**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**On-The-Job Training (OJT) Best Practices and the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program**

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JON VEHLOW: So without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to our moderator today, Susan Worden, supervisory program analyst, U.S. DOL, ETA, OTAA. Susan?

SUSAN WORDEN: Thanks so much, Jon. Hello, everybody, and welcome to today's webinar on OJT, so the TAA program. My name is Susan Worden and I'm the lead in the performance management and data reporting division for the Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance. I'm Excited to a part of today's presentation. We've got some great subject matter experts on hand to discuss OJT and OTAA, so without further ado, let's get down to summarizing what we're going to cover so I can turn the webinar over to discuss brass tacks (sic).

A review of our state data, as reported in PIRL, indicates that OJTs are an underutilized training option in trade, especially comparing them with other programs. So today, we're going to be looking at some of the root causes of what could be leading to that discrepancy. This will include debunking myths that may exist for TAA OJTs as well as perceived barriers versus reality, as clarified here in the Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance.

In addition to hearing from us, from ETA, on ideas and resources for strategies for OJTs, you'll be hearing from a couple of state experts on less successful OJT experiences to share, tips and tricks. And we'll also be sharing some resources from various states that have been used successfully for outreach and all of that all-important contract and paperwork portion of OJTs.

I am now going to turn it over to Tim Theberge, joining us here in the Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance about three years ago. Tim served as the ETA TAA coordinator for 15 years in the Boston regional office. So despite his youthful appearance, he's got a lot of experience and contacts on this topic under his belt. Over to you, Tim.

TIM THEBERGE: Thanks, Susan. So good afternoon and or good morning depending on where you are joining us from. Like Susan said – (inaudible) – also all areas of workforce development including WIOA. So I'm speaking with you today with some understanding of the relationship of all of those programs and the broader workforce system, not just specifically from trade, though obviously that's what we are here to talk about.

So the first thing I want to do is look at a side-by-side if you will. It's not very detailed, but it lays out some of the general differences between OJT under trade and OJT under WIOA, specifically the dislocated worker's program and dislocated worker grants, formerly known as NEGs, now DWGs.

The first big difference is our reimbursement rate. We'll talk about that in a little bit. Under trade, it is statutorily limited to 50 percent that cannot be weighed. In WIOA, the statue sets it at 75 percent, so there are some wavers available on a sliding scale basis to go up to as much as 90 percent, which some specific NEG or DWG grants have done in the past.

The next difference is weeks allowed. Under trade, we are again limited by the statue to 104-week maximum duration. Under WIOA, there is no set duration specifically. Again, we'll talk about that in a little bit.

The next is around OJT structure. Trade is not, like WIOA, a local program. Trade is very much a state-based program, a state-run program and to some degree with state policies. There is little variance that can occur at the local level or should be occurring at the local level within the Trade program. And so, when we talk about who is setting structure and policies and such for OJT, under trade that's really the state, versus WIOA where that's more likely to be based on locals.

Lastly, are employed workers allowed under OJT? Under trade, that is a specific no. Under WIOA, there are some exceptions and some allowability that does allow for employed workers, for certain employed workers, to experience or receive OJT.

ETA has done a good deal of work around OJT. We've been really working on this now for what feels like almost a decade to really try and reinvigorate OJT. For those of you that have been around longer than me, you'll remember that there used to be quite a bit of OJT back in the late '80s, early '90s due to some, for lack of a better word, abuse of those training programs.

There was then a crackdown on some less than ideal situations that were occurring out there, you know, millions of dollars in questioned costs and a crack down on all things OJT. And then the system forgot how to do them right, largely until about 2008, 2009, when we really tried to reinvest in those efforts and drive those with some very specific NEG projects that were targeted to increase the system's use of OJT.

One of those things that came out of that effort is our OJT toolkit that has been updated. That toolkit contains things that we were always asked for. Do you have sample contracts? Do you have sample training plans? Do you have policies and procedures that we can use? And so, the OJT toolkit was developed for that purpose.

Although this is written from a WIOA perspective, I would encourage you all, if you are looking for training plans, contracts, things of that nature, the OJT toolkit is worth your time to look at. You will need to make some minor revisions to those to make them trade compliant, but nonetheless, it's definitely worth looking at.

So as Susan alluded to earlier, there was a discussion of the difference amongst the uses of OJT within our different programs. And so, what does that look like? So here's a handy dandy little infographic that's looking at exactly that. You'll see trade is at a three percent, so one in 30 give or take. Participants that are enrolled in training are in OJT in trade. Under the WIOA adult program, that rises to one in five. Sorry. So one in eight and that's about 12 percent.

And under dislocated worker, you'll see that that soars to a 20 percent level, so one in five dislocated workers receiving training under WIOA are in OJT training. Since all trade participants are dislocated workers by definition, we would expect or think that the rate of trade participants in OJT would be similar to those of the dislocated worker program and as you'll see, there is a great difference between those.

