**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Opening Plenary H-1B TechHire Virtual Institute 2019**

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LAURA CASERTANO: Hi. Welcome, everyone, to today's webinar. My name is Laura Casertano and I will be here if you need anything technically speaking. Hopefully, you won't hear too much from me, but if you do have any technical questions, go ahead and let me know in that chat box in the bottom left-hand corner of your screen.

That chat box is also where we'd like you to introduce yourself now. I do see that many of you have done so already. But if you haven't, just go ahead and let us know your name, the name of your organization, where you're located in the country, and how many are joining you if you're joining in a group. That chat box is also where you can ask any questions or make any comments about today's session. We would love to hear from you and we'll get to as many of them as we can.

You'll also notice in the file share window on the bottom right-hand part of the screen, you'll see a copy of today's PowerPoint, as well as another document about creating your SAC account. You can download it at any point throughout today's session. You can also find a copy of the PowerPoint, as well as the transcript and recording of this session on WorkforceGPS in about two business days.

One last thing from me before we get things started. I want to let everyone know about the feedback survey that's going to be e-mailed to you immediately following today's session. It's completely anonymous and we use your feedback to make these sessions more useful to you in the future. So please, don't forget to fill those out. You'll get one survey e-mailed to you immediately following today's session. And then, you'll get another a month from now. So please don't forget to fill those out.

With that, I'm going to move us right into today's presentation. And you haven't done so already or if you're just joining us, please introduce yourself in that chat. We'll give you another moment to do so now if you haven't done so already. And now, I'm going to bring up your first poll question. I know we had it on the screen already, but if you haven't had a chance to answer it yet, I'm bringing it up one more time for everybody. You should see a poll question on your screen right now.

And so we ask you to choose the answer that best describes you or your group. We want to know who's on the call today. So if you haven't done so already, please take a second now to select one of those answers. There are plenty of answers there, but if none of those quite fit you or your group, let us know in that chat on the bottom left-hand side of your screen. I'll give everyone another couple of seconds to do that now, then we'll move on.

All right. With that, I want to welcome everyone to the opening plenary of the 2019 TechHire Virtual Institute Innovation and Change, Strategies to Manage Your Grant. With that, I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Robin Fernkas, the division of strategic investment division chief. Robin, take it away.

ROBIN FERNKAS: Thanks, Laura, and good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to this opening plenary of our virtual institute of 2019. Thank you for introducing yourselves in the chat window and for filling out our first poll to let us know who's on the webinar today. It looks like we are tracking to a few of our authorized reps, but we have the majority of you are program managers and directors, which that is great.

And we also have performance staff, our case managers, and some of our business outreach staff. So that's great, to see all of you here from the grants. And we're really delighted that you could join us for this third and final convening of our TechHire grantees.

So as I welcome you today to this session that's going to focus on the innovative ways that you implemented your grants and adopted various change strategies to make course corrections, I wanted to take some time to reflect on your progress. We're excited to see that so many of you are meeting or exceeding your goals at this point in the grant.

I want to congratulate you on shifting your programs or practices to make this happen. We know that takes a lot of hard work. And so really appreciate all the work that you've been doing. And, as I noted, your success is really the result of an incredible dedication on your part and on your team's part. And it's really gratifying to see, collectively, the TechHire initiative is removing barriers for youth and young adults, and others who are experiencing barriers and really helping attain valuable skills that will help them succeed in the labor market.

So over the past couple of years, we've seen a number of promising practices emerge and we would like, through these next few weeks, to be spotlighting those or highlighting those so that we can share them more broadly, not just with this community, but hopefully beyond the TechHire initiative. So we'll be looking forward to hearing from all of you as we go through the sessions in the next few weeks. And I'll look forward to hearing back at the final plenary.

So joining me today is my colleague Ayreen Cadwallader, who's going to review with you some key policy guidance, which is based on frequently asked questions. We also have Todd Cohen from Maher & Maher, who's going to facilitate a discussion from two of our TechHire grantees, Miami-Dade College and Flying HIGH Professional Development Center. And they're going to share some experiences about how they've used innovation and change strategies to manage their grant programs. Matthew Poland, from Jobs for the Future, is going to be here to provide some tips on how to stay engaged with one another throughout the virtual institute.

So our session agenda today, we are in our introductions and overview and doing a welcome and update. We'll be hearing those innovation strategies from Miami-Dade and Flying High, and we're going to then really try to get a group discussion going. You'll be hearing more from Todd about what to expect from the virtual institute over the next two weeks. And then, we will be looking to answer any questions that you have in the remaining time that we have after the discussion.

So before I turn things over, I'd like to begin with quickly taking a look at what the TechHire grantees have accomplished so far. These outcomes are from the last reporting quarter, ending of June 30th, 2019. So today, you have served a total of 14,699 participants.

