**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

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

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GRACE MCCALL: With that I'm going to move us right into today's presentation.

I want to welcome everyone to today's 2019 TechHire Virtual Institute Closing Plenary. I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Ayreen Cadwallader. She's a work force analyst for the Office of Work Force Investment with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Ayreen, take it away.

AYREEN CADWALLADER: Great. Thank you so much Laura and good afternoon everyone and thank you for joining us today for the closing plenary of our TechHire Grantees Virtual Institute. Today we'll be discussing the topic of sustainability; from grantee to guarantee. These are some of the key perspectives on sustainability that we wanted to be able to address with you during today's closing plenary.

Thank you for letting us know in the chat box who you are and who's on the call with you. And I know we have the polling question of – that Laura had up earlier just to get a sense of how folks are feeling about your sustainability plans.

And it looks like we're at the midpoint between good and uncertain, and there is a majority of folks that are likely able to continue some or all aspects of their TechHire grant program beyond the grants period of performance. And there are some who are still a little uncertain and that it might be too soon to tell and perhaps again we will have another year of our grant to see, sort of, what some of these practices are that could be continued.

And so with that, I just wanted to quickly introduce today's facilitators. Tom Hooper, who is an associate vice president at Jobs for the Future. And today you'll be hearing from our featured speaker, Robin Fernkas, who's our acting Deputy of Administrator, also the Chief of the Division of Strategic Investments here at the office of Workforce Investments.

And then you'll also hear from Dawn Busick-Drinkard, formally a Tech grantee with the Missouri TEMWINs grant program. And then Liz Ojeda, who is with the Denver Workforce Economic Development and Opportunity with the Ready to Work grant.

Our agenda today is here on these slides. We'll have about 10 minutes for you to hear from Robin about key perspectives on sustainability. And then you'll hear from our grantee presentations. And then we'll have some opportunities for Q&A. And then we'll be able to wrap up with some reflections and closing.

And again, our objective is to really review the takeaways from this year's Institute, hear key insights from the Department of Labor on strategies for program sustainability, and draw on some insights from our fellow H-1B and TAACCCT grantees who have closed out their grants and associated activities and how they were able to sustain some of those programs. And then hopefully we'll be able to – you'll be able to hear some specific strategies that you could use for your grants and sustaining your partnerships, securing funds and institutionalizing some of the key elements of your work.

I did want to quickly just give you some key takeaways from the Virtual Institute. I really hope that this year's online sessions have been valuable for you and your teams as we move forward to the last year of our grant. We've had some really great sessions from our large group webinar. Really the key aspect for insuring program completion are H-1B grants real time performance outcome measure, and then making sense of the future of work.

That one was definitely a really great topic to address as we prepare for the future workforce and how they can support these new and emerging technologies, many of which we are still not quite aware of, and really being able to ensure that American workers can be prepared with the right skill set to succeed in these skills – for these jobs for the future.

So hopefully a lot of you were able to attend that session. It was really very insightful. And then we also had our small group sessions where this was certainly an opportunity for you to hear from your colleagues and express some of your challenges and hopefully through this dialogue you are able to identify some potential solutions to the problem that were unique to your grant program.

So let's definitely continue with the last session of our Virtual Institute. I'll turn it over to Tom, who will introduce our first speaker. Tom?

TOM HOOPER: Great. Thanks so much Ayreen.

Well, good morning, and good afternoon everyone, and greetings from, surprisingly, chilly Boston, Massachusetts. I hope it's warmer wherever you are. Thanks so much for joining us for this afternoon's and this morning's closing plenary. Now I have a bias, I know, but we've got some great information and strong practices to share on the critical topic of sustainability planning. And we'll do that over the next hour or so.

Now there are a number of key strategies that are so important to sustaining your tech hiring initiatives. Such as maintaining key partnerships, raising awareness of your work in your region, and securing additional resources to fund your partnerships. I purposely mention finding additional resources last on this list because while there is no doubt that one critical component of sustainability is securing additional resources, securing those resources is one of a number of important sustainability strategies.

And in some ways other strategies like maintaining your partnerships are just as, if not more important than, finding additional resources. And regardless, were going to touch on all of those important sustainability strategies and others over the next 50 minutes or so.

So let's get into the heart of our presentation. I'm thrilled to introduce our first speaker, Robin Fernkas. Robin is, as Ayreen mentioned, the acting deputy administrator for the Office of Workforce Investment with the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment Training Administration. Robin has led a wide array of regionally focused grant programs during her tenure at DOL from the TAACCT grants, to the TechHire grants.

And she's going to draw on all of those experiences with grantee sustainability planning during today's session. After Robin's remarks, we're going to take about five minutes for any questions that you all have for Robin. We want to have a really highly engaged., highly interactive session today. So please don't hesitate to ask questions during that Q&A session as well as the general Q&A session we'll have at the end of the plenary.

