time, and if you do have questions or do want to follow up, please coordinate with your coaches, and we look forward to making the connections. Thank you.

(END)