So we're going to try to explore some of the whys and why nots and what's behind that over the next couple of slides. So we're going to talk about obstacles and barriers and whether these are perceived or real. So these are statements or questions or comments that have been made over the years to national office staff, to regional office staff related to why OJTs aren't used or preferred under the Trade program.

So this is part of the interactive part of your presentation and your webinar today, so we're going to switch. The screen will switch here. We really want you to be a little bit more interactive on this part of it.

So the first obstacle or barrier that we want to talk about is that this perception or statement that TAA participants may be too skilled to start over. So again, trade participants have been, the average trade participant has been in their job that they were dislocated from or separated from for about 14 years.

That is a staggeringly high number by comparison to other workers. And so, the first question to you all is have you heard from participants that they view OJTs as "starting over" or that they already have too many skills to go into OJT? I think it's worth noting we've heard the same argument for apprenticeships. And so, that's our first questions to you there is have you heard, or do you think that this is really a barrier or not relative to trade participants believing or of the opinion that they are too skilled to start over, or do they view OJTs as starting over?

It looks like all of the answers here are coming in as no. That's great to hear. Awesome. OK. Fantastic. Definitive. Awesome. Great. All right. This is terrible. I always love to see some of them as noncommittal. Very good. All right.

So let's move it on to the next one. So the next one we're going to talk about here, again and what we're looking for is whether this is perceived or real. Part of this is that there is a perception that trade will pay for costlier training that WIOA traditionally does not because trade tends to have more training dollars available.

So since trade will pay for that advanced training, participants are less likely to gravitate towards OJT because they see trade as an option to take that more expensive training, that higher career training if you will, that they otherwise not have access to.

So what we see from the numbers is that all training under trade, so that the average cost of all training programs under the Trade program, is about $12,000. OJT is actually less expensive than that, but again the question here is because that higher-end training is available or that higher cost training is available, are people moving towards that because this provides them an opportunity to get that training at no cost to them?

Oh. So now we're seeing yesses and they get TRAA. Fascinating. So as a follow-up to that one, Joe (sp), I'll call you up since you said about the TRAA. Aren't they getting wages that would be more than what they were getting for TRAA or are we simply suggesting that the TRAA is a lure to continue with traditional training as opposed to OJT? By the way, this is fantastic input and great feedback. Please keep up the chat.

So yes, it depends on the type of trade affected employer they were laid off from. It is to be valued more. Higher skilled workers in the service sector want the training. Fantastic. This is some great feedback. I'll keep this open for a couple more seconds here and let you type in some answers and then we'll move on to the next topic. This is great stuff. Oh. Because of the credential for sure. Great point. Yeah. And great answer, Joe, and you've already picked up on my next slide about being conditioned to push people into training.

So all right. So we're going to move on to the next one. Great answers there. Thank you very much. So the next one is about whether or not, so as we discussed earlier, trade has a 104-week statutory limit on the duration of OJT and one of the things we've actually heard, and again we're here to sort of double check this, is that that limit is seen as prohibitive for OJT. What I've then done on here is give you some information relative to what the actual duration of participation has been historically for the past couple of years under the Trade program.

You'll see that for all participants total, we're really looking at only about 76 total weeks of program participation. For those in training, it drops to 65 and for those in OJT, it drops all the way down to 45 weeks. That's actually the shortest duration. It lasts less than a year. So again the question – and again we're doing this to gather this information so we can better try to drive OJT as a solution or eliminate barriers that do exist or develop talking points around myths. Is that 104-week limit, is that a real-world barrier to OJT under trade?

And pretty consistency, pretty consistent answers of no. Under WIOA, I can say that we can talk about this briefly. Under WIOA, there is a limit, though it's not a hard limit. What it talks about is that the OJT must be commensurate with the skills required for that job based on the occupational code that the OJT is under. Great. Awesome. Right.

So the next one is sort of a two-part question, but on the same topic. One of the – this is sort of going back about 10 years, maybe 12 now. And we used to always ask about OJTs and why they weren't used more than they were under both WIOA and under trade and we were repeatedly told that it had to do with the volume of paperwork that was required to do them. What we're seeing, however, is that there are sort of two parts to this. One, that there's a perceived impact on the employer, that we're asking the employers for "too much paper", "too much paperwork".

So that's the first one. The second one is that the second comment we've often received is that there's too much paperwork placed on the counselors to actually gather the documentation that's required and manage that. And so, that's the next thing is about whether or not the paperwork is really a real barrier, a perceived barrier, or not a barrier at all. And again, that would be for both the employer and for your counselors and whether that might be one of the reasons why we have a lower rate on OJTs than we do on other programs.

We have an employers yes, case managers no. Fascinating. Too much paperwork to stay engaged. Fascinating. Compared to WIOA, TAA's paperwork for OJT is much more comprehensive when compared to the paperwork required. Fascinating. Tell me, what state is that so I can, I'd be interested to see what the – thank you. So I can run some, I'd like to look at the data set and see if the outcome is comparable for the two programs based on that comment.

