**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Serving English Language Learners under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program**

**Friday, July 19, 2019**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Menifee, CA*

GRACE MCCALL: Welcome to "Challenges and Best Practices in Serving English Language Learners, ELL." So without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Julie Baker, supervisory program analyst, DOL ETA Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance. Julie?

JULIE BAKER: Thank you, Grace. Hello, everyone. I'm Julie Baker, supervisor of the program development unit in the Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance. I've been with the Employment and Training Administration for 13 and a half years with six years in my current position. The first part of my ETA career was set at the Chicago regional office working in demonstration grants, performance as a state federal project officer and as a regional coordinator for the rapid response and trade programs.

CONSUELO HINES: Thank you. I'm Consuelo Hines and I've been working for over 20 years as the Trade Act program coordinator for different regional offices. Prior to joining DOL, I worked in the workforce development system providing rapid response, business and career services at the workforce center in San Jose, California. I also did disaster and employment assistance program coordinator helping those who became unemployed or suffered unemployment from disaster.

JESSE JOHNSON: Hello. My name is Jesse Johnson. I am a program analyst within the policy development unit at OTAA. I've been with OTAA as a whole for a little over 12 years now, but I've been under Julie's leadership out (here too ?) for four years. I spent eight of those 12 years actually in the national office but was fortunate enough a few years ago to be able to relocate back to my home state of Texas.

And today's objectives, we're going to look at how there shows a need to improve services to TAA, the English language learners or EA, ELL. Excuse me. All regions have TAA ELL participants and peer-shared practices can assist and inspire states to adopt new methods of starting TAA ELL participants. TAA employment and case management funds can be used to implement new strategies and WIOA and other partners are valuable resources in improving service delivery.

MS. BAKER: The idea for this webinar started with an observation made by Robert Helstrack (ph) in OTAA performance management and data reporting unit that when reviewing data on TAA training non-completions, he responded that participants with English language barriers were not completing training or not gaining the skills to be successful in completing training.

So when looking at the data, we see that TAA English language learners or ELL compared to all TAA exiters show ELL enter training at the same rate as other participants but that fewer ELL participants complete training. The data shows that ELLs do complete training, but that there is a need to share knowledge in order to improve their training completion rate.

When examining remedial training, we find a few interacting things. First, that the cross-match is low. Out of the 734 ELL participants last year, only 208 received remedial training, so the perception that all ELLs are in remedial training is incorrect. Last year, ELL only made up 28 percent of remedial training.

That said, if we look at only those 208 participants who are both ELLs and in remedial training, their training completion is a dramatic difference at only 49.3 percent. This also indicates the need to share best practices in serving this population.

Let's look now at ELLs by state. This was reported on the PIRL 803 English Language Learner at program entry and what we see here is that all regions serve ELL participants. As of last May, nearly $147 million of the fiscal year 2017 TAA training and other activities funds are projected to be returned to treasury at the end of this quarter. That's right. Almost $147 million projected to be returned. So states can and are highly encouraged to use their employment and case management funds to implement ELL service models.

We've brought together an exciting lineup of state trade and program professionals and English language acquisition practitioners for what I hope will be the first of many conversations on improving service delivery for trade-affected English language learners. Now we may not have time to answer every question today, but for questions we don't get to, we will continue this conversation on our TAA community of practice discussion board.

We want to begin with hearing from our state and local workforce audience. Please review these two questions and respond in the chat window. The questions are does your state exclusively rely on existing English language acquisition or ELL or ESL or ESOL programs to serve workers with English language barriers from trade dislocation? Please let us know yes or no.

The second question is does your state use any contextualized English language acquisition or ELL, ESL, ESOL programs that combine English and occupational training? So feel free to provide any detail if your state does provide contextualized ELL programs and especially if they combine English language acquisition and occupational training.

So what we're looking to hear from you is two answers. Number one, does your state exclusively rely on existing programs to serve workers? And number two, does your state use any contextualized English language acquisition programs that combine English and occupational training?

I love that multiple attendees are typing, so please continue to enter your responses in the chat window. So that's great. It looks like Oregon is a yes and a yes. That's excellent.

We've had some other yesses for question number two. Really like to see that. I guess really what we're looking at as ideal is no's for question one and yes for question two because that means you would be somebody that we can, we really would like to communicate with and engage in the community of practice with. I think you might have some valuable insight to contribute to us.

For those of you who are answering on the other way where your state does exclusively rely on existing services yes and no, you don't have any other contextualized English language program, you are exactly the audience we want to be reaching for this webinar. And again, you will also find it very valuable I think to continue the conversation on our community of practice.

So I'm going to give you just another minute to wrap up. It looks like we've got everyone already has submitted their responses. Great responses, everyone. We really appreciate the feedback.

And we are now going to go ahead and get started. I'd like to introduce Sarah Saito and Gerry Mulhern from the state of Minnesota. Sarah has just marked five years with the state of Minnesota TAA. Before that, she worked in workforce development and the TAA program in Wisconsin. She also taught English in Japan and served in the AmeriCorps. Gerry has worked for Minnesota's unemployment insurance for over 25 years and among his responsibilities is overseeing Minnesota's TRA program. Before state service, Gerry worked as an army linguist. So over to you, Sarah and Gerry.

GERALD MULHERN: Thank you. This is Gerry. I'll start first. Greetings from Minnesota. I'm going to talk briefly about some of the non-English languages we see here in the north start state. Then I'm going to hand things off to Sarah to talk about TAA and how her staff communicate with people who need assistance in other languages.

According to census bureau of data, most Minnesotans speak English at home. However, significant numbers also speak Spanish, Hmong and Somali. In my area, unemployment insurance, we print how to apply brochures and UI handbooks in these four languages and on our website, we post frequently asked questions and informational videos in all four.

But workforce services in general here in Minnesota are mostly conducted in English, but we still think it's important to get information to individuals in a language that they can understand. All of our different programs use a variety of resources. TAA for example specifically recruits staff that speaks other languages.