I should note too, and Laura touched on this as well, that because of the large size of this plenary, we'll be taking questions through the chat feature, which is on your screen rather than opening up the phone lines to take questions verbally. But again, please share all questions that you've got about the sustainability planning. It's such an important topic and we really want to have a really highly interactive session.

So with that we'll turn to our first speaker Robin Fernkas. Robin, take it away.

ROBIN FERNKAS: Thanks Tom. I'm really excited to be a part of this closing session and I really hope that you've found the Virtual Institute as valuable for you as we have intended. As we focus today on sustaining the impact and capacity of your programs and innovations, one thing we really wanted to convey from the departments perspective is that we don't – the goal of sustainability in our view isn't necessarily to maintain the programs as they currently exist, but really maintain key aspects of the impact of the program that you've had.

So as you work to sustain your efforts beyond your period of performance for this grant, we want you to consider what's viable for you to sustain. So both in terms of your underlying partnerships, which as Tom was saying are – can be vitally important to whatever you're going to do in your next venture, as well as key aspects of the programs that you developed. So for some of you, sustainability is going to mean continuing your grant efforts with some sources of funding, and for others you're going to be sustaining specific elements within your existing programs.

So some of the thought process that we encourage grantees to go through – particularly at this juncture of your grants is – it's a good time for you to get with your key partners, and really explore with them what they believe should be sustained. Program components, major partnerships, innovations, because really you're getting validation from them. You're also finding out who your champions might be in this process.

You may need to involve other organizations that haven't been involved before, but could be helpful in carrying things forward or expanding beyond your current scope. You may also want to be looking at aspects of the grant that could be institutionalized or integrated into your existing programs.

So if you decide to continue the program in its entirety or you need funding for a key aspects of that, it's really figuring out which resources are available and what more will you need to do that. And then finally, who's going to be the lead for sustaining these efforts going forward. It may be your organization or it may be another organization in the community.

When we talk about institutionalizing, or as we're thinking about sustainability, we're really – you may be seeking to continue the program as it is today, or you may be thinking about scaling the program. And so for some of you, you started with a small demonstration project to test out a model or to test out a concept, and you believe you can build on the success of this to take it to scale, which may include integrating that practice into larger organizations.

So let's say you're working within a community college within a certain department and you have developed something that now is going to be accepted or adopted college-wide or enterprise-wide. It could mean expanding to other geographic locations, like replicating what you're doing or adopting the practices for additional populations. So if this was effective with one group of young adults, perhaps it could be effective for others with similar barriers that you want to try the model out with.

So if you think about scaling, you're going to want to ensure that you have data, both quantitative and qualitative, and that you're going to – that's going to be helpful for you to determine where your success has been and what has contributed to your success. It's also going to be helpful to have that data to encourage others to help you champion the sustainability.

So think about the data that you wish you had – maybe, if you don't have the data that you need where you wish you had data, and that may be something that you need to be focusing on over the next year and putting together in your last year of your project.

So another important aspect of this planning is ensuring that your tying these efforts to a larger vision or mission for your institution or organization. So as TechHire grantees, you are already part of a larger initiative or mission to build a tech savvy workforce. So many of you began as the TechHire community movement, or others of you have become connected to that movement during this grant period.

You're going to hear in a moment from two of our grantees that have done this very successfully. But we can't underscore the importance enough of ensuring that you're aligning with the priorities of your workforce investment system in your area, and it's work to implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. I think that no surprise coming from the Department of Labor, but we really believe this is important to help with your innovations – really to support a broader agenda and having greater likelihood that these are going to be sustained.

TechHire grantees are well positioned to connect to additional resources and your required partnerships included the local workforce development system and employers where you were also required to leverage resources which may continue to be a source of funding going forward.

So we have provided on this slide there just a few of the ways that we're aware of that some grantees have sustained programs using their WIOA Title I local formula funding, their state set-aside funds, state workforce and higher education programs – those are programs that have been authorized by state legislatures – Pell grants that can help individuals with the – defray the training costs, as well as looking to private sources such as employer contributions from your employer partners or others within the community as well as foundation and other sources.

So I think I'm going to – I know there's one more slide there with some of the resources from the Department of Labor that we've developed over time to help you with sustainability. And I'd be happy to talk about them further, but I want to leave time for our other guest.

MR. HOOPER: Terrific. Thanks so much Robin. So much great enriched content in that presentation. Thank you. So we're going to stop here for about – up to five minutes or so, and take any questions that folks have or topics you'd like to explore more.