And so as of today, I'm sure you probably hit the 15,000 mark, and that's really exciting. Of those, 12,930 participants have begun training. And approximately half of those participants have completed training. Also, that completed the training, nearly 5,000, or 4,837 participants, have obtained a credential. And about 3,000 have gotten new jobs and 1,800 of our incumbent workers have advanced to new jobs as well.

So over the next year, we really expect these numbers will continue to increase, and we're really excited about where you are today. But that's really where we are. I would like to, at this point ask you how do you feel about the success of your TechHire program? Can you tell me, as you head into your final year, are you feeling great, like you've exceeded your benchmarks? Are you feeling good that you've progressed nicely toward your benchmarks? Are you optimistic that you may be a bit behind, but you're catching up? Or are you nervous? Do you have quite a bit of work to do in this final year?

And then, some of us may be feeling overwhelmed. So have you been struggling and do you need some help to meet your goals? And really, we're asking more out of where could we be supportive in helping you reach these goals as we head into the final stretch? So it looks like the majority of you are people– it looks like people were really in the great, good, or optimistic, which is a really good place to be at this point in the grant. And the majority of you are feeling good and some of you are feeling great. So that's awesome.

So in looking at where we are when we sort of break this down a little further, if we compare this to our target outcome measures, this chart shows how close we are to meeting our year three target goals, which is the red line, or orange line for some of you. And our year four, which is that higher gray line.

So as you can see, we're really on track for serving our participants. We're almost up to that year three target and enrolling them in training. So we're really keeping on track there. I do think we're going to see a big increase in the numbers in completing training over the next year. And we can focus on that through our upcoming technical assistance as well.

When we look at our outcome measures for credential outcomes and employment outcomes, these are ones that we typically see lag for a lot of the period of performance. And so we're not too alarmed at this point that we do see some lags here and that we're not on those targets.

We expect, again, given the high numbers of individuals that are enrolled in training, that we're going to see these increase over the coming quarters. And one thing I did want to point out is our training-related employment outcomes, which shows that of the 3,177 people that got a job, 2,265 of those participants are in jobs that are directly related to the training design.

So that's a 70 percent training-related employment rate, which is really awesome. So great job, everybody. I think you should – applause to you and I think you should feel really positive about that.

So at this time, I'm going to conclude my remarks. And I'd like to invite my colleague Ayreen to review some key policy issues with you.

AYREEN CADWALLADER: Great. Thank you so much, Robin. And thanks, everyone, for being on the call today. We're really excited for this two-week virtual institute for our TechHire grantees. This next section of the presentation, we really just wanted to go over some of the key policy questions that we wanted to address. And here, the first one is on the TechHire grant's eligible target populations and the percent ratio of target populations that can be served.

You'll remember that the goal of the TechHire grant is to empower and train American workers, particularly those with barriers to training and employment, in technology skills through traditional institutions of higher education, but also, non-traditional and accelerated training strategies.

As part of your statement of work, TechHire grantees selected one of several populations with barriers to employment as their target population. If you selected youth and young adults ages 17 to 29 as your primary target, you are required to serve at least 75 percent of your target population as this youth and young adults category.

The other populations may be unemployed, under employed, or incumbent workers. These do not to be youth and young adults. And no more than 25 percent of your total served must be these other populations.

If you selected one of the three special populations to serve as your primary target, these are those individuals with limited English proficiency, those with disabilities or prior record. You must serve at least 50 percent of your target population in these special populations and the other 50 percent of those can be unemployed, underemployed, and then, no more than 25 percent may be incumbent workers.

And so I did want to remind you all that these percentage rate showed will be applied to the total participants served at the end of your grant. You do not need to make sure that your percentage ratios are aligned on a quarterly basis. However, it is very good practice to make sure that you know your percentage ratios every reporting period so that you can make adjustments if needed. And really, continue to serve your participants in alignment with your target outcome goals, as you proposed, and ensure that they meet our full requirements.

OK. So if that – we can certainly advance to the next slide, which is our statement of work modifications. We are starting to see in this year four some statement of work – increase statement of work mods for the last year of your grant. And we do encourage you to review the ETA handbook, section four on modifying grants, for more details on submitting a statement of work mod and, obviously, working closely with your FPO to get this submitted to the national office.

The period of performance extensions, grantees may begin to request extensions by contacting your FPO to determine the feasibility of extending your grant. ETA will consider grantee's ability to continue meeting proposed outcomes, plus any available funds to continue your proposed program design, and requests may be awarded for up to one year. And then, lastly, related to those performance outcomes, we do not generally approve requests to reduce performance target outcomes. So let us know or work with your FPO if there's any issues here that we need to discuss on a one-on-one, case-by-case basis.