And speaking of TAA, I'm going to hand off things to Sarah, our TAA supervisor, who will tell you how her staff works with different programs and providers to serve TAA customers and specifically those whose primary language is not English. Sarah?

SARAH SAITO: Great. Thanks, Gerry. So even though TAA is a federal program, we know that states administer it very differently from each other. We wanted to explain the Minnesota structure to give you a foundation of how we provide services.

So we can easily coordinate services and build relationships with staff because TAA, TRA and rapid response are all centralized in the same department and building here in Saint Paul. We're intentional about meeting every two to four weeks with both TRA and rapid response. TAA and TRA communicate before any petition is filed.

Also, Minnesota has a staff member who acts as a liaison between TAA and rapid response to ensure we're communicating regularly to identify potential trade-impacted, excuse me, trade-impacted layoff. Both of us will research and file petitions, meet every two weeks to talk about companies we're investigating and any rapid response events that are scheduled.

Rapid response shares the survey information with TAA to coordinate interpreters for orientation sessions. Rapid response staff ask employers what languages are represented and if interpreters are needed for meetings. To guarantee workers understand the process and benefits, the rapid response survey to the workers asks if they need a language interpreter or translated materials.

Another item that helps Minnesota be successful is to co-enroll 100 percent of our TAA customers into the dislocated worker program. This allows us to support customers and streamline processes.

As I mentioned, TAA staff are centralized in Saint Paul, so we depend on dislocated worker staff to provide the in-person case management around the state. Minnesota also uses the language line for UI, dislocated worker and TAA so people have access to information in their primary language at a minimum cost and effort.

The previous slide laid the foundation for the structure of TAA and TRA in Minnesota. Here are some of the very practical things we do while working with TAA customers to make sure they are set up for success, especially those who are English language learners. Formal assessments are a helpful tool to guide people toward training paths that will be a good fit and that lead to suitable employment.

Minnesota TAA purchased licenses to a common online assessment that we can easily send via e-mail to customers. This assessment helps customers make decisions that would be a good fit for their skills and interests. TAA and dislocated worker staff also clearly explain requirements and expectations of the program and benefits. This is a suitable time to use a language line or interpreter as needed for English language learners.

Once customers start training, they are required to have monthly check-ins with staff. Regular check-ins allow us to identify challenges and keep communication open. The 60-day TAA training progress report confirms the customer's check-in aligns with the school official's information.

In the past two years, Minnesota has worked with about 80 people whose primary language is not English. One of those customers is named Grace (ph). I'd like to tell you about her today. Keep in mind that TAA is intentional about hiring staff who speak various languages. Grace was laid off from the loan services department at a mortgage company making $28 an hour in August of 2018. She'd been working there for six years and her primary language is Swahili. Grace just recently enrolled in the TAA program. She appreciates that she has a TAA specialist Meg (ph) who also speaks Swahili. Meg can explain TAA in Swahili to Grace.

Because she initially wasn't understanding the TAA program or benefits, she was hesitant to enroll. Now that she's working with our staff member who can explain and answer her questions in Swahili, she understands it better and has submitted a TAA training application.

By having a staff member who speaks Grace's language, it gives her confidence and motivation to pursue her TAA-funded training. We're happy to report that Grace is starting the nursing program at a local college this August. The LMI for nursing in this area is over 12 percent with a median wage of $42 an hour. We're really looking forward to Grace's success in the program.

Another aspect that helps Minnesota succeed in serving customers is that we can use additional programs and opportunities throughout the state. Like Gerry mentioned at the beginning, most of our workforce services here in Minnesota are in English and it's important to get information to individuals in a language they can best understand. These services are offered by a variety of agencies, not necessarily TAA. However, these services definitely contribute to TAA's success in supporting ELL customers.

Here in Minnesota, there's training available in Spanish, mostly short-term healthcare training. Another agency provides training for people who speak Hmong to become a bus driver or farmer. Our public transportation company hires many people who complete the bus driver training, which promotes suitable employment and does practical skills for people who may have had a barrier to employment because of their limited English skills.

Looking ahead, Minnesota is launching a couple of products related to English language learners. Similar to unemployment's how to apply brochure, TAA is having a general brochure translated into Spanish, Hmong and Somali. We're also researching options to make videos in our top languages to post on our website. There are definitely challenges working with people whose primary language is not English and we're finding that there are many opportunities for success. Minnesota continues to learn and grow and we're excited for the future.

Does anyone have questions for Minnesota? OK. I see someone's typing so I'll hang on until we get that question. If you have questions, you can enter them in the left chat box on the left corner of your screen. OK.

The question is how do we know if the schools will instruct in their language? That's a good question. So we've just kind of learned it from experience. We do have some training institutions that specifically teach the class in Spanish. Like for a PCA class, the whole thing is taught in Spanish for example. Otherwise, we've just learned from students going to class and then learning oh, my instructor speaks my language, which helps them out.

So another question. Just to confirm, the brochures will be converted into the top three languages in Minnesota. Correct. So we are having them translated. The general information about TAA will be translated into the top three languages representing Minnesota.

MR. MULHERN: Thank you for your questions. We've got to move on to the next group, but with that we'll pass it back over to Jesse.

MR. JOHNSON: All right. Thank you so much. Now we have Angela Lopez and Mr. Rob Bermingham from Illinois' National Able Network. Angela Lopez has worked for National Able Network for 14 years. I believe half of those years were in WIA and WIOA and two and a half years in TAA. She is also the side director for National Able-certified American Job Center in Fulsome. The center sees about 4,000 job seekers a month. And Rob has worked at National Able Network for three and a half years. He started as a WIOA and TAA career coach before moving into his role. Rob has also had experience in vocational rehabilitation. So without further ado, take it away.

ANGELA LOPEZ: OK. Thank you. This is Angela and I'll start with first steps. So we'll talk about program introduction and customer engagement. Our customers come to us with a variety in English language skills. Of course, some seem to really know English. Others actually score well on an assessment, but less confidence.