Just as a reminder, we're taking questions through the chat feature of the platform. So if you want to go ahead and chat your questions and now that's great. We won't be able to open up the phone lines unfortunately to take questions just because of the size of the session. Just go ahead and type in questions now.

And as folks are thinking about those – and doing that – I'll start off, Robin, with one my end that would be great to get your perspective on. You mentioned state set-aside funds as one resource that could potentially help sustain your (entire partnership ?) programming. How would you suggest that grantees learn more about that potential finding source and its feasibility for supporting their work?

MS. FERNKAS: Well, I would suggest that they work with their local workforce development board and to use that as their way of connecting to what's happening statewide. Because those members are going to be connected in general to their state board. I know that's probably not helpful to talk about all these structures.

But in general, I think the thought there is that the governors have some flexibility over some of the money that they received – the formula money – and they often are looking to do statewide initiatives, and so I think the things for the TechHire communities, or the TechHire grantees is going to be finding out who's working on building – focusing on the tech pipeline, either within their regional economy or statewide and is there some way if you're not connected with them today you could get connected.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. That's great. Thanks Robin. That's terrific. So a few questions have started to come in and we'll take them one at a time.

First question is about future DOL grant competitions, and the questions is: Is DOL anticipating an upcoming competition that will fund activities similar to what has been funded through the – through these TechHire grants? Robin and Ayreen, you guys what to speak to that?

MS. FERNKAS: Sure. I think at this time the only open solicitation we have with our H-1B training funds is our apprenticeships closing the skills gap. And tat is open through next Tuesday. So a little late for this group if you haven't been focused on that solicitation. But what I can say is that we do collect fees from employers who are applying for H-1B visas.

Those funds the Department of Labor can use to fund training programs such as TechHire, and I would anticipate that we would be announcing – we usually announce one to two solicitations each year. And so I would just be watching for those on grants.gov and in terms of focus – it's always up to the secretary in terms of the secretary's priorities. What we can say is generally these are always requiring public private partnerships that are focused on getting individuals – building and skills workforce, trying to get people to the middle to high skill level jobs. So in general, those aspects would be a part of any future solicitations.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. That's great. Thanks Robin.

Another question that's come in is regarding the existing TechHire grants and the question is: Do we know approximately how many TechHire grantees are asking for no cost extensions? Ayreen, do you want to tackle that one?

MS. CADWALLADER: Sure thing. So we are starting to receive those period of performance extensions requests, and usually they are submitted from the grantees to the FPOs and we'll track who's these are. But at this point generally between 50 to 75 percent of grantees ask for a period of performance extension and they are awarded for up to one year.

MR. HOOPER: OK. That's great. That's great.

Another question that's come in is regarding the eligible training for minor process. And the question is more common. And I think, Robin and Ayreen, any thoughts you have on this would of course be terrific. The comment was, "Anything that the U.S. Department of Labor can do to make the eligible training provider application process simpler and more effective would be appreciated."

And of course this applies to sustainability because we know what funds that are available at the regional level can be used for training and that fund training costs. And eligible training providers are entities that have been eligible to receive those funds at that level. Robin, do you want to offer some thoughts on that one?

MS. FERNKAS: I was going to say, I don't really have a solution to offer so much as to say we could take that under advisement, definitely share that with our colleagues who are administering the formula side of the house or those wheel of formula funds.

I think some of this – it's kind of figuring out too – the source of the issue because – is this an issue that could be fixed statutorily, is it a problem with the ranks, or is this something that in the state or locals discretion they've set up some policies that are in addition to what's already in the statute or the regs. And I think it's kind of unpeeling them and figuring out kind of what the barrier is.

MR. HOOPER: Excellent Thanks so much Robin. That's great. Well, we have used up our five minutes of Q&A, so thank you for all those great questions on a range of topics. We'll definitely have some more time for questions at the end of the next two presentations.

And so let's transition to our next presenter now. Our next presenter is Liz Ojeda, Denver workforce program manager with the Denver Economic Development and Opportunity office.

Liz is a former Ready to Work grantee and we're really excited that Liz and the other – the final presenter today, Dawn Busick-Drinkard, are here because they both have extensive experience planning for the sustainability of Department of Labor discretionary grants.

They've been just where you all are now and planning for the sustainability of your initiatives and they're going to share their really good practices that they've found really successful as well as their critical lessons learned in sustainability planning. So let's turn now to Liz. Liz, take it away.

LIZ OJEDA: OK. Thank you. I'm going to be going through the slides here. I'm going to provide some general information to talk more about what we did during the grant and what we're actually doing now post-grant. During the tie that we had this, this was a collaboration between six workforce regions which was something very unique for the state of Colorado because most of ours have been either n a smaller scale or statewide.