So the next slide is on the H-1B grants co-enrollment policy. I know that we have several H-1Bs grants that's out now, as well as some new ones coming along. Generally, we did want to provide some guidance here and that grantees should not co-enroll participants in more than one H-1B job training program.

Really, the intent of co-enrollment for H-1B grants is to leverage complementary resources to maximize the scope and scale of the funded activities throughout the grant. It would not be acceptable to leverage resources that would result in the co-enrollment in other H-1B-funded programs that are providing the same or similar services.

And generally, the purpose of this co-enrollment is to meet the training and employment needs of program participants and to provide participants with comprehensive services that may not be otherwise available or allowable under one individual grant or funding source. So it's generally co-enrolling participants in more than one H-1B job training grant program may lead to duplication of effort while limiting the total number of participants that can't be served through the H-1B grant.

We do encourage you to leverage resources, which may include co-enrolling H-1B participants through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity programs and other federally funded programs and non-general programs. And note that this guidance does not prevent grantees from leverage tools, materials, or other resources that were developed under H-1B grant training programs, assuming that these activities do not result in co-enrollment.

The next slides here and a couple of other questions that we've received. One of them is working with individuals with prior records. Those individuals must not be currently incarcerated or behind the walls. All individuals served must meet the definition of the employed workers eligible to receive grant-funded service, which, for example, how we define unemployed individual is an individual who is without a job and who wants and is available to work. And so that was sort of our guidance for why currently incarcerated individuals will not be allowable for the H-1B grant.

The other FAQ that we've received thus far is working with staffing agencies. We've seen this happen. It is allowable. Several instances where H-1B grantees have worked with staffing agencies. These are for job placement strategies and business engagement strategies. We've seen them with grantees working with staffing agencies to place their participants in paid work experiences and internships. That's certainly allowable. And again, our guidance is that it's allowable as long as the staffing agency is not paid by grant funds and by the employer for placing the participant in that job experience or internship.

Then, lastly, OJT is not allowable for placement with staffing agencies. That is one thing in the funding opportunity announcement that we've noted here. Related, we also know that working with staffing agencies could be a business engagement strategy for the purposes of getting people jobs.

And we did want to give you a few points to consider if you are thinking about counting these as employment outcomes for the purposes of reporting. These three bullet points here, really, we encourage you to really consider what was the original intent of your grant? Did you intend to place these individuals in short-term or temporary employment?

The next bullet to consider is who is the employer of record? Generally, the employer of record is the staffing agency until the company decides to hire the employee on a more permanent basis. And then, lastly, does this employment placement with a staffing agency meet the participant's long-term goals for placement along a career pathway for middle to high-skilled jobs?

So please, definitely consider these points as you're thinking about your employment placement strategies. We do really realize that getting a job and being paid consistent wages is an immediate need and a high priority for a lot of people. So we don't discourage this an employment strategy. However, for the purposes of reporting, we do really want you to consider the guidance that's provided here.

And lastly – I know we're breezing through these; let us know if there's any follow-up. It's the last guidance on outreach and recruitment on social media. I know that there's going to be a small group session on using social media for program engagement. It's a small group session, so if you're not attending that session, it will be available in the fall.

But we did want to provide some guidance that outreach and recruitment of eligible participants is an allowable activity. However, the activity has to be necessary for the successful performance of the grant. And therefore, paying fees, such as those for advertisement or using a social medial platform, if they charge a business fee, would be allowable. However, please submit a request to the Office of Grants Management for approval, no matter the amount, for using that social media platform.

I know I really breezed through that. Any questions? And please, drop them in here and we'll tackle them later in this presentation. And then, if there aren't any further questions, I can certainly turn it over to today's facilitator, Todd Cohen. Todd?

TODD COHEN: Hey. All right. Thanks, Ayreen. And let me reiterate. Yeah. I know it's a lot of information. So please just do us a favor. If you have any question, at all, please drop it in the chat. Either we'll get to it as part of today's session or, if it requires a longer conversation, we or Ayreen or others, we'll follow up with you and make sure we get it answered for you. So please, don't hesitate to drop that in.

OK. So I'm the director of strategic initiatives for Maher & Maher. I'm with Matthew Poland, senior program manager for Jobs for the Future. We're part of the team that's been providing technical assistance to all of you for the last few years on behalf of Department of Labor. And we just got a couple more things to showcase as part of this opening plenary.

The first is we want to give you a chance to hear from two of your superstar grantees. And they're going to share some quick stories of success that they've had in the last couple of years. Now, these are different kinds of success, two different success stories. I think what ties them together is the fact that they are innovative. But they also represent a shift in the strategy.

So when a key component of their tech hire program wasn't quite going as planned, they both demonstrated this ability to make a course correction and get on a path to meeting and, frankly, exceeding their program outcome. So we have about nine months left, maybe even a little bit more for some of us, so there's plenty of time to both leverage the successes we've had, but also, to pinpoint what's maybe not working and to make as many shifts necessary and finish strong.

