**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**TechHire Grantee Strategies for Ensuring Program Completion**

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

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LAURA CASERTANO: Presentation. I want to welcome everyone to the second session of the 2019 Virtual Institute, "TechHire Guaranteed Strategies for Ensuring Program Completion." And again, if you haven't done so already, please introduce yourself in the chat on the bottom left hand side of your screen. If you just joined us, please don't forget to introduce yourself in that chat.

With that, I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Danielle Kittrell. She's a workforce analyst, employment and training administration with the U.S. Department of Labor. She's going to take us to our first goal. Danielle, take it away.

DANIELLE KITTRELL: Thank you so much, Laura and good afternoon everybody. Welcome to the second session. So again, before we get started we'd like to ask you to examine the issue of participant attrition, but we want to know what are the common reasons why participants may not complete your TechHire program.

So please go ahead and click the poll if you haven't already. Wow, you guys are great. OK. So you're having challenges balancing work. Do you hear that from participants? They can't support themselves during training. Certification exams, we hear that a lot with the H-1B program. Not ready to be successful in post-secondary training. Any English language barriers. What kind of issues are you seeing?

Oh great, a lot of challenges balancing work. Interesting. Couple English language barriers. All right. Cannot support themselves during training. Interesting. All right guys, well thank you. Hopefully we'll help you today with this presentation.

So now, again, my name is Danielle Kittrell. I work here at the national office in the employment and training administration. And again, I'll be your moderator for today. So I'm so happy to introduce Emily Appel-Newby who was the manager for ICF. She will be your facilitator. And I'm also so delighted to introduce two of our TechHire grantees, Midlands Technical College along with the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico. So we have some great speakers.

Now, here is a sneak peek of the agenda, as you can see, but also our objectives. They include to really look at the leakage points in your respective programs. We also want to helpfully prevent and also address those leakage points.

So as I said before, we have a really exciting presentation for you today. So with that, I will go ahead and pass things over to Emily. Emily, take it away.

EMILY APPEL-NEWBY: Thanks so much Danielle. This is Emily at ICF. I'm a coach to five wonderful TechHire grantees and I'm excited to be facilitating today's discussion. The topic of program completion is very important to all of us and dear to our hearts. I know because we – probably all believe strongly in the model of the TechHire program, the opportunity that it presents to the young people in other workers with challenges that we are trying to engage in the program.

And do we know that we have a lot of great employment placement services and wraparound services and we just want to get people to benefit from those programs. And so it can be really disappointing if someone joins the program and goes through that. We've been able to connect with them. But then, for some reason, it doesn't seem to be a fit for them.

And so, today the purpose of today's call is to help us, help provide you with a framework, first for analyzing what what are the challenges and reasons why people might drop out of the program; and then to give you some ideas about solutions that other grantees have implemented to help make sure that their participants, once enrolled are actually going to be able to complete the program, be it a short-term certificate or a longer term program.

So I wanted to share an approach that I used as a coach with one of the TechHire grantees that I work with, which is the MechaWA project in Washington State. Which is centered in Everett Community College but it's actually a consortium of I believe five or six different colleges working on advanced manufacturing.

One of the barriers that they were experiencing was that people would enroll in the program and then drop out before they had completed the degree or certificate. Many times for a good reason, because they found employment. But in the end, it counted against them in terms of their TechHire metrics, in terms of program completion and degree and certificate degree completion and certificate obtainment.

So I worked with them on a customer journey mapping exercise to think about from the perspective of the – a brief one it was just an hour conversation with program managers at each of the participating member colleges. To ask about what are some of the barriers and how could we think about what kind of solutions we could offer for – they could offer for each of those barriers. So we took it in terms of stages of the program.

So thinking about post-enrollment, the first half of the program, one of the barriers that tend to carve people to drop out of the program and then the second half. And I'll share some of those – some of the challenges and barriers that they talked about but I think that you got everyone here will find them probably pretty familiar whether you're working on advanced manufacturing or health care or IT.

Overall challenges came – the conflict was the student's goal was just to get employed; often, maybe sometimes as fast as possible. Well, the program's goal is training completion in addition to employment, and so that could present a conflict when the opportunity for employment arose.

Students already have families and maybe existing jobs that they have to balance with their training. What they found with advanced manufacturing specifically the Mechatronics field is large – shift hours, shift work and at very odd hours since it's about maintenance of manufacturing machinery. It has to be fit in during some particular times and then Mechatronics training requires really hands on work in the lab. They can't be outsourced where students can do their own self-directed study.