We were able to provide an opportunity for 675 people that we had served. As of this point we show that we have 542 trained, 47 upskilled in terms of incumbent worker training with 400 credentials. And really, that's a number piece but it doesn't tell the whole story about the work we did with the customers. We really used in the spirit of the work grant a customized approach for each individual that came through our program.

Looking at those higher skilled individuals, what skills did they have, where did they want to go to, is there an occupation at the end of it, and what was the gap that needed to be closed? And though there were some commonalities across there that we had a lot of different trainings, different credentials, different work activity that had to be utilized to keep with the economic scope and the capacity of the individuals.

So it was a constant learning. We weren't afraid to continue, and to change that model or adjust it as needed in order to create the success for the program.

We did have – the numbers, we have 440 people employed. And of course that was as of shortly after March 31. Numbers are still coming. We don't get – we'll probably have our final numbers through the Department of Labor. We had a high average wage, which was our goal. Our goal was $63,000 but we were looking at higher skilled individuals. People that had been impacted by the downturn in the economy back from 2007 to 2010.

And there was a huge economic impact. I don't thing we always think about – we get people jobs, it's great, we put them into work. But where's that economic impact on the community and on the system at large? And that's significant. And that in itself has a huge value. And I think sometimes it's real easy to lose sight of that. Because that has a – that'll continue to have an impact on your sustainability down the road.

On this slide we have examples of some of the best practices that we use. One of the things that we did inside of this working with the regions. We really looked at building off of what currently existed. We were fortunate in the state of Colorado that we already had sector partnerships that had been identified through the governor at that time, Governor Hickenlooper.

The key industries – 14 key industries that the state was focused on – and in fact we also looked at the state business services for workforce and how will we systematically work together to serve employers that went across counties, across regions, and ultimately were in multiple regions.

So we looked at building that sustainability and we had that in the system before we applied for the Ready to Work grant. So I think that gave us a – I feel very strongly that that those strengths we brought to the table gave us a platform that was needed to start to build a system that really hadn't existed within this scope.

So we went through here. I touched on different regions that had networks that used their job seekers as mentors. That they established communication processes for building the capacity and strengthening what currently existed.

A big piece of what we learned was taking everything that we did on the higher skilled, and translating it into entry level positions or start-up positions so that we could also attain the success at the entry level and build career pathways. And what we focused on the grant at the beginning was advanced manufacturing and IT we found, because of the economic changed, IT was a heavier focus.

So we weren't afraid to make that shift during the grant to meet the needs of the customers that we had and the employers. A big piece of our success was also related to apprenticeships because the state Tectonic – they started the first IT nationally registered apprenticeship program in the state of Colorado and one of very few across the country. There was less than 15 at that time.

And we used the grant to become innovative and look at how we build that initiative. And they've had a great success inside of that. So we used the grant in order to create s system that is creating sustainability but we didn't know at that time. So we were creating pilots and testing the waters.

In the sector partnership – this slide will explain a little bit about our sector partnerships. What came out of TEC-P technology and employment in Colorado partnership and our sustainability was developing sector partnerships that are truly led by industry, by businesses.

That's always a challenge. How do you sit there and be a part of this without getting engaged and putting your two cents in. Essentially you have to sit on your hands. You have to really look at what are they doing and what do they need, and you're that resource and guide for some of the conversations or some of the initiatives, whether they're leading the effort with what they're trying to do.

So we were fortunate with our advisory council that we created the Denver Metro Tech Partnership that incorporates the metro Denver counties. We also established the Boulder, Broomfield sector partnership and Boulder is the – that is the tech corridor in north west Denver a d they are now building the northern Colorado where we have advanced manufacturing – they're also building on a tech sector partnership. So these are the organizations that will help us create the sustainability that we need for keeping things going.

I think the key hurdles on this slide we talk about, that were economic changes. We went from a 5.5 percent when started the grant – when we applied for the grant – to 2.5 at one point – went up to 3.0 – it's now back to 2.9. that change in unemployment and changing the industry needs, we had to really be attune to that and making those changes for the program and for the good of the individuals and the employers we were working with.

Our regional partners, they varied. We had that. We had process changes, and we'd responded to the local needs. And what we anticipated four years ago was not where we wound up at the end of this and we had to change the jobseeker needs and we had to –training to fit the barriers.

Ageism was a challenge, and we developed a separate program in order to address the issues with ageism. In addition our Ready for Work parameters – we had targeted industries, and as I said before, we had to make changes due to the economic impact and I think we were able to address that with our FPO and with our audit that occurred back in 2017.

And – (inaudible) – might note in terms of sustainability within the industry, really establish your sector partnerships and continue to expand. You need to have the ability to change based on economic needs and established continuous improvement. Note what currently exists – your programs in your state, in your county, which are community organizations and build off of that.