The vast majority of our ELL customer base speak Spanish, but we do on occasion of course get other languages. We make a very concerted effort on the front end to make people aware that we can accommodate in their native language because regardless of the comfort level someone may have with day-to-day English, it is very different to understand the intricacies of the TAA program. It's so important to understand the details at that point.

So of course, in order to provide services, we have to first locate the customers and effectively outreach so that they actually walk in to learn more. So we embrace supporting customers, even before they come in. We do that in part through our invitation letters. We mail letters to customers inviting them to come in for orientation. As a default, those letters are sent in both Spanish and English and we also include the language line print out, which would indicate to them that we are ready to accommodate them in their native language.

We also place outbound calls whenever we have the information to do so. We've found that this makes a big difference and we're more prepared when they show up and they know more about the language needs before they even walk in the door. I think this can also help because they are receiving outreach through the Department of Employment Security.

They're receiving outreach through us. They may not be familiar with who we are. And just getting a call, we can answer a few questions. We of course take a friendly approach. We have found that definitely increases the show up rate to orientation and we think that in particular applies to English language learners.

When customers come in for orientation events, we are prepared to assess language needs and accommodate. We always because we have such a large customer base who speak Spanish, we always have a Spanish speaker available. We also have our language line information very visible because we have experienced someone sitting through orientation and seeming to follow along only to realize at the end that they probably didn't understand everything that they needed to understand. So we're really trying to make sure that we catch it as soon as they arrive, if not before they arrive.

We also try to make it as painless as possible for customers to let us know that they need accommodation in their native language. Customers advocate for themselves to varying degrees and we find that in promoting an equitable environment, we need to focus on ease of access to communication in their native language, especially on the front end.

Outreach does not end when customers walk in the door. We've found that some groups are very well connected to their former colleagues. And so, we also came up with what we call tell a friend cards and you see an example on your screen.

They're in Spanish. That is something we actually physically give them because not everyone of course is on social media. And they, you know, when they give this to someone that they formerly worked with, there's of course an underlying message of trust and it's kind of an informal referral. And this has worked for us with some groups, in particular when they were very well connected in the workplace.

We also have there an outreach postcard. We, when they get this postcard in particular, it will be probably our fourth or fifth attempt to reach them and, you know, it's out of recognition that we don't know why. Sometimes they don't respond to initial outreach. In particular with the ELL community, it can be because they're working and this postcard acknowledges that. And so, we put a lot of effort into increasing our caseload on the (summit ?) of English language learners. And with that, I will pass it over to Rob to talk a little bit about responses now.

ROB BERMINGHAM: So we wanted to see if these outreach efforts were working, so we looked at customers over a six month period who indicated during orientation that they were interested in ESL courses, just to see how many customers either enrolled in services or at least took the next step towards enrolling.

We found that 71 percent of the customers enrolled in services and 84 percent of customers took at least a next step. To us, this indicated that the customers understood what was being asked of them at the orientation and had enough confidence to come back. It also just demonstrates that these efforts work and that customers are responsive to these efforts.

As part of the application process, all customers also take the test that involves basic education and the skills and interest profiler. The test can be difficult for any customer, but especially challenging for ELL customers due to the English fluency needed to take the test and also the amount of time it takes.

This often results in frustration and because of that, we have bilingual staff present to address any concerns and just reassure that the score won't prevent the customer from enrolling in services but that it is a requirement. Ultimately, the (take ?) reaffirms that the customer would benefit from ESL courses, but if they're interested in taking.

We've also found a lot of value in customers taking a skills and interest profiler. We started using careeronestop.org recently for skills and interests assessment because the website translates really well into Spanish, especially if you head to other sites that have similar assessments.

We like it because it reemphasizes that finding a job is the end goal and it encourages the customer to think about the career and training that they want to pursue after ESL courses. We've found it's meaningful for customers and it gets them to think about the skills they have, which can be difficult for really anyone that's going through a transition after a layoff. Once the customer can take these assessments, they attend a training guidance workshop.

MS. LOPEZ: And I have a little bit more about training guidance workshop, again still focusing on this front end of services. We bring customers in for workshops. If customers are going to be taking advantage of ESL in particular, they're brought in for a workshop focusing on that and they're just guided through the application process. Some customers feel like just an application process in and of itself is daunting and so, we actually take time to sit with them and go over it piece by piece.

We also offer one-on-one support before they actually go into training. That's some thing that we were lucky enough to be able to work out with our funders. So we actually have a dedicated staff member who exclusively handles people while they're applying for training. And that is something that we know has increased the number of people going into in particular ESL and basic education because we think the process can be especially daunting for that particular group.

And the overriding message that we try to send on the front end is you are welcome here. We want people to feel very comfortable with us. We do know, you know, unfortunately there are biases out there and we know that our ELL customers have likely felt that impact. And so, we feel it important and necessary to go really far in expressing that our ELL customers are very welcome here and we are here to service them. I'll pass it over to Rob for a little bit on success in training.

MR. BERMINGHAM: So we've noticed it's difficult for customers to objectively determine when they're ready to go from ESL to vocational training so that they complete all within 130 weeks.

So at what point is someone ready? It could be determined through any number of ways but many of them are subjective and due to the time limitations of TAA, waiting for the customer to feel completely comfortable to move into vocational training might not be feasible. So we handle it on a case by case basis, but it ultimately comes down to good case management and helping a customer keep things in perspective.

Like Angela mentioned, we had to revamp our process to do this. And part of the change was that the primary role of one of our staff members is to assist customers with their training application, but also to work with local ESL providers and form relationships just so they have a better understanding of TAA and that we can all support the customer as a team. One provider actually created a summer ESL course specifically for our customers because the impact not having ESL courses of the summer would have on the TRA benefits and their ability to successfully complete the program.

We also noticed that our customers began to naturally form cohorts with their coworkers and the customers in these cohorts did totally appear to have more success. So we began to encourage it and it's also why we have the tell-a-friend cards.

Once the training is approved, we conduct pre-training meetings where we review the requirements again and utilize the forms we've translated into Spanish and then revisit and discuss vocational goals, which we will visit throughout ESL training. While entering, we help keep the customer motivated by recognizing any skills achieved, no matter how small they are, and provide perspective on the English language skills needed to attend and succeed in a vocational program.