But that's exactly the type of thing we want to try to eventually drill down into and we can't on this particular webinar because it will take us some time to look at the data and then collect some of the paperwork and actually look at it. What we're interested in doing is seeing if there's inefficiencies built in that don't need to be there for compliance purposes.

What I used to find all the time is that we would go out and do a review and discover that states and locals often had overly burdensome paperwork requirements that actually weren't required by anyone, but had always been in place and therefore tended to continue forever until we showed up and said, yeah, you actually don't need that. So I'd be really interested to go further down that thing.

Ah yes. The six criteria of training required and it's not for WIOA. So this is where I put on my other hat and suggest to you that although WIOA doesn't explicitly lay out six criteria, you can't actually approve someone for training that's not in demand that they don't have the skills to comply. I would suggest to you that improving training under WIOA without looking at something like the six criteria is arguably doing a disservice to the participant and potentially and question in cost. But again, that's another discussion for another webinar.

All right. Moving along. Thank you so much. This is fantastic and I can't wait to dive down into some of these. All right. Great. And yes. The, Tommy (sp), your answer is correct. The guidance for OJT under trade is more detailed than WIOA and if you'll remember, the statue prior to 2002 even used to have a six-month employment requirement under OJT under trade, which never existed under WIOA.

All right. So the next one is looking at whether or not the Trade's historic lack of case management funds and sort of support staff if you will, specifically the lack of trained job developers. So WIOA has job developers. Wagner-Peyser has job developers. Historically, that's not something trade has had or payed for on its own.

And so the question here is are, a two-part I guess, are the job developers under the partner programs looking out for job opportunities for all of our participants, whether they be WIOA, Wagner-Peyser or trade, or do they tend to focus more on their specific clientele? And, or has the lack of job developers specifically for trade been part of the reason there aren't as many?

Well for John, I tend to look up the local program. My trade is disconnected from the business services. Yes. Yes. It is. Great point, fellows. Thanks. All right.

So I'm going to try to keep this discussion moving. While you're all typing on that one, I'm going to tee up the next one. So again, we talked about this and I think we can go right through this one because people have already commented on it and that is that trade does have or is perceived to have more specific requirements in place over WIOA.

And as we've already seen some states point out, that has to do with I think the six criteria that are explicit to trade for the approval of training, but then the specific language on OJTs that is in trade that is not as specific in detail than WIOA. I've long argued that trade's six criteria are really the way that all training programs should be approved throughout the workforce system and back in the day, we had a couple of states that actually went so far as to institute those criteria under dislocated worker as well to eliminate that concern. All right. I think we've discussed that one.

So the next I want to bring to your attention and this is a leveraging funding opportunity. So the WIOA reimbursement is higher, 75 percent without a waiver. Trade is limited at 50 percent. However, I want to make sure this is the did you know part that if you co-enroll the individual with WIOA, that trade can cover up to 50 percent and then WIOA can cover the difference up to that 75 percent rank.

And so this is the opportunity we want to make sure you are all aware of, that a trade participant co-enrolled in the dislocated worker program can, you can leverage the reimbursement for the employer. Obviously, they have to meet both sets of eligibility requirements and the Trade rules being the more rigorous than the two are the ones that need to be met.

All trade OJTs are WIOA OJTs by definition. The other way around is not always true. WIOA is not obligated to add the extra 25 percent is the question, but again, to me, I don't know if that's the difference between getting the OJT and not, I don't know why one wouldn't. But no. There is no obligation to.

All right. OK. All right. And we have one more, well two more. So one is age. So as we all know, trade participants are older than the civilian labor workforce by a longshot. The average trade participant I believe is now 51 years of age. We alluded to this earlier when we talked about whether or not trade participants viewed OJT as starting over. And so, the second part of that question is whether or not, because our trade participants tend to be older, whether that age is a barrier, either for them or for the employer to view them as a potential OJT.

Fascinating answer from Mandy (sp), who says typically, the older workers are the only ones we get interested in OJT. Yes. And they can leverage the OTAA. That is correct. All right. Fantastic. All right.

And last, last one here we have. And this gets to I think it was Joan (sp), Connecticut, raised this earlier. This is about informed customer choice and whether or not we're making sure that our counselors are even looking at it as an option or whether the absolute default of our programs is to move people into the more traditional classroom training and that goes with TRAA. So that's the other part of that and whether or not we're making sure that our frontline counselors are really aware of what might be out there for OJT and whether that's presented.

All right. So you can continue to provide us feedback on any one of those in particular things as additional thoughts come up, especially as we move into the state part of the presentation. So what I want to do now is transition to that. I want to welcome our New Hampshire presenters, Chris Beauvais and AJ Lambert. Chris I have known for my entire career in ETA. She started with, not started with but when I first met her, was involved in Massachusetts and is now with New Hampshire as one of our true veteran staff out there in the area of workforce development.