So the first presentation, and these are going to be relatively quick, but they're going to be emblematic of what you're all going to hear over the next two weeks, real rich stories from the TechHire grant, but we're going to hear from Cynthia Pereda, the grant director from Miami-Dade College.

Cynthia and the grant has been really successful so far. She's going to talk about an online course model that had to get changed while they were into the program. And then, I believe Cynthia, you're also going to talk about your internship model, which also had to be enhanced and expanded, all as a result of feedback that you received from your participants or instructors, from employers. And so Cynthia, why don't you take it away for us.

CYNTHIA PEREDA: Great. Thank you, Todd. So thank you, everyone, for being here. And definitely, we have used a lot of innovation and change throughout the program, throughout these last three years, and we continue to do so, and it really has helped with the success of the program.

So one of the things Todd mentioned was our online checkpoint cybersecurity bootcamp. Originally, it was designed to be all online. And we started receiving feedback from our students, and not only from our students, but also our instructor, and we realized that through these conversations, that it was getting a little bit difficult for the students to really grasp everything that they were trying to learn online.

So we went ahead and, in speaking with our DOL officer, we decided to add additional lab hours. So then, the students started coming in weekly, on Fridays, for X number of hours so that along – to enhance what they were learning online. So they were not only receiving the lessons online, but they were now also attending a lab, where the instructor was there, and allowing them to one-on-one work together and troubleshoot any issues that they were experiencing when learning some of these lessons.

One of the other programs that we did something similar with was our cybersecurity course. It was originally three weeks, very intensive. They were learning multiple lessons in one day. So we decided with communication with our instructors and program, the director for that specific cohort, we would expand.

So instead of it being offered for only three weeks, we expanded those instructional hours and allowing students to start to take in, instead of three lessons a day, one lesson a day. And we really saw success and the students felt more comfortable and were able to retain all of that information that they were learning.

The other program that we – like you mentioned, the internship. So we were placing students in internship sites, but they were originally only for 150 hours. Our employers came back and provided us feedback that the students, once they were finally able to really understand the scope of their work, it was time for them – their internship was over. So we came together to try to figure out the number of hours that were more realistic for the student to learn what the skills are required of them. And then, actually, to practice it. To be able to get in on it and understand what they were learning, not only in the class setting, but then, also, in those few hours of training – on the job training.

So together with our DOL officer, we were able to do a scope of work change and from 150 hours, we expanded to 300 hours. So that really did help out our students and we've received much better feedback from the employers and the students themselves. And that's how we were able to really increase our success.

MR. COHEN: Cynthia, thanks. Quick question for you while I got you. So in both cases, what was the mechanism for feedback? I mean, you talked about employers coming back to you. Was it just one-off conversations? I mean, tell us a little bit about how what you have set up that allows you to sort of receive, analyze, and sort of understand where that feedback is coming from?

MS. PEREDA: Yeah. So we do – we have implemented surveys that we provide to the students at the end of each cohort. And with the internship site, we created a packet for them, so an internship packet. And in that packet, it allows them the opportunity to fill out some questions about their experience for the student and the employer, as well as an open box where they can provide any additional comments that they might have. So through that and, again, also, the daily conversation of on-site visits, that's how we've been receiving our information.

MR. COHEN: Excellent. All right. We're going to keep going. Again, these are quick hit snapshots of what you're going to learn more about over the next two weeks, but we wanted to give you a taste.

But if you have any questions for Cynthia, again, feel free to drop them in the main chat. We're going to do a little Q&A at the end here. I'm going to move on, though, to Flying HIGH. So Jeff Magada is executive director and founder of Flying HIGH. They're a community-based organization that serves the Youngstown, Ohio, region, and he's joined by Dr. Gretchen Hammond, CEO of Mighty Crow Media. So Gretchen is part of, really, the Flying HIGH TechHire team as well.

And what I want you to kind of pay attention to as Jeff talks is really what he's created here as part of the TechHire program is a real culture of change. So it's not even one isolated change. He's got – really, what they're doing is, in real time, regularly, continually, just identifying, pinpointing these changes and making the fixes as they move on. So Jeff, why don't you tell us a little bit about how that works.

JEFF MAGADA: Sure. Thank you, Todd. We appreciate you having us on. And I'd like to thank DOL for putting on the virtual institute. So myself and my staff will be attending every session and we appreciate the resources, bringing it to us at the right time. So thank you for that. But as far as what we're doing here, I guess our success has come from really have a good system and good people to carry out that system. So as we really look back and see was there any one thing that we've done that has really helped us achieve our benchmarks and our goals? It has been so many things that we couldn't even write them down.

So what we want to do is I'd like to tell you about the process by which we've been making change. So one of the first things we did is we focused on creating a good process. Because we learned that people work by processes and if you improve the process, you improve the way people work. And automatically, you will improve the results, and that is proven very true with us.