We of course also use assessments as a guide. One of our staff members has also found a lot of value in speaking to our customers in English just while they're in training just to get a sense of where they're at. All this builds up to helping the customer actually make the transition to vocational training, which we do by encouraging the customer to be open and honest about any fears and concerns, which we listen to, reassure and address.

Often in order to address them, we have the customer or all of our customers engage in training provider research early on. That often involves auditing classes to see how the program works and then discussing things, concerns with the provider so that they can be sure that the provider will meet them where they're at.

WIOA's trying to tie everything back into employment. You don't need to be completely fluent in English to get a job, but you do need to be completely fluent in vocational training. You just need to find a provider that will support the customer and meet them where they're at and that's essentially it.

MS. LOPEZ: So one thing that we did want to just make mention of that we would really advocate for is for basic computer skills instruction to be always included with ESL. Computer fluency can be a significant contributing factor in how comfortable customers feel going into vocational training. Many employers use computer assessments these days, so either way it makes sense I think in this day in age for computer fluency to be considered as important as ESL.

And just to wrap up, you know, support of our partners is essential. It, you know, we find that our English language learners really benefit from wrap-around services and so we try to make the, we try to make referrals very easy so that they happen. So you see on the slide an example of our flier, our outreach flier that can make partners aware of how to refer to us and they can do that easily. And then we also have an example of our referral card there that is also an easy way for us to make referrals to partners and for them to make referrals to us.

And then you also have on your screen a flier for what we did with our partners that actually helped strengthen our partnership with our local partners. It was called Careers in Bayou (??). It was a job and resource fair and we had 35 community-based organizations, 35 employers. We had workshops in English and Spanish available and it was a fun day. It was another way to welcome people in that environment, to show them who we are and to show them this whole picture, you know, what we do as a partnership and as a group.

And with that, I will ask if there are any questions. I think I might see a question on the way. I'll wait another second. The slide (at the end ?), which was just on the last slide, is like bingo but it's the way that it's played in Mexico and some Latin American countries. And we had that done as a way to encourage people to participate in the event. And with that, I will hand it over to Jesse.

MR. JOHNSON: All right. Great stuff, Angela and Rob. Great information. Now on deck we have Ms. Jennifer Foster of the Illinois community college board. Jennifer is the deputy executive director and oversees all programs in the Illinois community college board, including workforce and adult education. And within that includes English as a second language, high school equivalency, post-secondary Perkins/careers technical education, student services and academic and institutional effectiveness. Jennifer has been with the Illinois community college board for over 19 years and in adult education for approximately 31 years. So it's all yours, Jennifer.

JENNIFER FOSTER: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. Just to get started as a part of this, I hope you guys are keeping cool out there. We will start by just giving you just a little bit of an overview of the Illinois community college board and our system office. We are a system office that oversees approximately 48 community colleges in 39 districts.

We oversee all of the academic instructional workforce student services as well as two big grant programs through postsecondary education Perkins as well as adult education. Within our system, we have approximately 80 adult education providers throughout the state and that includes our English as a second language providers in which 60, approximately 60 of those programs actually provide English as a second language services. Our service provider network includes community-based organizations, community colleges, local education agencies, universities and the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Most recently, within the last year and a half, the Illinois community college board embarked on development of a strategic plan for adult education which is inclusive of all of our English as a second language programs. And as a part of that strategic planning process, we noticed several areas that we wanted to focus on. One is to improve outcomes by scaling effective models.

Another is making sure that we are smoothing the transition or increasing our post-secondary transitions and credential attainment. Our next goal is to strengthen college and career readiness and the last goal is to just develop lifelong career pathway systems and making sure that we integrate technologies as National Able has just presented about making sure that technology is a part of the English language instruction.

So as we talk about the services that we provide to the ELL population, we want to focus on a lot on our civics education pieces and we have programs throughout the state that focus on competencies and working with individual students. We also make sure that we're working on workforce preparation activities as well as career awareness.

I will also be talking a little bit and giving you a little bit more information about our English, our integrated English literacy and civics, we refer to it as IELCE, as well as our integrated education and training programs and our bridge programs. These programs are a requirement of WIOA, particularly the integrated English literacy and civics education as well as the integrated education and training programs.

Bridge program is a program that we work very closely with a lot of our partner agencies, including Title I as well as Title III programs. We're working to make sure that we have definitions that are current and everyone is in agreement with as we go through our process of development of instruction.

This gives you a little bit of an example of students that we service in our Illinois system. As you can see, a majority of the students that we service in Illinois are English language learners and this comprises approximately 52 percent of the population that we serve. This is to give you a little bit of information and context about our integrated education and training program.

These programs not only include our native English speakers, but also our ELL population. Integrated education and training, in Illinois we use it as ICAPS, our Integrated career and academic preparation system. We also, we blend the basic skills with career and technical education and training or any type of vocational training. It is key that we use labor market data in order to make decisions about what occupations or industry sectors are most prevalent in our different areas of our state.

We have 22 local workforce areas and so we try to work with our programs in developing that instruction that is most beneficial to our students. The individuals receive college credit, certificate, degrees or high school equivalency certificates as well. There's also included industry-recognized credentials.

These are team-taught instructional classes and sometimes they're blended instruction with our ESL as well as our English-speaking population. There are lots of support classes that are offered and for this particular population, it's very important that those support classes are there and making sure that our English language learners understand the instruction that they are in.

We also have our integrated English literacy and civics education. Again, another WIOA required program. We make sure that IET on the previous slide is a part of that as well as adult education activities, training as well as civics education. And I mentioned, fore mentioned about our civics competencies that we developed under WIA that we make sure that is incorporated as a part of this instruction. 25 programs throughout the state are implementing IELCE programs.

We have bridge programs as well and in our bridge programs we do a lot of discussion about contextualization, career development and transition services. So in a nutshell, what the bridge programs are is within an ESL context of instruction, you will contextualize that instruction based upon the specific occupation. You will make sure that career development activities are included as a part of that as well as transition services and making sure that individuals are making the movement into credit or other occupational programs.

