**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Applying Lean Strategies to Case Management**

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GRACE MCCALL: And welcome to "Applying Lean Strategies to Case Management." So without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Amanda Poirier, Regional TAA and TRA lead, U.S. Department of Labor, ETA, Region 1. Amanda?

AMANDA POIRIER: Hi, everybody. Thanks, Grace. So hi, everyone. I'm Amanda Poirier, and I work in the Boston regional office. And I'm the TRA lead, just as Grace expressed. And I am excited to be a moderator today.

So in an effort to share state best practices around ways to leverage case management partners, today we want to share stories from two states that have employed lean strategies to improve operations in the TRA program. The objectives of today are to provide an overview of what lean is, the federal perspective – which I'll touch upon in a moment –- and share best practices and learning from Rhode Island and Arizona's experience applying new concepts in the TRA program.

So I want to speak to for a second, as well, the poll that was up. And if, Grace, you want to put the poll back on the screen, it looks like based on the feedback that eliminating paper files, identifying roadblocks in case management, and increasing the number of participants are kind of the big priority areas.

Although, it does seem like all the different sections and needs that were identified in this poll are all relevant for everybody else in the audience, which is great because that's exactly what we're going to talk about today. We're going to talk about a lot of these different areas and how Arizona and Rhode Island were able to use Lean to resolve a lot of these.

So what exactly is Lean? We'll go to the next slide. Thank you. Lean in its purest sense, is a methodology that aims to organize human activities to deliver more value while eliminating waste.

While using highly visual techniques, Lean allows the teams to look at everything that forms a part of their current work flow in a manner that makes redundancies, bottlenecks, and waste more obvious. In turn, it allows for group brainstorming in ways to resolve problem areas which in combination with an evidence-based approach, builds consensus and supports implementing solutions successfully.

Because it is a highly structured approach, teams that apply Lean in the office feel supported in working through a problem that might otherwise feel overwhelming or intimidating. It also provides a framework for ongoing review during continuous improvement processes. So next we're going to talk a little bit about Bend the Curve in Maine. So when we started planning this webinar, we wanted to explore some questions about Lean in its application in government. For example, at the most basic level, can Lean be applied to government?

In government and particularly in our business of workforce development, we are not exactly production focused. We don't make widgets. Our priority is customer service. And we learned through research and conversations with Maine, Rhode Island, and Arizona that Lean is much broader than analyzing manufacturing processes, which we found interesting and noteworthy and wanted to share with you all today. So again, it started with Maine DOL, but it was a – it's now a statewide effort. And one of the myths that we found is that it's not just a practice that's applied – I'm sorry. It's a practice that can be beyond government, which is – well, within government, which is great.

So with that, I'd like to take a moment to talk about Bend the Curve, a lean concept and practice in Maine. It started in 2003, and it's continued until present. The reason that the strategy was developed was due to flat funding at Maine DOL, which equated to funding lost over the course of a decade-plus perceived waste in government and the lack of staff replacement despite turnover.

The goal of the model was to continue to provide customer service, quality customer service despite these barriers. In order to reach this goal, Maine DOL understood that it needed to find ways to create efficiencies and improve collaboration between programs and partner organizations and change the way that work gets done.

The effort was started at Maine DOL, and like I expressed earlier, it's now government-wide, because for Maine it wasn't just a one-time event. It was a change of mindset around how program operations can be more efficient to improve services for customers. This experience in Maine we believe set some context for today's webinar, which is that there are ways to improve operations of how we serve customers. Lean is one way to strategize solutions for operational challenges that might impede speed or delivery of services to TRA customers. And it's worth sharing how it might impact the full participants' services to customers and staff morale.

So before I turn it over to Scott in Rhode Island, I'd like to check in, open up the chat window to say, to beg the question of whether or not there are strategies that you've used out in the audience that are Lean or Lean like. And if so, if you could please describe in the chat, that'd be great. Is anyone out there?

If not, that's OK. I think that there were a couple of states in my region, I thought, that might have done a Lean event. It might not necessarily have been in the TRA program, but they had that experience. And it had produced some interest or results whether it was through reducing paper files or different types of the experiences that might have helped improve some of the case management.

OK. I think I see someone typing. OK. Just give it a second. OK. Well, if not, that's totally fine. That's why we are here today, to talk about what the experiences were in Rhode Island and in Arizona. So now I'd like to take a moment to turn it over to our first presenter today, Scott Greco in Rhode Island, who is the Chief of Labor and Training Operations. And one of the programs that he oversees is TRA, he's going to talk about Rhode Island's experience employing Lean concepts to case management processes in the TRA program. And thanks, Scott.