So that made the scheduling more demanding. Specifically during the first half of the program, participants realized that maybe Mechatronics isn't for them. It was not as much of a good fit for their personality and their workstyle. Maybe they needed to keep working to provide for their family and their employer wouldn't provide flexibility to attend classes. English language barriers, a lot of the same things we talked about in that opening poll question that you reflected were barriers that you're seeing in your program.

So during the second half of the program after they had really engaged for a while, they found that if a student gets a job offer, they drop out of their program. They found that because there was a degree program, there were uncompleted and deferred general education requirements that students just necessarily want to loop back to and they were – they felt like they were done with the program but this was a barrier to having them actually get the degree. And then in one particular situation there was a joint program where they needed to transfer between the colleges to complete the program and that was a barrier.

So then we talked about what are some – looking at those specific set of barriers and challenges, what are some solutions that are beyond the case management and wraparound services and employment services and tutoring services that you already – That you already provide as a pretty standard level of care. What are some other ideas that you might want to experiment with?

And so they talked about maybe wanting to experiment with creating – they did not have a cohort program because it was already structured around the degree program. So they thought they could maybe create informal cohorts to generate positive peer pressure and peer support. And they could motivate people to come together physically for cohorts, learning by giving them access to new tools not being used in class. Since this is Mechatronics, they literally mean new tools that the students could get hands on if they came into some kind of after-hours opportunity.

The creative solutions that they brainstormed to the second half was when students get jobs they could maybe position them as paid internships so they could stay connected to the program and the TechHire project would reimburse the employer.

And then another idea they thought of is when you have a non-completer who did get – who left because they got employment, maybe reconnect with them six or 12 or even 18 months after they get employment to talk to them about finishing their degree or their certificate. Offer them, specifically explore credit for prior learning to earn college credit for skills learned on the job to help accelerate their path to finishing up that degree.

So you can see with this exercise of the journey mapping where we took a look at stage by state the challenges that people were having and then do the matching stage by stage analysis of what the opportunities were. And I think this exercise as a whole took an hour, hour and a half. And it generated some ideas that they had not thought of just because you were bringing program managers from across the different member of colleges of their consortium, their project consortium into the room together. So it was a helpful exercise.

So I thought – I wanted to start off by sharing that exercise with you all to kind of ground this conversation in the kind of challenges that I think are universal based on the poll in terms of reasons why TechHire participants once recruited and enrolled may not be able to stay in a program but then also to give you a structure to think about doing your own internal analysis.

So that you can collect data about what are the barriers for – include your case managers, include your job developers you have on staff and other people in student success centers if you're a college to collect data about what are the specific barriers that we're seeing. One of the most common barriers that we're seeing and to generate a discussion about how to overcome those.

So having presented that, I am excited to introduce you to the two grantees that two grantees or multiple representatives actually that were are going to have on today's call. Who are going to share their experience with operating and TechHire program and designing program components with student completion and retention in mind.

And the first grantee that we brought in is the Midlands Technical College who are operating in Columbia, South Carolina. They are focused on IT and front-end design. We have three folks from Midlands who are joining to present their program today because there was so much enthusiasm about the program. And they all wanted to be able to share their piece of what each of these roles – each of their roles do to support student retention and completion.

So we have Qiana Henton, whose title is actually retention advocate. So that goes to show how much of a focus retention and completion has been from the beginning in their program; and then two of their job readiness coaches, John Cocchiarella and Kelly Simmons III. So with that I want to turn it over to Qiana to introduce their program.

MS. HENTON: Thank you Emily. Good afternoon everyone, my name is Qiana Henton. I'm here located out of Columbia, South Carolina at Midlands Technical College. Of course we operate with the TechHire program and we service three county areas, which is the Richland County, Lexington County, and Fairfield County. So what that means is that any participant that or any applicant that becomes a participant or is awarded as a scholarship recipient, they have to be a resident of one of those three counties which we service in the surrounding Midlands area.

In terms of our targeted groups, we are targeting those that have at least a high school diploma or GED. So we're targeting those that are youth or young adults between the ages of 17 to 29 years old and that need help connecting to employment and training services.