This gives you a little bit of an indication about the numbers that we serve in our integrated education and training program as well as our bridge program. We have over the last couple of years served approximately 8,000 students in our bridge program and another 900 in our IET model.

This takes, gives you just a little bit of information. There are other resources that are there that might be of interest. We have some manufacturing bridge program curriculum on these sights as well, but this gives you a little bit of information about our bridge programs and about our integrated education and training programs and a lot of resources that are there, both on our website as well as at the Illinois state website.

We do a lot of work with our programs. We do a lot of work with our professional developers on the career technical education as well as adult education side. We also do strategic planning. We have our strategic plan that's listed there that will give some more insight.

If you have any questions, please post them on the left-hand side in the chat box. Thank you.

MS. BAKER: Great. Thank you so much, Jennifer. Just wanted to give a little bit of time in case we have a question that comes in.

MS. FOSTER: The question is about that our state has 25 programs, not states that provide the IELCE component. Yes. OK.

MS. BAKER: All right. Thank you so much.

MS. FOSTER: I'll turn it over to Julie.

MS. BAKER: Thank you so much, Jennifer. And it is also my pleasure today to introduce Beth Goguen from the state of Massachusetts. Beth has been a workforce professional for over 20 years.

As the trade program manager from Massachusetts since 1997, she's responsible for overseeing the program, developing and implementing policies and procedures and providing technical assistance for the 29 full-service career centers in Massachusetts. Beth currently oversees four federal workforce programs including trade.

She is the liaison for the MassHire Department of Career Services with the WIOA partners, the Department of Employment Assistance and the Department of Transitional Assistance. She's also served as the director and co-lead of the local MassHire career centers for the past three years. Over to you, Beth.

BETH GOGUEN: Good afternoon, everybody. Well, in Massachusetts, while we work to address and meet the needs of our ESL customers every day, I'm going to focus on some specific training that we've sought out in the past at various times for our larger layoff, where we have large ESOL populations.

These types of, so what we do is we issue what we call a RFP, a request for proposals and they are tailored to the demographics of the workers. We always look for programs that are going to be competency-based and vocationally oriented. And we want to ensure that we're targeting those client's barriers so that they have functional skills by exposing them to work culture. And we'd like to keep the classes small. We find that people will get more attention so long as the classes are kept small, and that the hours are at least 20 hours a week so that they are really getting immersed into learning English.

We also include in our request for proposals that there are lots of support and check-ins while people are in training so that we can ensure their success and address any barriers as they are moving along. We also require them to work collaboratively with our local career counselors, whether they have weekly meetings or monthly meetings, so that everyone can stay on the same page and address any of the customer's concerns.

We also have found through our experience that tutoring, making tutoring available, either after or for groups or for individuals, also will assist people in moving along through the program. Having an open entry and open exit type of program is also important. As we know, everyone doesn't start training on the same day, so being able to accommodate those changes are imperative.

We've also had great success with vendors that use Rosetta Stone offering multiple levels and doing training in short stints. So every 26 weeks, we're looking for them to do some kind of assessment to see if they should move on or if they should extend their time in the current level that they are in.

We also want our vendors to, we set two goals to document obviously the increased level of ESOL and looking for them to be successfully transitioned to unsubsidized employment. Get their English skills to a level where they can at least get through an interview or onto occupational training. And I should say that we have had some RFPs that we've done where we have looked for contextualized training where we're doing the ELOS and some type of occupational training together.

So in Massachusetts, I just wanted to give some data on how many participants we currently have. Sometimes, our ESOL population though can be up to 25 percent of our training participants. We have, we also have a language line like other states have talked about that address multiple different languages that we make available to all of our customers, no matter if they're trade or not.

Similarly to again how other states have spoken, we also gather information upfront through our rapid response teams and set up TA orientations in that language if needed and start working with the career centers to prepare them to be able to service the customer that will be coming into their area. All of our notices for trade do go up in English, but we do have a translation box that we put at the bottom that's in about 12 different languages that indicates to them that if they need to have the letter translated, then they should do so immediately because it is important information.

Our TA participants are integrated into the normal flow of our customers at our local career centers, in which they are being assessed and referred to appropriate vendors that can meet their needs. We have a few concentrated areas with large ESOL populations on a regular basis that have multiple providers as well as having created with those vendors contextualized training and working, and they do that by working with their local career center and the needs of the employers, labor market information and the needs of the workers. For example, they will do ESOL and CNA training or ESOL and electronics training. Electronics training is one of our biggest ones I should say.

These were our training completions for the last three years. So we have a pretty good success rate for those who enter ESOL training and complete, then move on and these clients would move on to occupational training or employment.

And lastly, I just had an example of one of the last big RFPs that we had put out for a group of workers from a company called Sonoco. On the left-hand side, that's just giving you a little background of what those workers produced, manufactured. 51 percent of them had limited English skills. 44 percent of them were 45 or older. 72 percent of them had a high school diploma or less and they made about, they had pretty good longevity, five to 15 years and made $11 to $16 an hour.

So we had 129 of those workers who entered the ESOL training. 81 of them completed. 92 percent of them entered employment and their approximate wages upon entered employment was $11 an hour, so we were able to keep them at approximately the same wages as they were make when they left. So we found that to be a success. And working in the future, we're working more and more with our ACLS partners to identify and create additional resources and training for our ELL and ESOL customers.

So are there any questions? So one of the questions is the translation box at the bottom of the letters in the customer's language or English? So it's in English, but then what it says in English is also translated into about 12 different languages so that they can have the document translated. It's also sent out. Any correspondence is also sent out to, most correspondence I should say, excuse me, is also sent out to their local career counselor so the counselor is able to help them get a translation and know what's going on with that customer.

The question about Rosetta Stone I'm not sure. I'm not sure. The RFPs that we have done in the past, when the vendors have used Rosetta Stone we've found progress to be better than usual. But again, I mean the largest RFP that we did that was back in about 2010. So I agree. It has been a while. There are probably, there may be other products that are better, but we haven't explored that recently.