SCOTT GRECO: Hey, thank you, Amanda. Welcome, everybody. I just want to say the Rhode Island process actually started opposite to me. In Rhode Island, we had a statewide effort led by our Governor Gina Raimondo to try to Lean our state government and many of our state agencies. We also did the Lean process through the help of a consulting company called Exceedia, which guided us through the process. It was nice to have a nonpartial person in the room to help us work out a lot of issues that we had with staff.

In addition to the trade unit, I oversee, most of the programs that are in the One Stop that's – I see Wagner-Peyser, RESEA, SCSEP Program, TANFF, and some WIOA. And I'll explain why that's important as we go through the slide.

What is Lean? Lean primarily is a business methodology that promotes the flow of value to customer through two guiding tenets – it's continuous improvement and it's respect for people. It's a philosophy and a discipline at its core. And it increases access to information to ensure the responsible decision making in the service of creating customer value. It's really strategic and proactive. The five main principles of Lean are defined value, map value stream, create flow, establish pull in the pursuit of perfection. By defining value, you're going to define what your processes are, your tools are, and what your forms are. By mapping the value, you map out the value of each process, which creates a flow.

Establishing pull means we're going to determine what the actual value add of the services. And then of course, the pursuit of perfection is just for continuous improvement. Now, the presentation that you're seeing was actually a first presentation to a lot of people that were not in the TAA world. So a lot of this may be redundant to you.

But primarily, it's an entitlement program of workers that have lost or may lose their job as a result of foreign trade. It provides adversely affected workers the opportunity to obtain the skills, credentials, resource, and supports necessary to become reemployed. TAA staff that we have are extremely dedicated and provide excellent customer service.

And what we see is that trade customers actually become friends for life with their counselors. So the main reason for the Lean event wasn't so much that we thought we were doing a bad job. We wanted to take what we were doing and do a much better job. We're trying to break away from the folklore to the fact to what legacy decision we had made in the past. As you all know, there's primarily four different paths to trade.

We have job counseling to enter employment, job counseling to remedial education or ESOL, job counseling to occupational training, or to the wage subsidy, RTAA, or many different variations or actually the path could lead to all four ways for the Trade Program. This is a team that we had. There's myself on the left.

The team combined both front line staff and coordinated that ran the program. So we really got a hands-on approach to the Lean process. Summary is the Trade Program is run by the workforce development services unit of the round Department of Labor and training.

And what we found is through our Lean process was that it currently suffered from an inefficient work flow process that I'm sure a lot of everyone can relate to. It limited the effectiveness of the program. The staff is frustrated with administrative challenges. It contains redundant steps, produces too much paperwork, excessively large files. Some of our files were actually 3 to 6 inches thick.

They have sometimes unnecessarily complex processes. And it also creates a very difficult tracking system. So the goals and objectives that we started off with – and I'm sure a lot of you can understand the first one – was to eliminate paper files. So our goal was to establish an electronic filing system. The second objective was to eliminate redundant processes. So what we're in the process of doing right now is streamlining both our counseling process and developing standard operating procedures. Because government is so form-heavy, we decided to evaluate every one of our forms and all of our documents. And the goal would be to eliminate and/or redesign some of the forms that we used.

And the other objective is to capture all trade customers, meaning increase our amount of trade certifications and the customers that are affected by them, and by that, by training both our UI and workforce development staff to identify better adversely affected workers and the companies that we work for. This is our current state – primarily frustration.

Now, what you're looking at right now is what we call a current state map. And in the Lean process, which actually took five full days, seven hours a day, locked in a room. We didn't even give them water. But what we did was we actually mapped out every step of the way.

So what you see in the horizontal top is the actual process flow of what each step was, starting at as soon as you walk in the front door to ending at entered employment. The vertical lines list the steps in each process.

And you'll see three different colors. You'll see red, yellow, and green little sticky notes. Green, obviously, is a go. It's a good process. Yellow is one of those proceed with cautions that we have to look at and decide what the value add is. And the red was had either limited or zero value. So in current state, there were four, five key points or more that we actually realized. First, we realized that we had to improve our first contact for customer notification.

Secondly, is that the TAA counseling appointments, though not bad, were inconsistent between counselors and offices. We also determined that we needed a better occupational and transferable skill assessment to determine what the customer's true needs are instead of just putting them into the old CNA and truck drivers that we've been doing for 100 years.