So what we did as a staff and as a team, we collectively looked at every part of our process, from outreach, our orientation process, our enrollment process, instruction, case management, support services, our employer engagement, our job development, and our post-placement follow-up.

And all the staff wrote down the sequential process by which they were doing things. And so this process was reviewed by me and all other project staff as we were looking to do it better. So we then held developmental meetings where staff made comments and suggestions to improve each part of each person's process.

So we were really zoning in on how are we doing things? What is happening sequentially in our processes? And then, how can we improve that as a team? And these revisions were integrated into the process for implementation, and then, for testing.

And so we test our processes in the following ways. We purposely survey and listen to all our students' feedback. We do that on a class-by-class basis. We're surveying and listening to what they have to say regarding every part of the process, from orientation all the way through graduation. And then, we also evaluate whether there needs to be personnel changes. Whether we're utilizing our personnel the effective way if there needs to be any kind of changes in regard to individuals doing certain tasks, we're always looking at that.

And the next thing we're testing our process with is we're listening to employers. So we have job developers on staff that meet with employers on a regular basis, and they're getting the feedback from the employers how job-ready our graduates our. And also, integrating more of the training aspect into their on-the-job training contracts that we're doing with employers.

We also have weekly meetings where staff is coached by me, the project director; program updates are provided; and we discuss how things are going. Are things running smoothly? Are more people coming to enroll? We recently, or not too long ago, instituted Textedly. So when individuals will come for meetings, we automatically get their phone number, and we'll blast them out texts to remind them coming back for certain meetings and orientations and key dates. We're also we're aggressively using social media for outreach and enrollment. And also, we are really leveraging our community partners. So we have multiple community partners in our area, and we make sure we're in touch with them every time we're doing enrollments. So we get them promoting and referring to our programs on a regular basis.

And then, of course, most importantly, we're always reviewing completion and placement rates to see if we're on target to meet our goals. And we do that in a couple of ways. We utilize a real-time dashboard that all staff has access to on a daily basis. It's updated regularly, actually, daily. And then, we do a little old fashion. We use an eight-foot-long whiteboard to keep all staff informed as to where we're at in relation to our goals so we can see if clients pass through the process, all their names are moved from each column to the next. Staff can have – see a real person moving through those processes.

And then, the last thing we do is we utilize Dr. Gretchen Hammond and her team at Mighty Crow to come annually and evaluate our data. And she meets with us and provides us valuable improvement methods and strategies. So we're always kind of reintegrating and taking a look at it. So at this time, I'd like to ask Dr. Hammond for some comments.

DR. GRETCHEN HAMMOND: Thank you, Jeff, and thank you, everyone for being a part of this call. I would reiterate, from an evaluator's perspective, that we have a lot of data at our fingertips, both from what we're entering into the WIB system and then, what we're collecting as a program. And one of the things that Jeff stays tuned into is he doesn't wait until quarterly reports to really look deeply at his data. It really is something that he's monitoring constantly. And so when we built our own data system, we wanted something that would allow him to see numbers in real time. And so our system updates every 30 minutes so he can really see where people are progressing.

And then, we really split out our population into cohorts, not just by quarter, but we looked at people demographically and say to ourselves, okay. So if women are coming into our program, how are they doing? And are they performing different than men? And then, what does that look like when you factor in for age? And what does that look like when you take people who might be part of a special population? We deal with a lot of individuals who have been incarcerated. What do we know about them and how quickly are they progressing?

And like Jeff said, that data then feeds into the process discussion that the team is having so that they can make quick changes. A lot of the strategy at Flying HIGH has been a quick change evaluation process, where you pick something small, like when you do orientation, time of day, and you change it and you look at how that impacts things very quickly over a two-week period. And then, that allows you to implement constant fixes very, very quickly. And so that's been my role, is to try and feed him the best data possible so that his staff, the boots on the ground, are really looking at things and able to make those informed decisions.

MR. MAGADA: Absolutely. And Dr. Hammond and her team is invaluable to us to help us process through that. So in conclusion, I'd just like to say it's been a continuous process of improvement driven by an eager desire to do it better. And I guess if we had to put a little formula into this, Todd, it'd be good process plus good people make for good results.

MR. COHEN: That's great, Jeff. Jeff, let me ask you, and then, Cynthia, I want to bring you back in here for some quick Q&A. So the process was phenomenal. It's fantastic. Let me ask was there a specific change, Jeff, maybe, that you could point to that you thought, going into the grant would go one way and then, through these conversations, look at the dashboard, you had to pivot on that you could share real quick?

MR. MAGADA: Yeah. I think our ability to discern whether we had individuals coming into the program or seeking to enroll in the program who were ready and able to complete the training, Todd. I think that was probably the biggest thing that we've grown in, is that we want people – we're not here to set them up for failure.