OK. So with that, I will turn it over to Consuelo.

CONSUELO HINES: Thank you. I here to introduce Jennifer Hernandez and Ricardo Favila with their presentation from California. Jennifer served as the associate secretary for Farmworker and Immigrant Services at the California Labor and Workforce Development agency. Prior to joining the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, Jennifer worked for the national (interpreters ?), where she served as regional director.

Jennifer has extensive background in the non-profit and adult (ed ?) community working with farmworkers and immigrant workers. Ricardo Favila is currently the deputy division chief in the Employment Development Department, workforce service branch (where he does managing, initiation ?) and communication.

So to present the organization, Ricardo Favila is in the TAA program. He's looking forward to using his knowledge of California workforce assistance to improve service delivery and alignment between TAA and department programs. So I'm turning things over to Jennifer and she is all yours.

RICARDO FAVILA: Thank you, Consuelo. It's actually Ricardo. I'm starting first but thank you for the introduction. So real quick, California strategy based on our current administration vision, which consists of providing services for all and specifically opening doors of opportunity to English language learners.

At this point, we all know what the intent of WIOA is. However, what we often lose sight of is that WIOA programs are intended to provide services to people with barriers to employment in order to improve, in order to get those people sustainable jobs and career pathways.

With this in mind, California's strategy is looking at our workforce system as a whole and making system changes to improve our outcomes. Specifically, we believe that English language learner communities is an ideal candidate because ELLs meet multiple barriers to employment.

So here, as you all know WIOA has multiple partners within our system and oftentimes, when we think of the system, our mind goes to the bigger title programs because of the size of the program. However, each partner program brings something unique to the table which we should be leveraging from a system perspective.

Specifically, we believe that TA brings a training element that can be leveraged across all the workforce system, meaning with minimum supportive services from other programs, we can leverage the training investment to give to leverage the positive outcomes across all the core programs in the system.

For example, if a job seeker is eligible for TAA training, they can be co-enrolled into dislocated worker adult or youth. They could definitely be co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser. They could be receiving UI benefits can qualify from any program within the workforce system. We want to co-enroll to better serve the job seekers with better and to get those better outcomes. One of the things we've seen recently is that in many of our mass layoffs across our system, many of the impacted job seekers are ELL recipients.

So the big question we have here in California is how do we provide the resources to our TAA case managers in the field in order to better serve those job seekers in our system? So one of the things, obviously co-enrolling gives us a better outcome and we can spread those outcomes across the system. And we believe that once we put this all together, that will lead to success.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Jennifer, who's going to go into a lot more specifics on what the different things are from a system perspective to serve the ELL community.

JENNIFER HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Ricardo. So where I would like to start is just to give you a little bit more context about the bigger picture, right? Ricardo really was focusing on the work that we're doing as it reflects the TAA project. But really big picture, we really have been looking at this work more comprehensively and thinking about what do we envision for this community as a whole, English learners?

So California is a really diverse state. One third of the workforce is foreign born and the majority of the folks that are English learners in California are foreign born individuals and largely speak Spanish. And then on top of that, we have historically been one of the recipient states for refugees, so we do have a high number in certain areas of the state. So in terms of the diversity, cultural language, it is very diverse in California.

But the other element aside from language and culture is the educational diversity of foreign-born English language community. So what we found is that for, in California, about 53 percent of the English learners age 25 or older had a high school diploma or less. So then, when you look at the barriers to employment, you have the language challenge, you have the cultural barriers and then you have the low educational attainment. So that really makes our need to work across multiple programs even more critical.

And so, for us we've been taking a comprehensive approach where we look at this holistically from an immigrant immigration lens, so what does that mean? That means providing people with the economic mobility, right? It means that we provide people meaningful opportunities to be civically engaged.

And more importantly, it also means that there is this openness to immigrants, to refugees, to English learners within our communities, our society and our institutions. And I think some of the folks from Illinois were talking about sort of creating this welcoming environment and that's definitely important.

And so, what we use to sort of inform our work is the data and when we looked at our data in terms of the folks that we were serving in our program, specifically looking at Title I and who was exiting in terms of language learners, given that our workforce is a third English learner and foreign born, we were exiting around five percent in previous program years. And so, we knew that we needed to do something drastic to make sure that we were better aligning our program and better delivering services.

And so, what we did is we went out and we listened to the field. We asked questions about what were the barriers to entry? What were the barriers to partnership? And what could we do to support them in this effort? And so, early on we made the commitment to invest in funding pilot projects to really identify the strategies to better serve this population.

And included in that were also investments in technical assistance and evaluation, which has really been critical to document the best practices, but also to sort of debunk a lot of the myths and concerns around serving this particular population. And so, all of this has been ongoing and has really informed our co-enrollment efforts that was mentioned earlier.

So in terms of where sort of we initially started, I would say that one of the big changing moments for us was engaging in these multi-stakeholder conversations. We did many one-on-one interviews to just drill down into the weeds about what some of the barriers were to serving the English learner population.

And all of this culminated into an actual, physical convening where we brought folks from the various WIOA titles, community-based organizations, our adult education partners, both in the K-12 system here in California and in the community college, just really broad range stakeholders to have the conversation about what our priorities should be. And so, among them were many policy priorities. There was some programmatic barriers and we started to really identify what we needed to tackle first.

And all of this resulted in the development of a best policies, best practice policy brief which is really important. And a few of the strategies that have been mentioned today have been included in this policy brief, which you'll have a link at the end of the presentation. And it's really important to look at that because we do talk about mobile learning and the need to really leverage technology.

I mean when you think about nowadays most job applications are online or, you know, if we're teaching folks digital literacy, it would help them not only to look for employment, but also to interact with their children's schools, right, because a lot of these things are becoming more and more driven online.

So those types of strategies are mentioned and one that I would call out specifically is it has been talked today about online learning or digital literacy and Rosetta Stone. Well, here in California, we really are privileged that we have a home-grown program. I call it the Rosetta Stone model here in California and it's called USA Learns. It's at usalearns.org and it's essentially a Rosetta Stone to learn English. It is available free online.