We also realized that the paper files had to be eliminated, because if we had to go look for a certain form it would take us two hours to go through one single packet to find the form that we needed. And also, we had to realize that the approval process for customer training by management needed to be created and streamlined because now we're going into a new electronic file process.

We also realized that a lot of the TAA forms are outdated and needed elimination, consolidation, or redesigned. Some are redundant. I'll give you a couple of examples. One is a form that we used to refer people to either ESOL or remedial training. And we had two separate forms for that, so we decided that one moved to eliminate a form would be to combine the form because primarily it was going to the same vendors.

We used to have a form called a TRA 16, which is initial notification from UI to our job counselors to determine what their weeks are and what their duration is. And we decided to do is to have the customer be part of that and sign off so they're fully aware of exactly what the limitations and durations of the Trade Program are.

We also realized that customers' TRA UI payments are sometimes inconsistent or late. The final two I'm sure everyone can understand, is that the difficult obtaining the credentials by vendors and customers, and also the difficulty to engage customers after the attainment of the credentials to work with them on job development.

So the process changes that we started to make was that we first created a welcome email that went out to all Trade-eligible adversely affected workers. And what it did was it actually set up the first appointment. And we told them exactly what the process was going to entail and what documents were needed to proceed.

We also decided that we needed to set up standard operating procedures for all TAA appointments and counseling sessions, to identify and implement the new career interest and aptitude assessment tool, create the electronic filing system, and then again, streamline the management approval process for customer training.

In addition – and this is a little bit redundant, but this is how the Lean process works, is that we have to go through – we establish what we need to do and then we have to make the presentation to what we actually have to do before we start implementing. So the redesign consolidation eliminate of TAA forms is a goal. We also had a proposal to make our TAA counselors have the ability to actually make UI payments. Unfortunately, based on certain situations, we were unable to achieve that. We're also going to do an addendum to TAA vendor contracts to make it a performance-based contract.

So that was primarily to receive the credential that they would not get the last payment until the credential was actually received by us. And then also – which is the most difficult one – we're still trying to hammer this one out – is how to develop an incentive for customers to return for job search assistance and job placement. And here we are at future state. This is what the future state map looked like at the very end of our one-week trade conference or trade Lean process. And as you see, there are very few reds. And now the process is much more streamlined.

So each step along the way has a deliberate and distinct process to what has to be done. Even with this map right here, there's a lot of work that has to be done because you'll see in the next couple of slides, we develop what we call gaps. And gaps are processes and items that have to be implemented in order to meet our final product, which we're hoping to have achieved by July 1. At the bottom, you see a lot of the forms that we decided to keep. And those are some of the forms that we're going to be reevaluating and redesigning.

So let's talk about closing the gaps. Some of our 30-days gaps was to develop better Rapid Response information from workers still employed after the certification date, redesigning our TRA 16, developing the welcome email, developing communication process for our staff, a lot of stuff that I've already gone over.

So I can say at the end of our first 30 days, we were very successful to get most of our processes completed. We're still in the process of closing the gaps for our 60-day goals, which is revising a lot of the forms, actually setting the training for the UI and WDS staff. We eliminated the (paper vision ?) of trade. We figured that we would take people at their word as to whether or not they had a high school diploma or not.

And then we're also reincorporating credential requirements into vendor contracts. And right now currently, we had three checked off at the time of this presentation. We're currently at seven checked off. We're three check marks away from being complete for our 60 days. The 90-day gaps are a little bit more difficult.

We're deciding to redesign our TRA website. All TRA forms whether they're redesigned or keeping the original ones, they're now going to become PDF version or Excel version that'll have potential to have equations work in the forms. We're in the process of creating our standard case note templates and also trying to develop a better tracking method for our odd TAA payments.

In with this, we have what we call SWISS forms. And a SWISS form in its easiest way to describe it is that each SWISS form is a step-by-step process for each individual process or act that we do during the program. So an example would be getting a customer into training. Step one would be to do the assessment. Step two would be to do an evaluation, have the customer next investigate and follow the six criteria. And it would take everything down step by step from very start to very finish of what each process would be.

Now, the hard benefits are what we call the benefits that actually apply, that actually have a direct response to each of our problems. So the elimination of the paper files, having a consistent case management process, the better ability to determine customer needs, increasing the number of trade customers by educating staff and companies, and then streamlining our customer and program forms. The soft benefits are the staff has a much better morale, they're motivation has become increasing because they've actually been involved in each step by step to try to make their jobs easier and better, and to give better customer service, which increases our customer satisfaction.