We're here to set them up for success, but you got to be ready for that and have certain things in line so that you can complete the program and be marketable for employment and maintain, right, sustainable career. So that was probably the biggest thing that we really put a lot of time into over the last three years.

MR. COHEN: That's great. And I think a lot of folks – a lot of your fellow grantee leads probably had something similar to that notion, but that's great. Cynthia, let me bring you back in here real quick too. So you talked about some of the changes to your internship and the instruction model. Surely, you had to kind of have these meetings with instructors and academic leads. And maybe you could say a little bit about how that's gone down at Miami-Dade. Was that a one-time thing? Are you doing that regularly?

MS. PEREDA: So we're constantly meeting with our instructors in the academic schools. So for example, internally with our team, since we do have a team of around six staff, we do weekly team meetings, just to follow up, seeing how the students are doing, how they're engaging in their program. Is anyone falling through the cracks? Do we need to provide them any additional resources, so that they can try to be as successful as possible within the cohort, while the students are there?

And then, if you look at the cohort as a whole, we do a kickoff and a wrap-up meeting at the beginning, right before we start each cohort, to see any lessons learned, what's expected of this upcoming cohort, what we've changed to make sure that both the instructors and the students are successful. And then, at the end, we do a wrap-up meeting. So let's look back. What did we – from the changes that we made, what did we think of it? Should we continue to make any additional changes? Or did this new system work? So we're constantly monitoring and changing as needed.

So just because we expected something to go one way doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to happen. And it's okay for it to not have worked out as planned and to just continue to move forward and use it as a lesson learned. So yes, we do constantly have communication and we're constantly meeting with our students and our team.

MR. COHEN: Excellent. All right. I'm going to do this. What I'm going to add, there's a couple of questions that came in. So Jeff and Cynthia, if you just stand by for us. We're going to go through the TechHire virtual institute and talk through what we're going to learn and see over the next couple weeks. But then, we've got a few more minutes at the very end for Q&A. So I want to bring you back in.

One question that was just thrown out there was about a particular participant success story. So I'm going to give you the next 10 minutes to think about a really great one and come back to you on that. Is that fair? All right. OK. I really appreciate those stories. Those are the kinds of stories that are going to be talked about at length in much more detail over the next two weeks in the large and small sessions. So it's, really, I think, really rich stuff and things that are adaptable for all of us that are finishing out this grant.

OK. So what to expect during the virtual institute. And then, for others, please, again, use the chat. Keep those questions coming. So this will be like a conference, all done virtually. It's going to take place over two weeks. It's really designed for you. In other words, all of the coaches who have been working with you pretty closely, I think, have a pretty good sense and idea of what it is that is still keeping all of you up at night.

And so these sessions that I'm going to walk through real quick are very specific and very targeted to what we believe are the common challenges that you all have told us. So it's designed for you, but it's also designed by you. So every session is being led by or being featured – or featuring one of you, so one of the TechHire grantees. So at this point, we have so many great success stories, that those are going to drive the informational sessions over the next two weeks. So I think that'll make it just, again, much more rich and interesting.

So we have an opening and closing plenary. This is the opening. We'll have a closing at the end. We've got a few group sessions that are open for anyone on your grant team, and we'll show you how to sign up for that. And then, some small groups sessions, which are invite-only, targeted, roll up your sleeves, sort of back and forth conversations. I'm going to talk through that. And then, Matt Poland, at the end, is going to talk to the Slack channel and ways to engage throughout the process, because we want the next two weeks to be really back and forth conversation that doesn't stop.

OK. So really quickly. And then, I would ask if somebody, Christina or Laura, could put the link on the left on where folks can register for these, that would be phenomenal. But here's what to expect. OK. There it is. Perfect. Thank you. So these are the large group sessions. Again, any one of you, any person on your team, and of your partners, any of your subrecipients, they can attend these sessions. And so the first one is on TechHire grantee strategies for ensuring program completion.

So Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico, Midlands Technical College are going to be leading this session, and they've got some very innovative strategies to help support and motivate students from recruitment or enrollment to program completion to credential obtainment to placement. So really, if any of you are thinking about how do we ensure our pipeline of participants stays strong, folks stay engaged, retained, and then, end up on the back end in a successful career, this session's going to dive deep into some strategies around that.

Thursday of this week, we'll be talk about H-1B TechHire performance reporting, and Miami-Dade Community College is going to come back for that. But really, how to track and report real-time employment and training outcome measures. So I think many of us should be interested in that, and that'll be a really great session.

Then, next week, on Tuesday, it'll be Steering the DeLorean. How do I Make Sense of the Future of Work? And so Chippewa Valley Technical College will be leading that. It should be a really innovative, interesting, fun session, even, but how are the technologies that are affecting the IT-based occupations that we're all focused on for TechHire affecting those occupations?