And I'd like to have, hand this over to Chris and AJ to get the ball rolling with a discussion of New Hampshire's OJT. I want to point out that although they'll be speaking largely from a WIOA/WIA point of view, when you see New Hampshire's numbers and you consider how small New Hampshire really is in comparison to some other states, I think you'll really get an understanding of why we asked them to present today. So off to Chris.

MR. BEAUVAIS: Thank you, Tim. Hello, everyone. I'm actually the WIOA operations consultant for the state of New Hampshire and as Tim mentioned, I've worked with JTPA, WIA and WIOA for over 25 years in both New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

But a little bit about the New Hampshire OJT history, so prior to receiving our first OJT NEG grant in 2010, New Hampshire engaged in very few OJTs, probably fewer than 10 per year. And the OJTs were generally only with companies hiring workers laid off from paper mill closures in northern New Hampshire.

But then in 2010, we received our first two OJT grants, the OJT NEG and the other OJT NEG. And then New Hampshire was only one of a few states to receive a third OJT NEG grant. We followed those with JD, Job Driven NEG and sector partnership NEGs from 2014 through 2018 and now we're doing OJTs in our newly awarded Mature Worker Grant and National Health Emergency DWG.

We utilized our capacity through the OJT grant. As you can see, we enrolled 486 NEG customers in OJTs, but we've been able to expand OJTs to our formula adult and dislocated worker populations and have been successful in initiating OJTs for TANF and ESOL (sp) customers and other partner populations. So that built capacity enabled us to enroll 680 formula folks from 2010 to the present.

A couple of other interesting things in our history is that in 2014, a number of exciting events occurred. New Hampshire's program was acknowledged by President Obama as the leading state in OJTs for performance and best practices. We were also very excited to host Vice President Biden at that time and Assistant Secretary of Labor Perez at our Nashua, New Hampshire Works American Job Center.

They addressed an audience of OJT customers and employers and commended our efforts and some of our OJT customers shared their success stories. And finally, one of our OJT customers was invited to participate in a White House panel and talked about OJT as a winning employment strategy for the long-term unemployed.

And at this time, I'll turn the presentation over to AJ Lambert to discuss some OJT benefits and outreach strategies. AJ?

AJ LAMBERT: Thank you, Chris. And also, thank you to all the participants who have dialed in to listen to this presentation today. As we saw on that first bullet, the gateway to advance your careers, you know, when the participant is determined eligible and while they're on their interview, we present a reimbursement flyer.

We hand that to the employer as an incentive for the employer to hire them through the OJT program. We also encourage our participants to inform us following an interview so that we can then call and advocate with the employer on their behalf. And we also at that point in time will use, you know, that opportunity to explain and sell the OJT program even further.

The skill gaps training now. We work with the employer to develop the outline, the training outline and this fills the skill gaps for the participant. And to earn your full salary, the participant receives an hourly wage for the duration of the program and with the commitment from the employer to retain the participant once the OJT is over. Full support is available. The participant has full support of their career navigator and the job placement specialists throughout the entire OJT process.

Due to our extensive outreach, New Hampshire has place over 1,100 participants in OJTs with approximately 540 unique companies since 2010. That's one of my most favorite bullets.

Next slide please. Finding the right candidates. We will present the eligible participants to the company. The company does the vetting and the hiring of the participants. Once that's done, our partnership begins.

50 percent wage reimbursement. An employer is eligible for up to a maximum of $5,500 of reimbursement. The minimum hourly wage is $11 per hour with a maximum of $22.63. An employer can pay a participant more than the federal maximum allowed of $22.63. However, as the state of New Hampshire, we will only reimburse 50 percent at the $22.63 rate.

The skills gaps. Not only are skill gaps being filled, but more importantly, positions, vacant positions, are being filled as well, positions that may have been staying vacant longer than they should be. In streamlining our paperwork process, we provide full support from the job placement specialist and our fiscal department if needed.

We strive for a very smooth employer experience from the training outline, contracts, invoicing and evaluation process. Due to New Hampshire's workforce shortage, we have realized an increase in our hourly wages. Our average since the beginning of this program year has been $15.54 an hour, which is an increase over the past several years.

Next slide please. Our outreach systems. Our outreach strategies are consistent with your traditional sales organizations. We continuously have email campaigns on a monthly basis, constant communication with our customers via voicemail, e-mail, social media on a regular basis, and continuous cold companies to companies we see out there in our travels.

And often times on our travels, you're listening to a radio and you'll oftentimes hear companies advertising for open positions, so we'll also use that as well. We do use social media. LinkedIn and Facebook are the two platforms that we do use and in the next slide, I will touch base upon a shared database that's used across multiple agency partners.