It's establishing trust, flexibility and being engaged with other partners because you have a common goal that's ultimately employment and economic impact for your employers. With your job seekers, look at the technical assistance based on the industry requirements and community partner sand common goals for career services and ensure that you have relevant training, that you're doing for your job seekers.

And OK, that's it for me. I'll go back to the screen. And that's all I have today. I think we are ready to go to Dawn.

MR. HOOPER: Terrific Liz. Thank you so much seven minutes and thirty seconds on the money. That was excellent. And there's so much great content there. Thank you so much. We're definitely going to come back to some of these topics I know during the general Q&A portion of this session. Especially the sector partnerships as a vehicle for sustainability. So we'll definitely make sure we come back to that.

Our next speaker is Dawn Busick-Drinkard. Dawn joins us today with lots of experience working on the sustainability of DOL discretionary grants. Dawn was the program director for the MoSTEMWINs TAACCCT grant and has lots of valuable lessons learned from her experience and strong practices to share. So Dawn, I will turn it over to you. The podium is yours.

MS. BUSICK-DRINKARD: Thank you, and I'm so happy to be here this afternoon, or this morning for those of you that are out west. So a little bit about us. In Missouri we were 13 two year publicly funded community and/or technical colleges. We were round one, round two, and round four TAACCCT, and a total of $65 million that we attained over eight years, which impacted 11,700+ adult learners.

We worked in the health care industry, the manufacturing industry, and then the STEM industry with the occupations related to those industries. With that I want to explain first of all that in Missouri, we are a decentralized community college system. In other words, there is no state regulatory body – government body that has regulations over our 13 community colleges.

So together – they came together in a single statewide consortium on a volunteer basis to begin this pathway of making change in policies and practices that will impact, not only our retention and our completion – increase our retention and completion levels – but also just the way that we normally conduct business and how can we change our delivery models in Missouri to better serve our constituents. So that's a little bit about who we are.

So sustainability in the MoWINs world – what does this look like over those three TAACCCT grants. We had a variety of projects and initiatives and I think it – suggesting as advice to participants on this call would be is, we looked into our work plan that we developed in all of our scope of work, and was looking for the low hanging fruit that we knew that we could sustain.

We had some high-arching goals, and two big ones were in the rough one, was our first ever Credit for Prior Learning statewide model policy. In developing that it took us 18 months and we had to evaluate where we were, benchmark ourselves, who is doing Credit for Prior Learning, who is not doing it, what is Credit for Prior Learning, and what is it not. Then we also evaluated seven other statewide policies.

Once we developed our first draft policy, the next goal would be to vet it with all the faculty, the registrars, the administration, the presidents and the vice chancellors. And today we still have this single statewide model policy on a minimum basis, this is what each college's Credit for Prior Learning policies and practices would support. And I'm proud to say that all 13 colleges do still honor that.

The other big thing was to develop a performance tracking system on a non-credit student side of our – that's enrolled in our programs at our colleges. After the Great Recession we discovered something huge. And that was, we saw numbers coming in remotely from each of the 13 colleges that equated a higher number of adult learners enrolled in these workforce job training non-credit programs study that we had in our traditional degree seeking student data.

So we felt like we needed a policy – and a practice and a data – statewide data system that would support the data collection of these workforce training programs that would help the colleges report the performance in. and as we started in the round four grant, which would've been about five years ago, Missouri's general assembly did adopt statewide performance reporting higher education practiced and mandates here in Missouri.

So the stars started to align with the TAACCCT opportunity to go after some additional supplemental funding, in the round four, to do some statewide data integration. And that was to build a sister system, data collection system, that set next to our workforce data quality initiative that we implemented back in 2009. However that system only supported – the 2009 system MCCA – only supported degree seeking students – full time degree seeking students.

So we felt the need is – how do we go about designing a sister system that will set next to that, but that captures all this performance measures and data on our non-credit? And then better yet, how can we connect that system to labor market information and occupations and wages in the state? So that – we had the opportunity to take our supplemental funding and build what is now out there, launched and live, the MoSCORES system.

The system has a public side to it and a back side where – on the public side – adult learners and potential students and applicants can go out and see what occupations are high in demand within their region near their zip code, and then where are the training programs that support that. And then what is the performance of those training programs?

On the back side of this system each college is allowed to see only their own performance measures and how they're performing. And that's critical data to have as a college administrator when you're looking at what programs are meeting the needs of your community and are meeting the needs of your students, what programs should retire, what ones should be expanded, and be able to do some trends and networking.

So these are the two things that we decided to sustain and they are still moving forward. So here's just some brochures that I wanted to share with you what that looks like. A big piece pf advice I'd like to share with you in regards to key steps to planning this is, we needed to make sure we engaged everybody.