But it also increases our communication between staff and managers because it allows an open-door process to be able to discuss any issue that trade has, where we find the difficulty now. And that's that continuous improvement. So even though we've reached certain steps or we think that we've solved the problem, as you know, sometimes other problems become apparent once you fix one problem. And it's caused a lot less stress with our staff also. The areas of opportunity is – and this is how it helps me is because it is allowed to share best practice with my other program coordinators to create consistent counseling methods.

And what we're doing with our Trade Program is that we're actually taking some of the things that we had in trade and turning it over to both our Wagner-Peyser counseling, our RESEA counseling in almost every program that we do, because primarily everything that we do is something that's going to lead to people getting better jobs. And each program that we have, we all have our same counseling steps, so we're trying to integrate all these programs to make each of those programs work a little bit better. It's formalizing our standard work product. And it's also educating all staff about the program and all other programs.

So finally, our lessons learned are that the team approach is a valuable tool. We found out that our program, as much as we needed to change some items, actually had an excellent value to our customer. Our staff we found out is extremely knowledgeable and dedicated. And there's also room for improvement. So thank you, everybody. And I'm going to turn it over to Amanda at this point.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Scott. So I'd like to take one moment to say thank you, Lori [ph], for sharing that you all scan documents electronically to make an electronic case file versus having a paper one, which just is one of the needs that was identified in the beginning poll. And then also, a question for you, Scott, from Molly – what data case management system does Rhode Island use?

MR. GRECO: We use GSO.

MS. POIRIER: And a question from Alexa – in regards to process change in developing occupational assessment, how did this impact the relationship with WIOA Title I partners? And I believe she's referring to the two.

MR. GRECO: What happened was is that I also oversee all of the Title I programs for most of the portion of our state. And even with that, we realized that the TABE process really wasn't an effective process. When I first took over the program and realized the cost of TABE and realized that we really – how can I put this – we're questioning our customers as to what the educational value was. And the reason I'm saying that is because we used to have to TABE everybody that had under a bachelor's degree. So we were tabing people that already stated they had a high school diploma. We were tabing people that already had an associate's degree.

So when I polled all of our vendors to ask them exactly what their needs were for TABE, we found out that the only reason our vendors needed the TABE scores was because we were asking for it, because each of our vendors for the ETPO was actually doing their own assessments. So at that point, we eliminated the TABE for customers that did not need to have a placement into remedial education. Rhode Island also now has actually eliminated TABE all together, and we're actually going with a CASAS system to determine needs for remedial and ESOL education.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Scott. So I think that's it for questions. And, Julie, thank you for answering. Yes. It's a Test for Adult Basic Education. That's the acronym for TABE. And it's one of the assessments that's used usually throughout the system I typically have seen. TABE testing is one of the big ones.

So we'll move on next to Susan Standen – thank you, Scott, again – who presented in our case management webinar in Arizona's Lean event and how they continue to use Lean to develop new strategies to improve trade operations. Susan is a Trade Coordinator in Arizona. And previously she was a Counselor. And today Susan will discuss the benefits of applying Lean to the Trade Program and how it's impacted Arizona's operations and staff relationships. So thank you, Susan.

SUSAN STANDEN: Thank you, Amanda. Welcome, everybody. As ongoing process improvement, the State of Arizona has been incorporating Lean principles across all agencies and programs. For the TAA program, we are examining how to incorporate the practice in the various aspects of everyday job functions. Today I'll discuss various Lean management components and how we have incorporated them into our case management system.

Lean involves everyone at all levels working toward continuous improvement, removing waste, reducing issues, and improving customer value. These are three Lean management components and some of the associated Lean techniques that we have incorporated into our case management business practices. I will be reviewing each of these techniques. The first Lean concept that we will examine is standard work. Standard work is a set of activities that represents a current least-waste method of planning and controlling normal business processes. Standard works offers step-by-step instructions necessary for counselors to complete a task. They establish consistency across the state.

In the absence of a counselor, they allow another staff person to assist with various program functions by following the standard works. All standard works are saved to a shared drive to be accessible to all TAA staff whenever needed. During one-on-one weekly sessions between our TAA supervisor and counselors, it was brought to her attention for certain processes there was confusion as to who did what and when or what was required for certain TAA functions.