New Hampshire Employment Security, NHES, hosts approximately 25 job fairs on an annual basis around the entire state of New Hampshire, where we have a presence at every single one of them. Now NHES can also hold a yearly job fair specific to a certain company if they're onboarding multiple employees at one point in time.

And our network efforts, we find that networking after hours yields leads from individuals that are actually looking for work. And we find that chamber events hold potentially new customers and allows us to network with existing companies we're currently working with. Thank you.

And as far as our best practices, okay. We have a dedicated staff of OJT job developers. In the beginning, we had originally utilized employment counselors and a job placement staff with career counseling skills to initiate the OJTs, but found that they were not always as comfortable with cold calling and similar outreach methods as those with sales and marketing skills. We used sales force for our Customer Relationship Management, CRM platform, and currently we use a database called NEOSERRA to maintain and track company contacts and activities.

All of the New Hampshire Works partners' agencies, including NHES, New Hampshire Voc Rehabilitation, Department of Health and Human Services staff, share the job leads through the NEOSERRA database, increasing the number of employer contacts and ensuring that we work together, not separately, with targeted employers. As we stated earlier, we built a very strong social media presence as an outreach strategy and we've also double the amount of followers that we now have on Facebook.

It's at this point in time that I will push this back over to Chris, who will discuss additional OJT best practices and lessons learned. Chris?

CHRIS BEAUVAIS: Thanks, AJ. So another one of our best practices is the ability to enhance our WIOA case management system called eTEAMS when we need it to best capture activity and performance information. So on the local level, we pull information on OJTs specific to each OJT grant as well as formula adult and dislocated worker. We also use the eTEAMS system to identify potential OJT customers by matching their employment goals to available OJT opportunities. And then the OJT developers meet with employment counselors for the next steps.

We also developed OJT specifically for eTEAMS to track all the details of the OJTs, the contracts, the placing, training plan, etc. We also developed reports to track real time pre-exit outcomes to assist in predicting performance and success of OJTs. And we also track hiring trends by reviewing the employer base for past OJTs.

When we received our first OJT grant, we attended a U.S. DOL conference targeted to the new grants and made good use of the U.S. DOL OJT toolkit that Tim mentioned earlier with all the documents needed to get started and improve our process. Why reinvent the wheel? We provide marketing materials to customers, including the targeted letter that explains that they're eligible for an OJT and they can present that to an employer.

We also provide them with a paragraph that they can insert into a cover letter when applying for a job. This strategy may not work for every customer, but it has been an effective tool. Employers have said that this strategy has made a difference when interviewing an individual with a good work ethic whom they would have like to have hired, but who might be lacking many of the necessary skills.

Now, I'd like to move on to some lessons learned and challenges and first and foremost, not surprisingly, the paperwork process can be cumbersome for employers. In particular, the submission of timesheets and payroll records seems to be the most difficult. At most of our OJTs, the employers are small businesses.

They do not always have the infrastructure in place to handle the invoicing process, so invoices and timesheets are often incorrect. Also, employers are required to submit evaluations of participants in the progress of an OJT. Unfortunately, this would not have always occurred with regularity.

So some best practices initiated to counter the challenges were to assist the employers with some of these cumbersome tasks. We streamlined the paperwork process as much as possible, including providing the employer with a sample invoice.

Our OJT staff and internal accounting staff provides support and training to the company's billing personnel on completion of the billing and invoicing and we do that at the OJT signing on an ongoing basis. We stress that employers must submit timely invoices on a monthly basis and from early on in the OJT grants, we have required that the evaluation be submitted with the monthly invoice to ensure that payments are not made without the evaluation submission.

Next slide please. And some additional lessons learned and challenges, site visits. Site visits are another requirement for OJTs and our OJT staff perform the site visits and meet with both employers and customers approximately one month into the OJT. Employers are busy and scheduling the site visit after the fact is often difficult, so as much as possible, the OJT developer schedules the site visit at the time of the OJT signing. We have also updated the site visit form for ease in use based on experience and we group the site visits geographically to minimize multiple trips throughout the state.

And some lessons learned on internal operations. So the internal controls and payment, we know it can be difficult on an operational level. We refined the process over time with the input of all staff involved from the initiation of the OJT through those involved with the payment process. OJT developers reach out personally to employers who are late in their invoice submission. They're the ones with the personal connection with the OJT employer.

And also, to ensure that we receive all formula OJT invoices for program year closeout, we ensure that no OJT end days are no later than May 31st. For NEG and DWG grants, we ensure that the OJT end dates are no later than one month prior to the grant ending. This was the real lesson learned for us.

Next slide please. I put together some recent performance data for the past five years showing the difference in performance for enrolled individuals, all enrolled individuals versus those who engaged in OJTs. Performance is showing the employment rate for both the second quarter after exit and the fourth quarter after exit. The data is also presented by formula adult, formula dislocated worker and NEG DWG.