I would say if there are any adult educators on the line, that you should really seek it out because one of the things it does is that it allows teachers to use it in their classroom and gives you access to analytics and they're building it out more and more. There's recently been updated to include a civics component, so for individuals that are learning, that are studying to become citizens so a really useful tool.

But another important tool that was mentioned or strategy, excuse me, in the best practices brief was around program alignment and really looking at leveraging our partners because again, today we're talking about English learners. The reality is that many of these individuals will be in adult education, and so it's going to be really important that we're working with our adult schools to identify what are the labor market needs? How can we work together to develop the programming that includes vocational ESL that includes conventionalized learning, right?

And that is putting folks on a pathway to be able to gain employment quickly, but be on a longer-term training journey, right, because the reality is when you are walking the language capacity, it could take a person five to seven years to learn English and that's not realistic. People need to be working, and so we need to sort of have sufficient onramps and off-ramps so that people can become lifelong learners and be benefitting from our programs.

So in terms of some of the other policy priorities that we focused on, I would say one turning point was in our WIOA state plan. We called out a requirement called the 15 percent requirement and essentially what it did was it required our local workforce development board to identify how they were going to serve English learners in areas where they had 15 percent or more limited English proficient within their jurisdiction.

And you might think, well why does that matter? It matters because in some areas there was not the infrastructure to serve English learners. And so, thinking about big picture changing the whole system and not really looking at the effort to serve English learners piecemeal, it was really important to have equal access across the state and ensure that we were changing our practices as a whole, not just by program.

And so, what it did was it really engaged a more thorough conversation with our local partners, not just the adult school providers, but also community-based organizations to help inform our local areas about what does the English learner community look like? Who are some of the other community-based organizations that are serving in that area? Are there special needs in that community in terms of supportive services? Can we better work with some of the non-profits to serve this particular community to educate them that we're there as a workforce system, but also to better serve them? So that was really critical.

In terms of another sort of turning point I would say is that in more recently in the WIOA plan modification process, we really stepped up our game in terms of increasing community engagement.

And the reason this is important is that, you know, the data will show one thing when it comes to looking at labor market information when we're looking at demographic information from the census. But there's a lot to be said to really have conversations with other practices in the community, other stakeholders, namely community organizations, right, because they oftentimes are providing similar services that we are in the workforce system or oftentimes are providing services that can complement what we're doing.

And so, it's really important that we engage them in this planning process, and we saw that it was really effective building new partnerships and hopefully those will continue to develop.

Another piece that we did early on that I really want to spend some time on is we launched, using discretionary dollars, English language learner navigator pilot. And so, what this project did was invest discretionary dollars in five communities where we implemented a partnership with the local workforce board, a community-based organization that serves English learners and the adult school partners.

And so, the navigator that became really the heart and soul of the project was really impactful and made a huge difference. And these people were important because they were reflective of the community we were serving, the English learner community. Oftentimes, they had shared culture. They certainly had shared experience and oftentimes they also had shared language.

And so, having this navigator be the first point of contact to go out into the community where people live. In one situation, we had a gentlemen who was going into the Halal Markets who was born at the mosque. In another area, they were going into the flea markets where English learners live to educate them and bring them into the workforce system. And then once they were enrolled, they would start benefitting from services.

So in the end, our program was a success. We enrolled 537 English learners, the majority of whom had less than a high school diploma, a high school diploma or less and they were mostly women. And in terms of their outcomes, it was really effective that they either performed on par as the general population or exceeded some of the outcomes.

And so, that was really important to debunk some of the myths and fears of serving English learners. What we know is that yes, it may take a little bit longer to get the positive outcome, but there is success in serving this particular population, but you need to be thoughtful about the intervention.

And so, what's next for us? As was mentioned earlier, we're now looking to build on a lot of this, the lessons learned, build on this program that we built, this pilot project and really apply all of that in our co-enrollment efforts. And so, we're continuing to build a partnership, not just with adult education, but with social service programs like TANF and SNAP programs and really being able to better serve the English learner population.

And I think the next way, we're really going to be making a more concerted effort around leveraging these resources to bring in more individuals that are eligible for the TAA because as Ricardo mentioned earlier, it really is sort of a low-hanging fruit. And in California, we've had really good examples of when, through local collaboration, folks have been able to successfully serve some major situations.

And so, with that that, if there's any questions if you could leave them in that chat box and we'll wait for those and then turn it over to Julie. OK. I think there are some questions.

MR. FAVILA: Yeah. So the investment that we made in California, I saw one of the questions about the funding. It was the governor's reserve that we made the investment.

MS. HERNANDEZ: So there's a question about educational progress. So that is actually the area where the English learners performed the best. They did probably three times better than the general population and we were looking at measurable skills gain. So in this last slide that California has, if you look at the ELL initiative resource page, there's a lot more documentation regarding the pilot that we conducted. And then in the third bullet is a link to the ELL navigator evaluation, which will give you more detailed information about the outcomes and what specifically we were looking at for measurable skills gain.

And in that particular pilot, it was an 18-month pilot and so we looked at the outcomes accomplished at the end of that 18-month period. And one thing to note is that about half of the individuals that were enrolled in our pilot exited and then the other half are continuing to be served and we're going now into the second round of this pilot. I think that's all, Julie.

MS. BAKER: Great. Thank you very much. Thank you to all the presenters for providing us insight into your various models at serving English language learners. Now we will open this up to all the presenters and any additional panelists and discuss a question together. We also have a question from the chat window as well.

For the panelists and the presenters, please be sure to tell us your name when you start speaking and for those in the audience, please enter any other questions into the chat window. We have very limited time, but we will respond if we can. If we run out of time, let me remind you to visit the TAA community of practice discussion board to continue this conversation.

So our first question to the panel, in a few words, what is the first step for a state to start working on expanding their TAA English language learner program? And can I ask Angela at National Able Network to kick us off?