During these sessions, our TAA user guide was reviewed and found to be too general in some areas. Our user guide is updated annually. But in the meantime, we need staff to be able to access guidance and instructions to do their job. Here's an example of a standard work that we currently have in place. Since going to electronic case files a year ago, we've had to revisited many of our practices to support document uploads in our TAA system. We need to ensure when a document is uploaded that supporting documentation is also uploaded with the document.

Training plan changes that involve additional costs – either training or costs or TRA costs – have to be approved by upper level staff in order to serve as a checks and balances for tracking expenditures. We found that there was no consistency on when the TAA counselors were uploading changing requests as some were uploading the change requests as soon as they completed the forms and then later uploading the upper level decision as a separate document. And this caused confusion for file audits. Since our TAA user guide has not yet been updated to include managing our electronic case files, we determined we needed a standard work so all staff are on the same page.

No one knew exactly when and what should be uploaded. So after conducting a problem-solving exercise, we all came to the consensus that it made the most sense to wait until an approval or denial email was issued to the counselor who could then upload the change request along with the approval or denial as one document. We wanted to avoid the back-and-forth and multiple printing of the form, signatures, and then scanning and emailing the form to the appropriate designee. And here's a testimony for standard work from one of our TAA counselors. And this is just one more from a relatively new counselor.

The next Lean component we're going to look at is visual management and specifically visual process adherence. Visual process adherence allows teams to see if each key step in the work process is being followed by considering relevant metrics associated with the steps. Such metrics may include lead time – so the time it takes to complete a job function from start to finish – touch time – the actual time spent on a task – and pacing to the participant's demand. We can determine adherence through observations of the actual work being done, scorecards, and flow boards for just a few examples.

Gemba is a Japanese term that means "the real place." it is a place where the real work happens. The Gemba walk is an essential part of Lean Management philosophy. Its purpose is to allow supervisors and managers to observe the actual work processes and explore opportunities for continuous improvement. The supervisor is not there to evaluate an employee's performance. Rather, they are there to collaborate with the team and find problems together. They should try to focus on finding weak spots in the process, not of the people. The three essential practices include observing, listening, and recording.

By having all of the facts available, you can then use problem-solving techniques to examine any issues and determine if there's a better way, a least-waste way to complete a process. A prepared checklist allows for the supervisors to engage with staff.

Staff understands we are there to assist in making their work flow easier with less wasted time, energy, and resources. Through observation, we're identifying potential roadblocks to effectively serve our TAA participants or staff for bringing roadblocks to our attention. The observations and listening techniques lead to conducting problem solving, which in turn allows for analysis of the issue, what is the potential root cause, and how might it be addressed?

During a Gemba walk, the TAA supervisor observes staff having to walk a distance to a scanner that was also used for printing and copying and was shared by all of the partners located in a job center. The TAA counselors also voice the frustrations with the location of the scanners and the issue that many times when they arrive to scan something it is not available due to staff printing or copying large quantities of documents. As a result of the observation and concern voiced by our counselors, a problem-solving exercise revealed that for another state agency who had transferred to electronic files months earlier prior to the TAA program, the staff were provided with individual desk scanners.

We submitted a request to our administration with supporting documentation justifying the need. TAA staff now will have their own desk scanners available whenever the need arises. Staff are able stay on task completing document uploads timely. And then this is just another testimony from our TAA counselor supervisor.

Basically, our staff are located in different offices all over the state. And so the supervisor likes to get out, get to the individual offices. And then she really sees what's going on, sees if there's things that could be done more easily, if there's processes that we can change. So she just appreciates the communication she gets through doing the Gemba walks and seeing how the staff are doing.

What you measure is what you get. The organization's measurement system strongly affects the behavior of managers and employees. The most fundamental reason to measure an activity is to improve it. We use metrics to see where we started and where are we now. Metrics allow us to establish targets and determine areas to focus on.

We have metrics that counselors report each week, and then there are monthly metrics that I report up to our administrative level. Almost a year ago, we incorporated a TAA scorecard that the counselors would repeat their weekly activity on. The scorecard is located in a TAA folder in a shared drive so it is accessible by all relevant staff.

Through this scorecard, we are able to determine a potential issue with a number of individuals – in job search status, for example – who are not transferring to other activities. And we are worried that some individuals were possibly not getting the level of guidance and engagement from our counselors that they were due.

Based on this information, we were able to incorporate some Lean techniques to assist the counselors in developing stronger case management practices to more easily track the status of each individual on their caseloads, and ensure all deadlines, monthly updates, and benchmark reviews were being conducted timely.