So by having this opportunity to raise single statewide community college opportunity, we designed the system and developed the system that it would be for all trainers to report their non-credit performance in. In other words, we connected it to ETPS system within the state workforce agency.

Therefore, any training provider that's wanting to me ETPS eligible and adult learners could attain WIOA training dollars to take those programs of study must begin to start reporting their performance on those programs of study in this system in order to maintain and retain their approval in the ETPS system.

So you can kind of see how the stars align. We had WIOA, we had the ETPS system needed to be reworked, our legislature passes performance reporting requirements, and now through the TAACCCT grant we were able to build a system to meet many partners' needs.

So a little bit about our partners I when we were looking at sustainability of this system, its – who would be the partner of that who also interacts with this and that is not a TAACCCT grantee but would need to interact with it long after the grants went away.

And the first one that came to min was, not only the community colleges and MCCA, but our state and MERIC, which is our Economic Research and Information Center. Because they manage the data quality – the workforce data quality initiative, back in 2009. And it made sense to build this system and set it next – on that state server – next to its sister system – the new MoSCORES – so that it would be sustained long after the grant.

So by having MERIC as an engaged partner, and the Division of Workforce Development so we could help them engage and develop and design their new ETPS system, which is now required under WIOA to report performance measures, we also looked at partnering with DESE and the Department of Higher Ed because, after all, these are higher education programs. And there are career pathways that will be impacted as we start seeing trends and the database gets loaded up.

Now be mindful, the database went live in August of 2018. The grants expired September 30. So we are live now, but the data is not a robust as it should be. We are requiring the schools to report two years of performance data. However, we're not quite there yet. But you can go onto that MoSCORES system and see and search programs of study in comparison to the occupations they support.

Some advice that I would give to everybody is we – in four years we had monthly planning meetings. We engaged everybody at the college that was willing to come to this table. Institutional research, IT directory, workforce development directors.

We vetted everything, the data dictionary, to make sure everybody understood that every field in this system meant the same thing. And then documentation. We built a technical guide for users. How to use the system for the colleges. In the event that we planned for turnover in staff that may no longer be here because the system is now live and is being sustained, on a state server.

Those are just a few idea to help you when you're looking at what types of things should you sustain in regard to your H-1B grant. I would suggest starting with you work plan and your strategies and your objectives.

And I'm going to throw it back to you Tom and we'll go into closing.

MR. HOOPER: Terrific. Terrific. Thanks so much Dawn. Another great presentation. Lots of really good practices that came up there from specific elements of initiatives that could be sustained, to processes to do that, like that planning comment you just made about working with folks in your colleges and other organizations.

So we're now going to open up the plenary general questions. We'd love to hear any and all questions and comments are great. Again, please use that chat feature on your screen to pose those. There was already a question about the separate TechHire Initiative that was brought up and thanks Ayreen for putting on that great resource on the chat feature, I just point folks to that.

So again, if folks could send in their questions now, this is a great time to do it. As folks are thinking about questions, I'll pose one to the group. Are there specific champions that – especially thinking about Liz and Dawn – typical champions that you all engaged in your sustainability efforts, who are really core to helping sustain your work. Can be both organizations and individuals. It would be great t hear about that.

DAWN BUSICK-DRINKARD: This is Dawn and I can start with – I want to say, first of all, my champions were my presidents of our college. They understood the importance of having – utilizing data driven to make some key performance decisions that are impacting their colleges. So their support of this statewide data collection, we couldn't have done it without them.

The second champion would be, of course, our state agencies, the state Department of Economic Development, the Division of Workforce Development, and MERIC and the Department of Higher Ed. This brand new database system, while the grant funded it and supported it, it went on their servers. So they are maintaining it long after the grant went away with their resources and their state dollars and maybe some of their WIOA dollars. But they too benefit and see benefits from this system and utilize this system daily.

MR. HOOPER: Great. Thanks Dawn, thank you. OK, Liz –

MS. OJEDA: This is Liz. My champions, I would say they're probably the workforce directors that represented the six regions, and they were all under the umbrella of the Colorado Urban Workforce Alliance, which is a collection of the regions that are the Metro-Denver area for the state of Colorado Department of Labor and Employment.

They really understood what we were trying to do and stepped up the changes that they needed to make. We used our state data system and we had to make some adjustments in terms of how we were collecting the information.

But I think they truly believed in the efforts and understood the need for collaboration in order to close the gap in terms of the unemployment and continue to serve our customers and build sustainable efforts. So I'd say those were probably our key champions.