MS. LOPEZ: Sure. This is Angela Lopez and I would say communication with partners. Since TAA outreach is a little different, you don't necessarily have a flier that you're just simply distributing widely. You know, I think partners knowing what, you know, what we do and that we are very well equipped to serve English language learners I think is key. So you know, going to meetings and just making sure we push the information out there with our partners and the know how to refer to us.

I think for us in particular, we've been working on I know our relationship with the Department of Employment Security. Clearly they're a clear partner and I do often find that when we're out, you know, presenting to our partners about our services that if used, TAA services are very, very substantial and life-changing and sometimes, you know, people forget I think. And we definitely see an uptick in referrals in particular after we've been in communication with various Department of Employment Security sites.

MS. BAKER: Great. Thank you. Thanks a lot, Angela. Anyone else? I would love to hear from some other panelists about in a few words what would you say the first step for state to start working on expanding their program would be?

MEG: This is Meg from the panel. The first step is to do initial assessment of languages that are being spoken in counties. I think in Minnesota, we have document from United States Census Bureau and it lists the other languages that are being spoken by counties. That is a gold tooth for us because when we are doing partition in the certain county, we can go back to the document and it can tell us which language we need to translate our materials to. Thank you.

MS. FOSTER: This is Jennifer Foster from Illinois and I would say that from a state level perspective, it's very important that we develop a plan in which to provide services and I would agree with National Able. The local programs are the best in terms of understanding and knowing how to work with a particular population and also, they have the tools already.

If they're working through their state office, they have the English language services. They're participating in the IET models as well as the integrated English literacy and civics education model so they're better equipped to be able to partner and make sure that these individuals are meeting all of the managers, the performance, and are accessing the employment that they need to.

MR. FAVILA: So this is Ricardo with California and I would echo what was previously said. It starts at the state level developing buy-ins from all the different partner programs and then doing outreach to those community-based organizations to gather all the supportive materials to be better informed on how to serve the ELL community.

And then coming up with a state strategy to deploy those resources and make them available so we can have those meaningful conversations with the job seekers that are coming through the doors and provide all those services. No one program can provide everything, so it has to be a partnership between the state and the community-based organizations that serves the ELL community holistically.

MS. BAKER: And I thank you all. We are, we do have another question that came in through the chat window. I'm going to reread it, but I would love the panel to take this question. It is how do you work with the community colleges in offering the program? Do you teach the programs or are they taught through the community colleges? In our area, they're not always offered in certain terms. I know this question came in while California was speaking, so let me ask California if you wouldn't mind addressing this first.

MS. HERNANDEZ: Yes. So this is Jennifer from California. So this is precisely why we really focus on building the partnerships at the state level to put in the policy leverage to require planning that was intentional and thoughtful and included our adult education partners, partners from the community college and community-based organizations.

So that can all be shaped through policy but it happens on the ground, right? A lot of the decisions are made locally. And so, we would just encourage you all to use the local boards as conveners to have these kinds of conversations and jointly identify what are the areas that are growing that it makes sense to train people because we don't want a training that doesn't lead to employment, right? And so, having those conversations at the local level.

And if you visit our ELL, the policy memo, one of the recommendations that we made, the process of that is actually taking place in a few places is that they've created sort of at the board level ELL work groups so that you bring in folks from the various systems to jointly sort of strategize about how you create the infrastructure long-term to serve this population, so that's something to consider.

MS. BAKER: Great. Thank you so much. Does anyone else on our panel want to talk a little bit about working with community colleges and offering programs? I think that would be helpful if anyone else, and also on our community college board might have a response as well.

MS. FOSTER: This is Jennifer Foster from Illinois again. And being a part of the system office, I would agree with California. It's best that you start at the state level in developing those agreements and the discussion points and making sure in our state we have the 39 community college districts and each of those districts are part of a local workforce area. So having the convening early on in terms of the development of a plan, but also then working with the community college.

There's another aspect to community college. I hope this is across the U.S., but in Illinois we also have a non-credit area which is our workforce development and customized training piece. So that could be a way to look at prior learning assessment in order to articulate that to the credit round. So you know, that gives, sometimes those courses get started really, really quickly. You can get the individuals in those and then later on come back and articulate that to credit for the participant so that they can continue on a career pathway.

MS. BAKER: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that response, everybody. I'm not seeing any other questions coming in for the panel at the moment, so I think we are going to go ahead and start wrapping this up. Again, we will give you a link in just a moment of our TAA community of practice. But if you have any other questions feel free to, you can go straight to the community of practice to the discussion board and you can enter them there and we hope to continue this conversation.

I did want to go ahead and reiterate what today's objectives were. Do you believe that we have accomplished our objectives? We took a look at data that did show a need to improve services to TAA ELL. We did acknowledge that all regions have TAA ELL participants. We did hear some great peer-shared practices that hopefully will assist and inspire states to adopt new methods of serving TAA ELL participants.

Of course, we want to remind you that TAA employment and case management funds can be used to implement new strategy, but also can be used all the way through training, then after training until successful reemployment occurs. So you can use those funds all the way through participation. And we have also heard about WIOA and other partners who are very valuable resources in approving our service delivery. So I'm going to turn this over to Consuelo now to finish our program off.

MS. HINES: Thank you, Julie. Yes. We encourage you to attend to the next upcoming webinar. The first one for the trade adjustment assistance for workforce community of practice and the second is setting themes for preparing approval for TAA programs with certifying reports. These actually will supplement all the great information that we have shared today. I will mention improvement for your implementation of the program.

And other resources we have put in this play in this slide, the training and employment (knowledge ?) 2016 change two. We need best practices. The link is there. And also, the TAA approval for workforce community of practice, WorkforceGPS. When you receive the invitation for the webinar for the TAA workforce community of practice, you may receive maybe just the name of TAA workforce community. So just saying that the invitation is returned to the same program, the same webinar.

And contact information. You have received them. You can see the e-mail and contact info in the corresponding flags of the presenters and here is our national and regional contact info for any questions that you may have after this presentation or future presentations. Thank you for another today.

MS. MCCALL: All right. Excellent as always.

(END)