It also allows us to monitor caseloads statewide and highlight the successes of our customers, such as job placement and successful training completion, just to name a few. Other takeaways from the scorecard include we noticed a decline in individuals experiencing successful training completions. We can examine why this is happening. Do we need to revisit how benchmark reviews are working? Another area we started recently tracking is the number of actual active case-active TAA participants versus those who are still showing as active in our case management system, but have become employed and no longer needing services – those pending exit.

One last benefit of the scorecard is we track the number of newly eligible individuals versus the number of new TAA enrollments. And this led us to a major overhaul of our outreach methods. Flow boards map the journey of the TAA participant from the time of entry into the program to the benefits and services they may receive toward the ideal of exiting with suitable employment. Flow boards offer an at-a-glance visual of a participant's current status on a counselor's case load. The flow boards are displayed where a counselor or management can readily see the activities of each program participant a counselor is responsible for.

The flow board adapted for TAA case management purposes is a wall chart categorized by the industry a participant's job goal goes under and the current TAA service a participant is receiving – either job search training or RTAA. Each individual on a case load is represented by a proxy card which offers information related to their current status.

All participants start in the job search column until they move into training, RTAA, or paying suitable employment. The idea is to maintain awareness of where each participant is within their activity. We want to help the counselor stay engaged. If a participant reaches 90 days in the job search status, the counselor or participant may need to review together what else may be needed.

Is the job seeker getting any feedback? Are they getting interviews? Perhaps skills are not matching what employers are looking for. If not already pursued, is training needed or an option? Are there other barriers that need to be addressed? This just illustrates each section of the flow board and how an individual may move through the different services we offer. And here's a flow board created by one of our counselors to track her TAA case load. Another testimony – Julie appreciates the visual reminders offered by the flow board.

The final Lean component I'm going to review is problem solving. In the past, when a problem arose, either myself or a TAA program manager determined how we were going to fix it. Essentially, we were dictating what changes we were going to make and how they would be incorporated at the counselor level.

As you can imagine, this practice of time resulted in grumblings and negative attitudes. The problem-solving concept offered through Lean management appreciates problems as they afford a chance to make changes and try something new. Also, by incorporating staff at all levels, there's more buy-in from the staff who are doing the work.

Basically, when evaluating a problem or looking at the gap between what should be happening and what is actually happening as this is where the problem often arises. Here I'm illustrating a three-part problem-solving process. First, to find the problem, then by determining the causes or root cause, it allows you to fix the problem. Countermeasures are actions taken to control a problem and to eliminate or at least mitigate the root cause. Effective countermeasures also eliminate the recurrence of the problem. The natural poll for problem solving first, to identify the problem, analyze the cause, develop countermeasures, evaluate effectiveness, and adjust if necessary.

Here's an example of the problem-solving process in action. Our problem – low co-enrollment rate between TAA and WIOA programs. What should be happening? We should have the majority of our TAA participants co-enrolled with WIOA. We should be getting feedback on the results of a referral. Was the person co-enrolled? Why or why not? What's actually happening is the TAA counselors are doing as they've been instructed. During the TAA initial intake appointment, every TAA participant is to be referred to WIOA if they're not currently enrolled with them. But once the referrals were sent, no follow-up was incurring. So we didn't know why individuals weren't being co-enrolled.

Without strong communication between both programs, our co-enrollment rates were quite low. We brainstormed the possible causes for the co-enrollment rate. Perhaps there was a lack of understanding about what the TAA program offers and the benefits of co-enrollment for both programs. Some participants told their TAA counselors that they were advised they could not pursue TAA until they finished services under WIOA. And possibly it was not well explained to participants what the benefit of co-enrollment was. And finally, we also determined that because there was no formal statewide co-enrollment policy, local areas were all operating differently.

I was invited to provide information on the importance of TAA and WIOA co-enrollment through a partner operations meeting, which included all local area administrators from around the state. I explained the importance of the data that TADI is focusing on and the fact that Arizona has been consistently missing the target for co-enrollment rates. I also provided information on how WIOA could benefit from co-enrolling their participants with TAA. And this meeting started the ball rolling. The administrators felt they could easily accommodate the co-enrollment process.

Once the lines of communication were opened between the programs, the idea was presented about having TAA staff initiate the WIOA enrollment packet with the participant being referred. They could assist with required paperwork and ensure understanding of the documents WIOA will require when the individual arrives for intake appointment. This'll save time and allow the individual to come prepared so the enrollment is not held up.