We also offer four main areas of services. So we have the intensive services which basically are for those who come to us who may have already taken the IT training and received IT certification but just have a hard time trying to find employment. So we actually help them with that. So we provide a job service for them with providing assistance with them in terms of job postings, helping them find jobs, even internship opportunities so that they can gain the experience that they need.

Because a lot of times they have the training, the formal training, but they just don't have enough work experience. So a lot of times that is what the issue is with them trying to gain employment in the IT field is because of the lack of experience. So I'll bring in that intensive service piece is a great help to those so that they can help get their foot in the door with the IT field.

The other service that we offer is of course, the boot camp training. We offer three networking programs and two programming programs. So the networking programs are computer technician programs, then we have the desktop and service administrator program, and then we have the advanced desktop and server administrator program.

Those three programs consist of A+ Network+, Security+, Cloud+, and you have the Windows server classes and then also the CCNA Cisco classes which part one and two – that consist of part one and two and then we have the Linux+. So every participant who's interested in these networking programs have the opportunities to go all the way through the advanced programs if they're interested in doing so. Which we do encourage them to do because as you all know, the more IT certifications you have, the marketable you are going to become.

And then for the programming programs, we offer two programs which is the front-end web developer and the back-end web developer. And so those – that is for those who are interested in creating webpages, who love coding, all those good types of programs they like to develop. So we offer those two programs.

We encourage everyone – if they're interested in the front-end, we encourage them to also take the back-end and we call that as a person that is fully stacked. So they actually know how to code and also understand the language of programing. We have noticed that a lot of employers they look for those that are actually fully stacked and who has that language behind the coding. So we encourage everyone to take those programs together if the opportunity is there for them to do that.

And then we also offer certification preparation courses and that is mainly for those that are on the networking side. Because of the fact on networking side you have to have certification so we offer an exam prep course; which really for those that are in the training, it is mandatory for them to attend. So that it's there for them to help prepare for the certification exam. Those exam preparation courses are instructor led.

That's when they have the opportunity to take practice exams, ask questions. And while they are taking those practice exams any areas in which they are deficient in, that's the time that they can actually get the help and assistance that they need from the instructor to be able to help them overcome those deficiencies. So we have found out that those certification preparation exam classes have been a great asset to the program and when it comes to these students working on a – (inaudible) – certification.

And then we also offer employment services. With our employment service piece we have paid internships which are 12 weeks long. And in those paid internships it's the – it's paid through the grant so there's no cost that's coming out of the employer's budget. It's really a win-win situation for the actual participant and the employer.

The employer gets an opportunity to bring someone on board that they can train and utilize their recent skills and training abilities to be able to help them grow. And we've been really successful in our internship program doing that. There has been a lot of success that has come out of this meeting. We've had a good bit of students that have been hired on through those internship opportunities which has been really good.

So it's only 12 weeks long, they can work a total of 30 hours a week or up to 30 hour work week. And it's been a great opportunity for those who have taken advantage of it. The one thing about the paid internship, is in order to become eligible for a paid internship, is that you must at least successfully complete your, on the networking side, your computer technician training, which consists of A+ and Network+. And you have to obtain your A+ and Network+ certification. And then once you've obtained that, then you are now eligible for a paid internship.

And on the programing side, you would have to successfully complete the front-end web development training. And so once they are eligible for that, then we provide that service to them. However, there are students that have made decisions to move forward and continue to take the courses before taking an internship which is totally fine. It really is up to the participant's discretion on how they would like to take their internship.

We also provide job search assistance as well. So we also give – we also email all the participants their job postings. We help with resume review. We help with mock interviews. We do everything that we can to possibly help prepare our participants to get out into the workforce so we also offer those types of services to them as well. And we also help with those that are unemployed and underemployed. We also help with job participants as well for those participants that are coming in the program that need to have that assistance in trying to find employment.

OK, so that ends where I'm stop and I'm going to head over and present to you Mister John Cocchiarella, who's going to continue speaking on the services that we offer our students.

JOHN COCCHIARELLA: Good afternoon everybody. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk about TechHire in our program. The majority of our students in the age range that we're working with the 17 to 29, one of our challenges is that they don't have a lot of IT background.

And so when the program was first implemented we needed to strategically look at how do we best ensure that everybody is going to make through the program? Really we have three touch points that you can see on the slide there. I'm going to talk briefly about them to kind of give you an idea of how we approach.