In nearly every stage, except for one actually, dislocated worker second quarter after exit, the employment rates for those receiving OJT exceed those receiving career services or ITA only. And in that one case the difference is minimal. We planned a 90 percent entered employment rate for all of our OJT NEG grants and this goal was exceeded over the five-year period. OJTs have also been a very successful strategy for our formula adult population.

We partner with TANF employment programs to enroll TANF customers in OJTs. We also work with local community organizations and employers who initiate both individual and group OJTs with ESOL customers.

And the next slide shows a quote from one of our OJT employers and this employer, as with many of our employers, finds the OJT process to be so successful that they do repeat with us and bring on many more people for OJTs in that company.

So that concludes New Hampshire's presentation. Feel free to contact us if you'd like additional information. And now, I'll turn it back to Tim for the Q&A session. Thank you.

MR. THEBERGE: Thank you so much, Chris and AJ. So are there any specific questions? The discussion in the chat box has been fantastic throughout. Are there any specific questions for New Hampshire that we can share their way? If so, please enter those now. As we see them, we will pull them out and put them in our questions box for our presenters and, but to not take up too much time while we're waiting for you all to ask those, please feel free to put them in there as we go along.

I'm going to move along to Georgia and to Renola Wicks, who actually is back out of retirement like many people in our system these days who, after spending years working in the Trade program, is back again to assist Georgia in deploying and developing their program further. So without further ado, Renola Wicks with the Georgia Department of Labor.

Renola Wicks: Good afternoon, everyone. Hello. Greetings from Georgia. I'm the business analyst with the Georgia trade program and we'd like to thank you for being with us so that we can share two OJT experiences that demonstrate that an OJT can either be as small as one participant, one employer or it can be a partnership with our WIOA partners.

Next slide please. OK. Next slide. So our first example is the Trade-impacted Georgia company that specialized in the production of uniforms. OJT was introduced at one of our information sessions where one worker showed a particular interest in OJT.

So we scheduled a follow-up appointment with this impacted worker and at that meeting, we conducted a preliminary assessment to get a profile to help us in matching her with a qualified OJT employer. Because the worker was so motivated to upgrade her skills and get back to work, she made a practice of including information about OJT in her job search activity. And this is something that was mentioned earlier by New Hampshire and it's also something that Georgia trade recommends to the participants.

The next slide is some insight into our interaction with the employer in this case. So we learned from the worker that one employer she'd spoken with had shown an interest in OJT, so TAA met with the employee, who already had a job description for a position they were planning to advertise, which meant that TAA had less work to do in terms of job development.

We gave a more thorough overview of the Trade OJT requirements, highlighting the benefits to the employer and ensuring the employer that we would simplify the process as much as possible and make it as seamless as possible. We talked about award criteria. We answered their questions.

We even shared some of our templates and forms that we thought could be useful to the employer in doing things like developing their training plans and conducting their skills assessments and so forth. We also designated a case manager to work with the employer throughout the process and we got an opportunity to tour the worksite while we were there.

The employer was very interested and wanted to start the pre-award process that day, but back at the office we reviewed the pre-award analysis that they had completed and it was determined that employer was eligible or met the eligibility criteria to participate in an OJT.

We scheduled a time for the worker to meet with the employer and during that meeting with the worker, the employer actually used some of the forms that TAA had given them to help them with the process of outlining the skills that they were going to require, identify gaps and what the participant already knew versus what they would need to learn. Also, a tool that we had to help them estimate the hours for the worker to become proficient. And there was a subsequent meeting in which we finished up the contract agreement with the employer.

On this slide that we're on, let's see. Where are we? So next slide. The TAA provided case management. We conducted three interim reviews with the trainee supervisor to assess the trainee's progress toward completion and this particular OJT was about 36 weeks in length. So we did an assessment fairly early on, one toward the middle and then toward the end.

We processed the monthly invoices to reimburse the employer the 50 percent. The purpose of the post-OJT closeout conference that we held with the employer was to get feedback from the employer to see how the process had gone, whether or not they had any suggestions for improvement and to talk with them about potential future OJTs.

On the next slide is a summary of the results of this OJT. The participant completed the OJT and is still employed with that company today. Her average pay increased by $3 per hour due to the new skills that she'd obtained during the training and the participant later shared that she would be in line for a raise within six months after the OJT concluded if she continued to form as well as she had.

This next slide introduces the OJT partnership that TAA formed with one of our WIOA partners. So this one involved a Georgia company that specialized in the production of rail transportation and products and services that was certified trade. And the impacted workers had worked there with the Trade-affected employer for one to five years prior to being laid off. They were performing entry level-type welding jobs at an average wage rate of about $15 an hour.

Next slide. As part of the workforce area partnership, a group of participants was assessed and 10 were determined to be good candidates for OJT. Of course, the participants were co-enrolled in WIOA and trade services. The next slide. The 10 workers received their hands-on training at the employer site as well as the classroom training component at a local technical college. The total training on this one was 16 weeks.