I compiled a list of all active TAA participants who are not currently co-enrolled according to the office they are assigned and forward this information along with a copy of the recently developed statewide co-enrollment policy to lead each local area administrator, who in turn disseminated this information to the appropriate office supervisors for review and action.

One local area in particular had the majority of TAA participants who had never been co-enrolled with WIOA. One roadblock encountered was the fact that we had many TAA participants who were already engaged in training or RTAA, so their time is limited for coming to the local office. We are examining how we can accommodate the co-enrollment process for these individuals.

Several meetings have been organized between myself, RTAA supervisor, the workforce program manager, WIOA case manager supervisor, and her counselors to open up the lines of communication. This particular local area is also reviewing their enrollment process to determine if there are steps that could be changed so as not to be so cumbersome. We just implemented these practices in information sharing at the beginning of March, and are still working out details for those that are already involved in TAA activities. But we're starting to see some success.

As you can see, January through March our co-enrollment rate was stagnant. But by the end of April, we started to see some progress. If we notice the rate slipping again, we can make adjustments or incorporate a new plan of action if needed. And this is just another model summarizing the problem-solving process.

Now that we have determined our problem and possible root causes, the problem solving continues. Problem solving never ends. PDCA is an interactive process. We will not solve the process perfectly the first time. Just as a circle has no end, the PDCA cycle should be repeated again and again for continuous improvement.

The basic PDCA road map defines how to implement an improvement. P – Plan – recognize an opportunity and plan a change. D – Do – test the change, carry out the plan. C – Check – review the test, analyze the results, and identify what you've learned. A – Adjust – take action based on what you've learned in the check step. If a change is not fully worked, go through the cycle again with a different plan.

Since the implementation of Lean Management, we are seeing the benefits. We're seeing increased value to our customers, staff engagement and consistency across the state, and ongoing process improvements. And finally, the belief that all of this is based on – to be successful, every employee must understand that collectively and individually, our job is to do more good for Arizona. To do this, we must all understand customer needs, identify problems, and prove processes, and measure results. And I'm going to go ahead and pass this back to Amanda.

MS. POIRIER: Thank you, Susan. So I have a question for you. Can you tell us more about your outreach methods in Arizona? Do you want to expand on that a little bit?

MS. STANDEN: Sure. What we're finding is when we get a new list from an employer, we were sending out applications to everybody in an information packet. But we were finding we weren't getting a lot of applications returned. And part of the problem we know for some reason our companies that were being certified were getting certified well after people had been laid off. And so we were missing out on Rapid Responses and being able to go on site before the people were laid off.

So what we started doing is two weeks after the applications and TAA packets were sent out, we then posted the list for our counselors to be able to access. And those that had time would go in and we would attempt to call everybody that was on the list or reach out by email if we had email addresses for them. And the counselors would then note the results of the call. If they got ahold of the individual, they would talk to them, explain about the program, find out if they had an application. If they didn't, they would send out a new application.

If for whatever reason we couldn't get phone numbers for the individuals, or if we didn't get return calls, then a letter was sent out just kind of explaining about the program. We thought maybe well, people are reemployed – maybe they think they wouldn't qualify. So we were trying to address some of the concerns individuals might have through this letter and instructing if they wanted more information to call us. So we've done that. And then we have a second letter. If an application's returned but then the person never pursues enrollment, there's a second, different letter that we send out to try to connect with them and to try to get them to call one of our counselors or bring them into an office. That's just kind of quickly.

MS. POIRIER: Yeah. Understood. Thanks, Susan. I appreciate it. For Scott, too – how do you obtain emails for trade-eligible workers?

MR. GRECO: I'm sorry?

MS. POIRIER: How do you obtain emails for trade-eligible workers?

MR. GRECO: We usually do that through Rapid Response on the trade application that we fill out on Rapid Response. We also use our MIS system to try to grab them out of that way. And some – if I'm not mistaken – I also believe that UI has access to some emails if they put the email address in during their online application.

MS. POIRIER: Great. Thank you. And for both Susan and Scott, we had a question about aptitude tests and which ones you use.

MR. GRECO: Well, I can speak that we are still currently in the process right now of determining which test that we – we're still in our research process. That's one of our gaps that we have not reached yet.

MS. POIRIER: OK. Thank you.

MS. STANDEN: OK. And for Arizona, WIOA for everybody that comes through, just like with Rhode Island – if they don't have the bachelor's degree, they're given the TABE. And I know our WIOA partners are trying to get away from the TABE. And so we are exploring different assessments.