From the very beginning, when we first meet prospective students, to help them make that commitment and follow through with the commitment they complete the program because it is very intensive as all of our programs are.

We really start with an information session. That's an open session that we have we have about weekly, I guess throughout our three county area. This is just a great opportunity for folks to come out, they heard about scholarship, they heard about the free training, and really get an idea of what that training consists of.

We've taken a very key but simple approach in letting them know what the expectations are and also what they can expect if they successfully complete the program as well. A lot of times we get questions about, well I've never programed before and specifically with the programing side, this happens quite often.

And so we also have some resources available to them to help them make that decision. Of course we use – own that online. But we can also send them to online classes just to see if they can get past the hello world aspect which I personally can never get past that point. And then let them decide if programing is for them.

So then when they come back during the advisement then we can talk about their experience and really determine is this a career that you're really interested in? Or did you just hear about the fact that web developers can make a million dollars their first year in the industry? And so we really have a heart-to-heart conversation during the advisement and it's always one on one. And we have a couple of others.

There's three of us on the team. So we have a couple folks that will sit down and just talk about what the goals are, talk about their individual goals and then we provide all kinds of supportive services to them as well. We built the program around understanding that there's roadblocks and understanding that we have to be prepared to offer assistance in overcoming those roadblocks.

So we talk about roadblocks quite a bit. We talk about the things that have kept people from finishing and we go on individually, what are your personal roadblocks and then we offer support. We offer services. The biggest thing we offer is, hey look we know it's going to be tough. We know it's going to be difficult.

What we want you to do is if you come up against a roadblock, let's work through it together. And we've been able to do that so we see the students coming to us. We just had it happen right before this session where a student is struggling in A+ because they're just not used to the boot camp process or boot camp type of classes.

The last thing that we do that I think is probably not unique but something that we really drive home is that during the orientation. In the orientation once folks have been approved, once they've gone through the advisement we get them together as class or as what we call a cohort and we bring them in and we spend about an hour and a half during orientation talking about what the expectations are, but really it's – the goal is to teach them or to start to build a team.

From our experience, we understand that if they work together as a team, they have a better chance of completing. And we've got evidence of that throughout our cohorts. Those that have gotten together offline together and spent a couple of hours each Saturday studying together find themselves to be more successful. So those are the three kind of touch points that we use from the very beginning to start building a team work, start building a commitment with our students.

Now I'd like to introduce to you, Kelly Simmons III. He's also a job coach here with Midlands TechHire. He's going to bring our part of the presentation home.

KELLY SIMMONS III: Thank you John. Hello everyone. Just wanted to touch on four points that we believe that's helpful when it comes to solutions and then also just for completion and then retention for our students.

First thing is that, of course during the training, we have incorporated what we call interpersonal strategies for success because just based on internships, based on our engagement with employers and the industry, what we've heard is that it's great that you have certifications, you have the training, and you have all of those things put in place but, do you have the soft skills?

Do you have those interpersonal strategies for success? And those types of things are team work, communication, conflict resolution, decision making. All of those things to enhance your positive self to make sure that you are prepared for what's to come. We've made that mandatory for all of our students.

We've incorporated it into the training program itself and we find that some students, they are a little apprehensive. Because I like to consider it as professional development while they're in training, that they have that experience and then also, that they are ahead of the game when it comes to competition. Because that's what we let them know. It's like, look, you're in competition not only with each other but also other individuals that are trying to get into the IT field and so this is what we are seeing is being very, very successful and helpful.

With that, the next point that I want to point out is just identifying participant challenges. I think John was talking about roadblocks and I think that's pretty much, probably across the board, that our participants they do have challenges. Life happens, but one key that we've really honed in on is connecting with our instructors, having those doors of communication open with our instructors so that we can identify participant challenges that they are facing.

And again, we're just reminded that life happens and we just want to make sure that our students, they are aware that we are here for them. And we want to convey that to the instructors as well that we are there to assist them. So again where they can focus on instructing but where we can provide additional services and support for our students to help. May not necessarily remove the entire roadblock, but to help – to get them through that process so they can be successful in their training.

So of course after training, we do – and Qiana talked about it as well – is the mandatory exam preparation classes and study sessions. As she mentioned, it is instructor led and it gives students the opportunity to increase their focus but then also, their – in their abilities to take the exam, to get prepared, to become just excited about taking their certifications.