Next. WIOA provided case management in this case. They engaged with the employer to assess trainee progress towards completion and to assure that there were no unresolved issues with the employer. WIOA also lead the post-training follow-up process to finalize employer reimbursement and close out the agreement.

Next. TAA reviewed participant applications and determined if they met the criteria and issued determinations to the trainees and we monitored the process along the way to ensure adherence to TAA OJT requirements. We also funded the classroom portion of the training including travel costs, tools and the certification testing, and we offered a stackable gas welding certification on top of the pipe welding certification that they started with to increase the trainee's skills and marketability.

And the last slide on our presentation is a summary of the results of this particular partnership with, between TAA and WIOA. So all participants completed the OJT and successfully passed the certification test. All 10 participants successfully, excuse me. They all passed the certification test.

All have completed, have continued employment utilizing the gas and pipe welding skills that they acquired during their OJT. And while the workers earned an average of $15 an hour at the Trade-impacted company, their pay has increased substantially to an average of $25 to $27 an hour due to the new skills that they obtained through the OJT.

We've seen a great deal of work done by other states with their OJTs and we fully intend to leverage some of the work that we've seen and some of the ideas that we got just from listening to the New Hampshire presentation today. So we thank you for being with us and I'll now hand it back to Tim for the Q&A.

MR. THEBERGE: Thank you so much. All right. So again, if there are specific questions for Georgia, you can enter those into the chat. We do have two questions for New Hampshire, so Chris or AJ, if you could try to chime in on these. One is how do you engage with the Trade team in New Hampshire and then the second was how OJTs have been accepted in the rural areas of the state.

MR. BEAUVAIS: OK. I'll take that first one, Tim. So in New Hampshire, we, our programs are operated by different agencies. The trade program is operated by the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security, a state agency.

And the WIOA program, we have the operator at Southern New Hampshire Services, which is a private non-profit. But that said, we really do work together collaboratively with all of our partners and there really, currently, there really are not many trade act approved companies. I saw Jerry Jules' (sp) name as one of the participants today.

I did check with the WIP folks to see if that was still the case and, but when we do have trade act companies out there. I know that trade act program has more parts for the OJT than we can use, but we would certainly partner and have, I know there's comments around co-enrollment. We've co-enrolled, especially in our large plant closings, where we have where the company was certified for trade, co-enrolled just about every individual in our WIA and now WIOA programs.

And what we certainly could do is if the individual had received their training through TAA and then still needed an OJT, we could partner with and co-enroll that individual and provide the OJT. And we did partner very closely in some of our rural north country areas and some of the mill closures that we had up north to co-enroll and work closely with the TAA team.

And the second question, so I could take a stab at it and maybe AJ could follow along. But the, actually, up in our north country as we call it, northern New Hampshire is our most rural of areas and that's actually where most of the earlier OJTs had taken place prior to 2010 and there's so many of them up there with some companies that are tried and true companies that really like the OJT program and have found it very effective. AJ, do you have anything to add?

MR. LAMBERT: Yeah. I do, Chris, and thank you. The majority of New Hampshire is considered rural except for our larger, few larger cities. And typically, in your rural areas are some of your medium to smaller sized companies and they're the ones that embrace an OJT with open arms because again, they're companies of 50 employees and down and getting a wage reimbursement during training, even maxing out at $5,500, helps tremendously.

And we've helped out quite a few small companies with, again 50 and below employees, and they're very, very happy and they've actually come to some of our workforce investment board meetings and have spoken on behalf of the success of the program for their companies.

MR. THEBERGE: Great. Thanks. All right. So for a quick recap of the state presentations, these are sort of the takeaways I want to leave you with. Again, there has been some great discussion on the chat. We're going to build off all of that for future TA and likely some webinars.

The first is that when states and locals are looking to hire your business services people, I think there sort of needs to be a shift and we've seen this. New Hampshire's done this and we saw this in Brooklyn, New York.

We've seen this in some other places, not as widespread as others. Massachusetts did this to some extent with their rapid response folks, but that's looking at when you're looking for who to hire into those positions, really what you're looking for are people who have sales and marketing background more so than a human services skill set.

The human services skill set is still needed in our system, but potentially it's not the best for the folks that are going to be reaching out to the employer community to the businesses. That's really where people that have that sales or marketing background may actually land you with some better results.

The second and I can't stress this enough is the use of a strong social media and other presence, a digital footprint if you will. There are some states and locals that do this really well. There are others that don't and remember that this also includes things like LinkedIn. Sometimes that one is often left out of this world instead of the Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and others. As you look at those, keep in mind that the demographics of those users is different by age, sometimes by geography but more about which age cohorts. So keep that in mind as you think about that one.

You will always hear from me that partnering is a value. Your comments have reflected the challenges that have continued to go along. With that, let's see. The infamous one-stop model was, I don't want to say put an end to that, but that was always the intent of the development of way back in the day, the private industry counsels.