We used to use what was called the PESCO SAGE, which was an aptitude interest inventory combination. And it was completed on the computer. And that actually gave really good results, good information, good ideas on what jobs a person had aptitudes for. But then the county that was using that got away from it. So we're looking at some different options also on the assessment tests.

MS. POIRIER: Great. Thank you both. If anyone has additional questions, please enter them in now in the main chat. And we can continue to answer them over the next couple of slides. I'm just going to call your attention to some resources. So we had a webinar back in November of 2018 in Arizona.

Actually, Susan presented as part of that, discussing case management practices and some best practices around that. And also, there's a case management FAQ. So we recommend that you look at both of those links, see if there's anything that you cull from that, as well, that's related to this webinar. Also, in terms of things that are coming up, we have the community of practice that's going to be launching in June of 2019.

So hopefully, within a couple of days next month you'll see something over the course of the next month regarding that launch. And if you're familiar with the WorkforceGPS community of practices, there'll be blogs and resources that'll be available for the trade community. And so we're really looking forward to that.

Also too, we have a webinar coming up on June 18 – Promising Practices that Support Accurate Fiscal Tracking and Reporting, and Serving English Language Learners under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program. That will be on July 19. So we have webinars coming up in June and July, so stay tuned for that.

There actually was an invite that was already sent on the June 18 webinar, so hopefully everybody's received that. And I just got another question in – who initiates Rapid Response events? Is it a collective effort between TAA staff and WIOA title partner staff? Or is it driven by the partners? So in Arizona or Rhode Island, Susan or Scott, would you like to respond to that of who initiates Rapid Response events, how it works?

MR. GRECO: Yeah. I mean, we have a business service unit that handles the majority of our Rapid Responses. So that's a unit that's dedicated to all the employer needs. Rhode Island is kind of a unique state where we're almost a single web. We have two workforce boards. But DLT is the primary main function for everything WIOA and everything workforce development. So we work in conjunction. The majority of our partners rely on some of our business services also. So it primarily started off with our business service unit.

MS. STANDEN: And here in Arizona, definitely business service units. And a lot of times WIOA is contacted first just because they're well known for conducting Rapid Response sessions. But if there's any inkling usually that TAA may be involved, then our partners are really good about notifying me or even contacting our counselors. Our counselors are co-located with the WIOA partners. So we've just gotten word of two pretty big possible layoffs that are potential TAA. So our counselors are in there right from the start, which is fantastic.

MS. POIRIER: Great. Thank you, Susan and Scott. I think there's some folks that are typing in. We're kind of closing in on time. I'll give it one second before we finalize everything. So, like I said, we have the two events that are coming up in June and July. So I hope everybody registers for those.

And also, this'll be recorded, as well and available, so I want to let folks know that as well. We'll send out the link for that. And here we have the contact information, as well, for everybody. So feel free to connect with your state peers to learn more about their Lean strategies and how they help serve TAA customers through those Lean events.

OK. Just one more question. Does a Rapid Response orientation take place before or after trade-certified, especially if you believe they will be potentially trade-impacted? So I think in Rhode Island, Scott, if you want to answer that, I suspect it probably could be either or?

MR. GRECO: Yeah. It's either or. I mean, it all depends when we get notice of. Whenever we get notice from the company that there's going to be a potential layoff, we try to deal with that immediately, whether they're trade-certified or whether we help them get trade-certified after the Rapid Response.

MS. POIRIER: Thank you. And Susan?

MS. STANDEN: Yeah. Here in Arizona, it's pretty much the same. If we think there's any inkling it could be trade, possible trade layoffs, then definitely we have staff on site, and because they can also represent employment services too. So they're on site and providing information on TAA and letting people know, hey, a petition's been submitted or we're working on submitting a petition. And they do provide information, because that's what we found is the best, to try to connect with the individuals prior to layoffs happening. So the earlier we can get in there, the better.

MS. POIRIER: Thank you. So I think that's it. I want to thank everyone for listening and asking questions. Again, please save the date for the events coming up. Let us know, too, if there are any other topics you would like explored via webinar. We're always entrusting your ideas and look forward to sharing more best practices. I hope everyone has a good rest of your day and take care and again thank you. Susan and Scott, thank you so much for your time and sharing your best practices today. We really appreciate it.

MS. STANDEN: Thank you.

MR. GRECO: Thank you, Amanda. Thank you, everybody.

(END)