Because we understand that once they complete the training, typically where the roadblock or challenge is, is taking the exam. We've incorporated that into our training. They're required to participate and we've seen where the morale and the excitement, and the desire to take their certs have increased. With the mandatory exam prep, the study sessions, it is awesome.

As John was mentioning, we have it as cohorts and there are set cohorts that we have in place but when the study sessions are taking place, that's a cohort within itself. And of just empowerment and also just motivation that they can take that next step and take the certification and pass that certification.

Also, we have the level up career workshop where our students are able to engage employers and give us feedback. It's great that we have things in place but we really love to hear from our students so that they can give us feedback and improve our efforts to support them.

And many of you, as you mentioned some of the challenges that they face is just having a full-time job as an example. Having a full-time job and working in the related field is just difficult. And the beauty of it all is that it allows our students to hear other students that are facing the same challenges but also, how do we provide solutions to help support them to get through that hurdle? So they don't feel as if they are on an island by themselves.

With having that open dialogue, we do that on the front end of the level up career workshop, but then also after we have that moment, we are allowed to – we actually bring in employers in to come and to talk to students to hear kind of the cutting edge and the things that are taking place in the industry. And then also, to ask questions, to say any questions they may have. But what we found is that it gets our students excited and they are able to see the potential in the IT industry which also gives them that push to go for their certifications.

And last, but not least, we do require our students to participate in employer workshops and industry tours. Just to give the students an opportunity to learn more and to see the face of IT. To understand the importance and the necessity of soft skills, things that I was talking about earlier in terms of what employers are looking for. But they also get to obtain value into what takes place on the day to day basis in the world of IT.

We just, again, are trying to encourage and to prepare our students where they are. They are aware of what's going on but most importantly that they're able to leverage their training to potentially open up into internships and then full-time employment or employment within the IT industry. We've just seen that after they enroll, that this is some of our best practices and approaches to them completing and also being retained in our program. So that's my section, I appreciate and we appreciate your time.

MS. APPEL-NEWBY: Thank you so much Kelly and the rest of the team from Midlands. That was great. I loved kind of – (inaudible) – enough approach that you have – that you told us about and we got a lot of good questions from the audience.

Keep sending in your questions on the chat box. We will switch over. We will go into a Q&A session after the second grantee presentation. So we are definitely taking note of all your questions and we will make sure to get to them if they're not answered during the course of the presentation. So yeah, please keep them coming and that will give us a good conversation starter for after the next presentation.

So with that, I want to introduce our next presenter who is Tawnya Rowland is the director of the TechHire New Mexico program. Which is – operates from the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico. With that, Tawnya, can you tell us a little bit about your program?

TAWNYA ROWLAND: Sure. Hi Emily, thank you. Hi everyone. Yes, so TechHire New Mexico, the grant was awarded to the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico. We're an

American Job Center Network partner. We have five offices in four New Mexico counties.

As part of the American Job Center Network, we are co-located with WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker, WIOA Youth, Division of Vocational Rehab, Wagner-Peyser, Job Corps, the list is pretty extensive. So having access and being able to work with all these wonderful partners helps us with co-enrollments and referrals and some access to some really tried and true tools.

The TechHire New Mexico grant is focused on providing IT and IT related training and IT job placement assistance for 17 to 29 year olds with documented barriers to training and employment. All of our IT trainings are accelerated in nature with the longest training being a 24 month associate degree.

We work with some amazing training providers here in the central region, Central New Mexico Community College and their nonprofit arms. CNM Ingenuity, that is the organization that provides the 12-week boot camps. We also work directly with EC Council regarding fiber security training, ethical hacking. University of New Mexico Continuing-Ed is another one of our training providers and then, of course, as needed we do work with a number of online training providers as well.

We don't run cohorts. We have a really good relationships with all of our training providers so that when our participants are enrolled in one of their trainings the training provides will alert us if participants are falling behind or not attending class so we have an opportunity to intervene and redirect as needed.

All of our potential TechHire New Mexico participants are required to attend an orientation and a labor market information workshop. Through the orientation LMI, potential participants are required to identify their desired IT job title or occupation, including the associated O\*NET Code.

They're also required to research what training is required to achieve that job title and any certifications required in order for them to get their desired job. They have to research all current job openings for the desired job and study the job posting. This really gives them, we thing, a good understanding of what a day in the life of this particular occupation is going to be for them so that they are able to really embrace it and engage and make sure that it's a good fit for them.