MR. HOOPER: Thanks Liz. That's great. And a follow-up question, and you've already sort of touched on this a little bit. For grantees who may not have a direct tie – this is in the chat feature obviously – grantees who may not have a direct tie to their organizations leadership, whether their community colleges or workforce boards. Suggestions for other folks to engage or ways to make that connection to their leadership.

MS. BUSICK-DRINKARD: And Tom, that is a great question, and something that we encountered in our round one TAACCCT grant. I felt like our grant managers at each of the 13 colleges didn't feel empowered or have the ear of their president. So we went before the presidents with data and dashboards of how each college is doing, insomuch as their grant performance.

And the dashboard meant something to the presidents insomuch that they're kind of competitive amongst each other and we encourage those presidents to have – to begin to have conversations with their grant staff to understand, and how could they help them meet their performance expectations within the grant.

So not only is it the grant managers role to meet to set up appointments with their president, but also we encourage our presidents to get out and set up appointments with their grant managers. And the dashboards were very instrumental tools in brokering that conversation and helping that conversation take place. It was a visual tool that they had to be abler to start that conversation. But great question. Thank you Tom.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. That's great. Thanks Dawn. That's really helpful.

A question posed in the chat box for folks to reflect on is: If anyone wants to share who our champions are – or even if they could be – in supporting your – the sustainability of your TechHire Initiative. So it would be great to see folks' thoughts on that in the chat box.

So definitely keep these questions coming in. These are great.

I'll pose one, as folks continue to think about questions. And this is something that's come up, in know, in a lot of conversations with grantees. And Robyn this is probably a good one to start with you, and then obviously great to hear as well from you Liz and Dawn.

As folks think about WIOA funds, especially WIOA funds at the regional level, how can folks think about using WIOA funds in ways they may not traditionally think about them to support sustainability of their TechHire initiatives. What are some potential uses there of those funds? But Robin, you want to offer some first thoughts on that?

MS. FERNKAS: I'll offer some first thoughts, sure, and then I'd really like Liz to jump in on this because I think she's done a really effective job at dong this in her community. I think there are a lot of ways, obviously people think about supporting the trainings through the individual training accounts.

But if you look at the WIOA youth funding closely aligns with the target populations of TechHire there may be some synergy there for you to get involved in some of the things that are happening already in your region. WIOA money can also be used for contracts for customized worker or incumbent worker training initiatives.

And it can be used for apprenticeship programs, for registered apprenticeship as well as other types of apprenticeship initiatives. So the registered apprenticeships in particular are already on the ETPL and so that may be a good avenue to pursue. So those are just some of the ways we have heard about, Tom, from some of the grantees, but as I said, I think I defer to Liz who's actually making this happen.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. Liz, love to hear your thoughts.

MS. OJEDA: Well, we have – I'm going to provide an example of something we did here. What we found in TAACCCT was there's been a number of sub-TAACCCT activities are really growing to be sectors of their own. And one is the cyber security. We actually partnered with a local training organization, Secure Set, to identify opportunities to bring in WIOA customers.

Now, this is a very high-cost training, because it's more similar to a boot camp concept. So we looked at partnering – what they did is they offered a free five week about 40 hour session for people to participate to determine whether there was an interest in cyber, and if they wanted to move forward in training.

So normally there was a cost associated with that. They came in and provided that for free, and then afterwards we had 14 individuals that were eligible for the training. So we worked with our WIOA partner, our workforce services ResCare in order to identify other funding opportunities.

So we took a blended funding approach. Building off of WIOA and what we were capable of providing through that, and looked at other funding resources in order to build the capacity to minimize any kind of loan costs for those customers, because it was a $12,000 training.

And we used WIOA as the arm for case management and managing the financial impact of it. So we really used WIOA, and we're in the process of doing that right now as we speak, the training starts next week. So we're using that as a way to create a baseline for funding needs, and build off of that. Because we can't always pay for everything that's out there.

We've also used WIOA for our apprenticeship program, the Tech Apprenticeship. So we used it under TechP to establish the pilot and work through that, and we now continue to use WIOA funding and our partner the registered apprenticeship, is using funding from employers in order to close the gap and pay for training. We're trying to think outside of the box here and how we approach this.

MR. HOOPER: That's terrific. That's terrific. So many good examples that just were shared there. Types of costs and activities that can be supported with WIOA funds. Another ill mention – and this actually ties back to Liz's great comments about sector partnerships. Many regions around the country are using WIOA formula funds at the local level, to fund their sector partnerships. Both the hard costs of training and of activities, but also the intermediary functions that's so important to protect partnerships. So just want to flag that as well as potential a funding source.

MS. BUSICK-DRINKARD: I'd like to add Tom that, here in Missouri, we did dual enrollment with our TAACCCT grantees. So not only did they enroll in the community college for the training programs, but they were dual enrolled in the WIOA. We knew that if we would increase retention and completion rates, that we would also improve the performance outcomes for the WIOA partners, our workforce investment boards.