These local boards are tasked with being the preeminent policy makers in a local area and are really charged with trying to bring together the entire system and that does include all of the programs, all of the business services. In regards to program, it's supposed to roll up to the board. And the ability to leverage the resources that each program can bring to the table is really where you're going to get the greatest success for our participants and for the businesses.

And with that, you should always view our services as a service to employers. So you heard Jane Oakes used to like to talk about I believe the dual customer and we've talked about job seekers as the primary customer. So it usually gets me in trouble. This is usually when the disclaimer comes in that says the opinions of Tim are not representing those of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Employment and Training Administration in entirety.

But this is where I encourage you to really look at employers and businesses as the primary customer of our system because if you can't meet their needs, if you can't find a way to make the system work for them, it almost doesn't matter how great of a job you do serving our job seekers if you're not going to meet the needs of the businesses where they are. And that is a I think we're getting there.

I think you're see a lot of the stuff about customer-centered design that we've also been pushing lately and I'm not here to tell you that's wrong by any stretch. I think that matters too for how we interact with our job seekers.

But I think the other part of that, that really is key and that I would really all challenge you to look at is how are we serving those employers? Do they see us as a service? Do they see us as a hindrance? If it's the latter, I think we really owe it to our job seekers to make sure we're not getting in the way but trying to figure out how to make that work.

All right. So with that, again, please keep your questions coming. I'm going to turn this back over to Susan Worden.

MS. WORDEN: Thanks, Tim. OK. And as we get ready to wind this down, I just want to remind folks of the fact that as Joe reference at the beginning of the presentation, we have some materials that is available for downloading. I'm just going to flash a couple of the examples just to kind of whet your appetite to make sure that you do take advantage of these resources that have been provided by New Hampshire and Georgia and Missouri.

First, we're going to look at a brochure from New Hampshire. Oh. Sorry.

MR. THEBERGE: Oh yeah. Sorry. I apologize. I was like oh, the next slide. Yes.

MS. WORDEN: OK. Good. So we've got some highly appealing graphic brochures that New Hampshire has assured us they've spent plenty of money on, so feel free to steal from them in terms of ideas. This is an outreach brochure from employers. Also, I'm just going to put a quick spotlight on a state that did not present today, the state of Missouri. We have it queued up to share. There we go. That has been very successful in driving OJTs in Missouri but is used as an outreach tool with employers.

Additional material is available but deals with contracts and additional paperwork requirements that are obviously an integral part of the OJT process. Just want to encourage folks to make use of that. Additional materials may be made available once we post the recording and additional and other materials as we are still processing some of the additional materials that were shared, so more may be available than what we're sharing today in the available downloads. OK.

Next. Nope. Back. Yeah. So okay. Not going to say a lot about this except to say that we have statutory, regulatory and guidance citations on what governs OJT for the TAA program for your later reference.

Next slide. And for resources, first I just want to reiterate the availability of the OJT toolkit. Many states have told us that this is a foundational resource in developing successful OJTs in their states. So please, if you're not already familiar with it or you haven't looked at it lately, please do so.

Next, the state of Oregon delivered a best practice webinar in conjunction with OJT TAA talking about how they leveraged their case management funds to hire dedicated staff to perform a variety of outreach functions that benefit the TAA program. This includes networking with employers for petition filing, but also for the benefit of identifying OJTs.

And I should emphasize that this is done in coordination with the WIOA side of the house. It's not necessarily designed to replace WIOA, but lots of great information on how they're partnering with WIOA. But again, leveraging those case management funds practically for that employer engagement and we know many if now most of our states have underleveraged financial resources that come from trade funds.

Also available is an apprenticeship FAQ that our TAA put together in conjunction with the office of apprenticeship. This provides a list of benefits and services specific to the TAA program that coordinate well with apprenticeship as well as scenarios of how TAA and apprenticeship can work well together. And obviously, a lot of this material could be leveraged practically for understanding how OJTs could be used, especially when talking about how classroom training could combine with employer-based training such as OJT.

OK. And if we don't have any more questions, it looks like we don't. I just want to remind states of a couple of save the dates we had already mentioned in our last webinar. In our efforts to improve outcomes, we are planning on launching a community of practice through WorkforceGPS, currently slated for late May. Really excited about that. We may be reaching out to some of you in states who have good best practices for blogs and discussion topics because we want to hit the ground running with lots of great ideas and participation.

In addition, we are currently planning to host a reserve request webinar to give information on that topic area for the TAA program. Again, we're looking at late spring, 2019, probably May.

OK. And just to recap all of the contact information for the different presenters today, information for myself and Tim Theberge, who did such wonderful facilitation on OJT. In addition, we have our state presenters from New Hampshire and Georgia. And with that, I'll hand it over to you, Jon.

MR. VEHLOW: All right. Thank you, Susan.

(END)