After our participants have been determined eligible and enrolled in the program, they're all required to take three WorkKeys tests. The applied math, graphic literacy, and workplace documents. And for our case managers, core development specialists, cross reference the participants individual WorkKeys scores to the O\*NET Codes just to ensure that the participant's scores on WorkKeys support them pursuing whatever their desired IT training career pathway.

And if for some reason the WorkKeys scores are low, we will provide the participant with prerequisite trainings or whatever it is they need to better prepare for their desired training, whether it's a boot camp or some other accelerated form of training. We just – We really thing this helps set the participant up for program completion.

The case managers, after the participant is determined eligible and enrolled, work with the participants to develop and individual employment plan or IEP. This tool helps both the case managers and the participants identify and mitigate any obstacles that might prevent successful training completion or obtainment of the desired job that the participant is seeking.

All of our participants are also required to complete soft skills and entrepreneurship coursework. The entrepreneurship coursework is offered through Cisco Academy and the soft skills training is primarily provided through Penn Foster which is an online training tool.

Any of our unemployed participants are eligible for needs-related payments to help cover their monthly rent and utilities while they are in training. And this of course, really helps them support themselves and again it helps ensure that they do complete their training and move on into their desired IT job.

We also offer incentive to encourage our participants to communicate with us after they've completed their training. We are able to provide them with a $100 incentive and then once they have gained employment, if they've not been working with us directly on job interviewing then we will provide them with another $100 incentive just for letting us know.

Part of the supportive services, we provide all participants who need a new laptop with a laptop. And then, of course, the case managers we work really closely as I mentioned, with our training providers to monitor participant class attendance and progress and intervene with tutoring or mentoring if needed.

After the participants have completed their training, I work with them and our network of IT employers, here within the central region to help match our participants to the vacant IT jobs. Most of our participants do not have prior IT experience. So one thing that we found the employers really appreciate is we're able to subsidize up to 12-week internships or up to six months of paid on the job training. And the subsidy basically is we will reimburse the employer 50 percent of the cost of either the internship or the OJT.

And this is a great way for the employers really to have an opportunity to help train the participants. It's a really good way for the participants to get a better feel for what's going to be required of them as they move along their IT career pathway. It's been – It's worked out to be a great win-win and really helps our participants gain that initial work experience that they need to start building their career.

Then I also work directly with the IT employers really to monitor their progress through the internship or OJT. And if they need additional job readiness support, coaching, if they need help with resume development, mock interviewing, job search skills, interviewing skills, whatever they might need in order to be successful in entering a job. And that's pretty much it. Thank you everyone. I really appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

MS. APPEL-NEWBY: Thank you, Tawnya, so much for sharing your experience and how the program works in New Mexico. Now we're going to move into, we have about 15 minutes left in today's session.

So we're going to move into a Q&A, question and answer period. We've had some questions come in through the chat box in Adobe Connect and I encourage the attendees to go ahead and keep entering questions into the textbox while our presenters from today will go ahead and start answering the questions that have already been entered.

I think that all four of them at this point were asked during the Midlands presentation. So let's go ahead and have Qiana, John, and Kelly go ahead and answer them first, but then I also would love then to have Tawnya hop on and talk about any parallel components that she has in the TechHire New Mexico program, how their format and length and admission requirements for that.

So with that, Midlands team, can I have you answer those first four questions?

MR. COCCHIARELLA: Absolutely. So the networking programs, it all depends on what they're taking. We offer classes during the day and during the night. So just to give you an example, A+ is two weeks during the day. A+ during the evening is four days. I'm sorry, four weeks.

Most of our folks do not have prior IT experience. We're finding more and more that in the age range that we're servicing that's one of our big challenges is that they don't have any prior IT experience. So it makes the boot camp process even more difficult. That's why we instituted the study sessions and the exam prep.

The exam prep, I guess I'll just keep – Do you want me to keep going? The exam prep during the day is – well, for both, it's a 12-hour class. And then the study sessions are just done two or three times a month. It's about nine hours total for the month.

There's no application process for the internship. Everybody who completes the training along with the interpersonal skills class is eligible for an internship. Now they have to – the competitive part comes from the fact that they have to interview with the employers an so we don't have an agreement with anybody that they'll just take all of our students. So it really makes those interpersonal skills classes even more important because those are the things that they need to bring into the interview with them.