And that is something that has been sustained over – and carried over into our SNAP programs. So the SNAPs are dual enrolled into the training programs as well as into WIOA. And then our apprenticeships, we're doing dual enrollment, because if we are working together as partners and increase the community colleges increase their retention/completion rates and they are improving the performance outcomes on all of these programs, whether it be SNAP, apprenticeships and dislocated workers and WIOA.

MR. HOOPER: Dawn, thank you. That's really an important point about emphasizing all of those funding streams and dual enrollment. Thank you for bringing that up. We've got time for, I think, two more questions. One question was were Pell grants restricted to academic credit courses? It's a great question.

One that we're not quite as familiar with just because the Department of Education's role in that. the best step to take is to look at the Department of Education resource – like their website and see what you can find there. I think we – a good place to start searching on is around career pathway programs, and to see about potential opportunities there with Pell.

We have time for one more question. This is a question that has come in from a number of grantees and it would be great to – Liz and Dawn – to hear your thoughts about this one. Making sure the key stake holders in your regions are well aware of you TechHire work, is honestly a critical aspect of sustainability, and sometimes not thought of as much as additional funding or securing partnerships. What are some good strategies for raising awareness of your work in your region you'd suggest to folks?

MS. OJEDA: This is Liz. What we did in Denver – we really tried to get engaged in the industry business events that were occurring. We identified certain industry associations. Colorado Technology Association is really the key premier association that's connected to Tech and IT. We ensured that we participated with them, we established a partnership both on the youth side and the adult side, and TechP was just a component of that.

The manufacturing partnership that Colorado Association for Manufacturing partners, they also participated in it. So we became engaged by becoming active – not necessarily members, but participants in their meetings, sharing information with them, and it really was that work of mouth and several key events that we had at the beginning, and our website that helped us to market who we were and how we could engage in our partnerships. So it was really a lot of ground work that was established in the first year.

MS. BUSICK-DRINKARD: And I can share in the MoWINs – and I want to give one shout out in specific example, and that's to State Technical Community College here in Missouri. They're MOStart, which is a reentry program.

We created success videos around the adult learners lives that were impacted with these programs of study, and did real quick interviews with the student, with the employer who hired them, as well as the faculty and the navigators who worked and spent long days and evenings and weekends with these students to make sure that they're successful.

So I would think, take a look at these outreach videos, these success stories, because your local TV stations are looking for stories just as this. The videos were two to three minutes in length and each college was abler to receive one and then we did an overall video. Then the other thing is we used our own videographers within our colleges, which is a very cost effective way to produce free media that you can put on your website's, on your twitter feeds, on your YouTube's as well as share with your associative press within your regions.

MR. HOOPER: Thanks Dawn. Thanks Liz. That's terrific. I mentioned too that we see so often employer partners are really interested in being involved in our reach efforts like this, both because they believe in the work of the particular issue grant program, and also because publicity is great for them too in their region. So just suggest that as a way to think about including key partners in your awareness efforts.

Well, we are at time, and we're just going to do a quick wrap-up. First a really big thank to our speakers, to Ayreen, to Robin, to Liz, to Dawn. Lots of great content shared; everything from funding sources, to strong planning practices. So big thanks again to you all. A second note is, we're going to sending out an evaluation form via the TechHire mailbox tomorrow regarding feedback from all of you on the Virtual Institute as a whole.

So would love to get you feedback on the Institute and definitely look out for that evaluation form. I'll also encourage folks to continue these discussions and the learning that's going on in the TechHire community of practice. It's a great resource for sharing your practices and learning about others. So definitely encourage you to continue the conversation there. And thanks Ayreen. I hand it over to you.

MS. CADWALLADER: Thank you so much, Tom. And again, I just wanted to briefly thank Robin, Liz and Dawn for your presentations today. Definitely sustainability is one of our key things that we prioritize from a grant management perspective; knowing that the H-1B grants do have a lot of flexibilities and your target populations that you can serve and your training strategies.

We really do encourage that a lot of these promising practices that result out of your grant programs – hopefully they can be replicated on a larger scale or on a different – in a different way.

So definitely thank you to our speakers today, and thank you to our grantees for your participation and for joining us during the Virtual Institute. I know the virtual platform was an opportunity to sort of continue the dialogue and we hope through our upcoming technical assistance in the next year we can continue to do really great work.

So thank you so much everyone, and please reach out to your FPO for any further questions and the TechHire grantee mailbox at TechHire@DOL.gov if there's anything that we can do to support you. Thanks so much everyone.

MS. MCCALL: All right.

(END)