And especially for those of us who are thinking about sustaining the great curriculum and programs that we've developed and thinking about how the future of work is affecting these specific TechHire-based occupations. It should be a really interesting session.

I'll make a quick note. It's not actually Miami-Dade Community College. Bridge Valley. Sorry about that, Bridge Valley, who is part of the Thursday session on performance reporting. So again, those are the large group sessions. They should be really interesting. I encourage all of you to sign up.

Now, the small group sessions, so that's what you see on this page, these are invite-only. They're target-only. I'm still going to talk through them, because you should know by now which sessions you are a part of. If you see something on here, though, that you want to attend, that is it sounds perfect for who you are and what you need, then in the chat, write your name, write your contact information. We'll figure out a way to get you engaged in that. It'll either be part of these sessions or be part of a later session. OK?

So the first one will be on Sustainability Plan Work Session. That'll be led by State Technical College of Missouri. And that should be really interesting because they're, I think, going to talk about a collective approach, not just the college's approach to sustainability of the TechHire work, but collectively, how they're doing that with their partners.

Also on Wednesday, Coaching and Case Management for Participant Success, Midlands Technical College. Again, designed for case managers, coaches, navigators. How do you support the support needed for students to succeed through the program? And then, Best Practices and Strategies for Confirming Demand, and this will be North Central Texas College. They've done a really good job in evaluating skills and job demand working with their employers to really pinpoint the skill occupational credential needs and then, infusing that into their responsive programs.

And then, on Monday, so a week from today, three more really great small group sessions. So Leveraging Participant Relationships for Employment Outcome. So I know many of you are dealing with this, but staying in touch after program completion with your participants to track outcomes. I know it's a difficult thing. We're going to talk a lot about strategies for student and alumni engagement. So it should be a really good session.

Using Social Media for Program Engagement. I think all of you have used social media to some extent for your TechHire work. Clackamas Community College has gone above and beyond in terms of using their social media strategies to improve outcomes. So a really rich conversation around what they've done and it's all innovative and it's all really adaptable, I think.

And then, Flying HIGH and Jeff will be coming back for a session on Employer-Centered Design to Boost Business Engagement. And he's going to talk about a number of those things he mentioned today around employer engagement, including the sort of post-placement employer check-ins that he mentioned his job developers are doing as part of their comprehensive employer relationship-building approach that will continue long after the grant is gone.

So a lot of great sessions. For those of you who are invited to these, really encourage you to make sure you're there. Bring your team. And for those of you who want to attend or see something interesting, again, put your name on the left, put your contact information, and we'll make sure you're engaged. Any questions on that? Again, put your questions there at the end.

And let's see if we could hit a couple of these. I think we have a few minutes here. Jeff and Cynthia, before I even start, let me come back to you. If you could each really quickly give us one great success story, participant success story, 30 seconds or less, let's start there. Who wants to take that first? Jeff, how about you?

MR. MAGADA: OK. So we had, actually, a 38-year-old male that had been incarcerated multiple times with us and who also had some addiction issues and entered our program.

And we helped – we placed him in our work acclimation job readiness piece, where he was – he got back in the grind of getting up for work, taking instructions, completing tasks, and did very well. Entered into our welding training program, all the time working with a case manager to get what we call the big five in place – valid driver's license, reliable transportation, professionalism skills, making sure he's clean and drugs-free, and also, went through some of our drug counseling.

And he had multiple children and was trying to secure a home for them by getting himself a home and bringing back his partner with him. And he was able to do that, as a home. He has now a full-time position, doing very well, making some very good money, and supporting all his kids and his significant other. And we're very proud of him.

MR. COHEN: Excellent. Cynthia, how about you?

MS. PEREDA: Yes. So we actually had this one young lady. She entered our program – and she had experienced homelessness in the paste; she had been in one of the shelters. And she was already stably housed, which was good, but she did have a child. And then, luckily, with our grant, we did have – we do have funds to assist students with childcare. That was one of the largest barriers that she had, that she wouldn't be able to attend school and pay for childcare.

So we did assist her in the electronic health records program that we have. And she was able to successfully complete that certification exam. She worked together with our career readiness advisor and they were able to place her in a stable position. And now, she's successfully hired. She's been able to maintain her job. We maintained in contact with her and followed up with her. And luckily, she now has her child in permanent childcare, and she doesn't have to worry about those things anymore. And she's been doing very well.

MR. COHEN: That's excellent. And Cynthia, let me, while I have you – and this question could go on for – the answer to this could go on for a while. But let me see if you could hit it real quick.

And then, we're going to talk more about this, I'm sure, in the deeper dive sessions later. But somebody had asked this question about community colleges. I mean, just that low unemployment means lower enrollments across the college in every program. It's affected, no doubt, most of the colleges that are grantees here. Has that affected you? And then, give us, maybe, really quick, how have you dealt with that?