So although we get feedback all the time from our employers that our folks are very well prepared so that's good for us to do that for them. But no, it's not – there's no competition other than the fact that they have to interview and they have to impress the employers that they have what it's going to take to come in and do an internship with them.

Let's see, the IT program with all the certifications, there's three different tiers. And so like Qiana was saying, the computer tech, that's A+, Network+. The desktop service administrator, we got a couple of server classes and then it includes Security+ and Cloud+. And then the last one is ICND one and two for CCNA and then Linux+. So as they go through the classes, they get the certifications. That's kind of the gateway to get to the next class or next set of classes.

The question about how many unique participants. We are scheduled to or goaled to help 400 folks, and so far we're at 300 with many cohorts coming here over the next several months as we come towards and end.

I think the last question up there is at what point do we record participants as completers? Yeah, can you jump in on that one?

QIANA HENTON: Oh yeah, sure. So let's see. At what point do you report participants as completers? So basically what happens is, there's different points so every person that successfully completed a training program. So for example you have computer technician program, and that program consists of A+ and Network+. Once they successfully complete that training, they have completed that particular training program.

And then if they want to move forward and go to the next tier, which is the desktop and server administrator program, they have to make sure to obtain that A+ and Network+ certification first, which is the key to get to the next tier. So they get into that program once they complete those classes for that particular program which is Security+, Cloud+, the Windows server classes. They have to then obtain Security+ and Cloud+ certifications which will then allow them to get to the third tier, which is the advanced desktop classes, which consists of Linux+ and the Cisco CCNA part one and two classes. So those are kind of like the gateway to kind of get from one tier to the other.

Every time they complete a program, they're considered as a completer. OK? So you can have one participant to complete three programs. Or you can have one participant that will complete one program. It just depends on their interests.

Yes, there are multiple stopping points. It's up to the participant if they would like to only complete computer technician, if they're only interested in just the A+ and Network+ and they just want to get their A+ and Network+ certification and they want to stop there, that's totally fine. As long as they successfully complete that program, that is totally fine. We do, however, encourage everyone to go as far as they can.

Like I said before, getting as many certifications as you can is only going to make you a lot more marketable and successful in the IT industry. So we do encourage that but it's not required for them to take all of the classes. It's basically – They can actually select what program they want to take. So if you have a person that comes into our program that says, hey I want to take the desktop and server.

Well, in order to complete desktop and server, you must make sure you complete computer technician training first because A+ and Network+ are the prerequisites to the desktop courses that you have to take. So it's important that they understand that you must complete A+ and Network+ and then you can move forward to the desktop. And once you complete those classes in desktop, then you have successfully completed the computer technician training and also the desktop training.

So that's pretty much how that works and – to advance as well. A lot of our students who are interested on the networking side, they are interested in going to the advanced. Do a lot of them get to that point? Yes and no, it just depends on how motivated the participant is, because it is a lot of work. It's a lot of studying, a lot of preparation when it comes to obtaining all of those certifications that are involved. But we have had a good many that have gotten to that point and become very successful with obtaining all of their certifications.

Let's see. What's next? Our learners –

MS. APPEL-NEWBY: Qiana, I'm sorry.

MS. HENTON: Mm-hmm.

MS. APPEL-NEWBY: Again, I want to give Tawnya a chance to react to some of –

MS. HENTON: Yes.

MS. APPEL-NEWBY: – questions that I'm not sure there's a – Qiana – Tawnya, go ahead and just respond to the ones that seem relevant to your project where your project can provide insight and then I'm happy to circle back to the Midlands team. Because I think, Qiana, there was more that you wanted to answer. But I want to give Tawnya a few moments to respond to these questions.

MS. HENTON: Absolutely.

MS. ROWLAND: Sure. Thank you, Emily. So the TechHire New Mexico grant we have committed to serving 450 participants and as of today we have about 80 participants left to recruit and get entered in training. Our goal is to have those remaining 80 participants enrolled by Christmas so that we have an opportunity for them to complete their training and gain employment before the grant performance period closes June 30th of next year.

All of our participants are required to earn an industry recognized certificate or credential at the completion of their training. Which includes A+, Net+, Security+, Certified Ethical Hacking, JAVA, the boot camps that focus on web development, or various software proficiencies that they need to demonstrate that they've achieved.

And these trainings range anywhere from 12 weeks up to 26 weeks. For the more boot camp style trainings for the associate degrees, obviously that's a 24 month program but we're at the point in the grant right now where we're not able to enroll anyone else in the associate degree program. We just don't have time left in the grant. And I think that covers the questions that I had.

MS. APPEL-NEWBY: Thanks, Tawnya. That's awesome. Qiana, were some of those leader questions relevant to you? About the A+, Net+ course and how you're paying for the tiers of training? Do you want to take two minutes maybe to answer those questions?

MS. HENTON: Sure.

MS. APPEL-NEWBY: Thanks.

MS. HENTON: OK. No problem. I'll answer number eight where it says the grant pays for all three tiers of program. That is correct. The grant – If the participant is interested in taking all three programs, the grant will pay for that. And the same for the programing side. If they're interested in the front-end and back-end programing, both of the programs we will also pay for that as well. The grant will either pay for either networking or programing. The participant cannot take both at the same time. It's either one or the other.

How long is the A+ and Network+ courses? It depends on if the participant is taking coursed during the day or courses during the evening. If, for example, if the person is interested in computer tech and they're taking A+ and Network+ during the day, it varies between 8 to 12 weeks long. For those that are taking it during the evening it varies between 12 to 14 weeks long. During the day they're going about six hours a day, per day Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. And on Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. And then in the evenings they go from Monday to Thursday from 6:00 p.m. to 9:45 p.m.

Let's see what else. Did that answer those two questions?

MS. APPEL-NEWBY: I think so.

MS. HENTON: OK.

MS. APPEL-NEWBY: It looks like we have a couple more questions coming in. Oh it's just a thank you, acknowledgements. And that's fabulous.

Well, thank you guys for this robust discussion. I really appreciate that you have shared ideas about how you have designed your program to support retention and completion from the front end. The – at the point of enrollment, making sure that people know what they're getting into with this TechHire training and then providing services that are more than just wrap around kind of more generic, if you will, workforce services to really TechHire specific services. To help them get connected to industry and complete with the specific certificates that we're focused on in the TechHire particularly IT projects.

I encourage you all to – So with that I see that we have such a robust conversation going on and I'm super excited about that. And I want to encourage you to continue the conversation on Slack. Which is awesome. If you – Hopefully you all, all you participants, grantee representatives have signed up for Slack. Let's see, which is a – it's an app like downloaded it onto my phone. I literally had never had it before a couple weeks ago when we decided to use it during this – (inaudible) – tool institution – institute and it's a really fun way to keep in touch with the other folks who are planning the virtual institute.

We were using it for work too about ways to share ideas between. We found it particularly helpful to share ideas between meetings that just came to us through the course of other work on the grant. And so, I think – this line of conversation that you have going on with John at Midlands and with Tawnya in New Mexico. Go ahead and consider that.

I'm also going to post two questions later today on the Slack channel. One, what career exploration tools and resources do you use with TechHire participants to learn about the industry and its occupation? Kind of the way TechHire New Mexico talked about using – doing their LMI workshop and pointing potential participants to look at – to explore O\*NET.

And then also, what tools or resources do you share with participants to give them a sense of the training? So again, they know what they're getting into. Like the way that Midlands asked them to check out a self-driven coding site, like codeacademy.com.

So we want to hear about the similar strategies or different strategies that everyone else is using and we think that Slack is a great way to continue this conversation. It's been very fruitful in the chatroom.

And there's a link here. Oh, I'm hoping Laura or Lee, you can post it. I'm struggling here to copy it. I should have done that before into the chat so that everyone can have it. Actually, I think if you click the web links, join us on Slack, that should give you the web link to download Slack. You'll get a link, download it through the Apple Store or whatever onto your phone and you can get – and you can continue.

Thank you Veronica, it wasn't – didn't have that set to go. So thank you for participating in today's session. To reach the Federal Project Officer, the National Office and your Technical Assistance Providers, you can always reach out to TechHire@dol.gov.

Many of you are registered for tomorrow's small group sessions and I hope that you are ready to participate in those. It's going to be some wonderful, fruitful sessions. And if you are not participating in tomorrow's small group sessions or whether you are or not, I wanted to remind you to please attend the next large group session which is on Thursday on – using real-time performance outcome measures.

So with that, thank you to our presenters from TechHire New Mexico and Midlands Technical College. Thank you for sharing your insights. And thank you to DOL for hosting this forum for sharing.

(END)