MS. PEREDA: So yes. At first, my recruiter wanted to kill me and didn't understand how she would be able to recruit for this specific population. We've been able to – we've had to change around our approach for marketing a lot. We so realize that not one method works for us. We have to use everything.

So our recruiter is – she goes to Target. She takes flyers with her. She starts passing them out. Here within the community, we try to target each cohort to the community that it's going to be held at. So flyer. We send e-mails blasts. And our biggest thing has been social media. So hitting the Instagram and the Facebook. That's really helped us.

But yes. We've had to turn away students and – because of that. Because either their income is too high, or they just don't meet the qualifications. But we have been able to meet our target and actually, exceed that. So it's been tough and we've had to get creative, but we have been able to do it.

MR. COHEN: That's helpful. Thanks, Cynthia. OK. Ayreen, let me pull you back in because somebody asked a technical question about the no-cost extension. And maybe you could say a little bit more about that and what's possible, not possible.

MS. CADWALLADER: Sure thing. And really quickly, it's definitely our period of performance extensions for the H-1B grant. These were originally for your grant that was awarded. There is an opportunity to extend if there are funds available and if your program design can support an additional couple months of continuing your grant program. We do put a cap on it, which is a year of creative performance extension grants that you can receive. And those are done by coordinating with your FPO and talking with them about how the feasibility of if that is possible for your grant program.

MR. COHEN: Excellent. Thanks. OK. We have one more thing to cover. Don't leave yet. It's the Slack channel. And really, this is important because this is how all of you, we can stay engaged over the next couple of weeks and get your questions answered. I did want to – let me just remake the point, though, that the sessions coming up after this, large and small, will be heavy on the back and forth.

And the small group sessions, you all will not be muted. You'll be conversing with all of us. So that's where we're going to tackle a lot of the challenges questions that you've had. So keep those coming.

But with that, Matt, let me turn it over to you to take us through Slack.

MATT POLAND: Thanks, Todd. So yeah. We're really excited to introduce a new tool for engaging during the virtual institute. It's called Slack, and it's a communication tool that's become very popular in the workplace, and many of you may have heard of it. It's great for communicating among teams and groups and kind of quick conversations. You know, think of it as kind of a direct message or chat function that you can use across teams. People use it quite a bit on mobile devices, but you can also use it in a desktop application.

So we actually created what's called a workspace on Slack for the virtual learning institute. The link for it is in your Web links. There's a little box there you have for the Web links on the screen. And everything I'm going through here is actually on the file share as well.

Creating your Slack account. There's two documents there and creating a Slack account is one of them that goes through step by step. So you're going to click on the invite link, which is both in the PowerPoint here, and it's also in that document. You're going to enter your e-mail address. It's going to confirm you over e-mail. If you don't already have a Slack account, you'll have to set one up real quick and easy. Just have to put a name and password in. And then, you're going to create a name for it. We're suggesting folks put their organization next to their name so people know where you're from.

And then, you'll be invited to the TechHire virtual learning institute workspace. We have just a couple channels on there, and it talks about it in that document. One is the main channel for chats. So if you want to post resources, ask questions, we invite you to use that. There's also an announcement, so that's more for announcing things happening with the virtual learning institute.

But mainly, the chat will take place in the – it's called VLI-2019. You'll see it when you log in. And you can also download it, both on Android and from the App Store and Apple, if you want to use your phone for it. That's what I think is really popular with Slack, is being in quick communication with teams among Slack.

So we're really hoping that folks want to check it out and consider using it for programs or communicating with colleagues. And we're having you try it out during the virtual learning institute. So we'll be asking questions to follow up after each session and coaches will also be out there to engage with you.

And then, at the end of the virtual learning institute, we're going to be archiving the workspace on Slack and closing it out. But we will move everything that's happened on there onto WorkforceGPS. So all the information that we exchange during the virtual learning institute will be preserved on WorkforceGPS going forward. So that is the quick and dirty version of Slack for everybody. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me or anyone from the TechHire team. We're happy to help.

MR. COHEN: Great, Matt. Thanks. And let me remind folks that if you look at the Web links box, I think it must be on the bottom, middle bottom, of your screen, there you go, that's where you can sign up for Slack that Matt just talked about. But that is also where you can register for all the sessions. OK. So I encourage you to go on there, just register, get your name in the mix, and then, you'll be a part of this session.

So let me do this. Let me close by just thanking Robin and Ayreen, DOL, all the team there. And then, Cynthia, Jeff, Gretchen, all of you for being a part of this. And for all of you out there, just for being part of this and the work you're doing, and we look forward to really engaging on the deep level on this stuff over the coming weeks. So thanks again and we'll see you soon.

(END)