**WorkforceGPS**

**Registered Apprenticeship 101 Bootcamp**

**Engaging Businesses in Apprenticeship**

**Tuesday, November 5, 2019**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Menifee, CA*

JON VEHLOW: Hey now and welcome to today's webinar. My name is Jon Vehlow and I'm here if you need anything technically speaking. Hopefully you won't need to hear too much from me but if you do have any technical questions, please let us know on that chat whatever in the bottom left-hand side of your screen.

That chat window is also where we'd like you to introduce yourself now, so please go ahead and type into that chat your name, your organization, how many are joining you today, and if you are attending in a group. You may also use that chat box to ask our presenters any questions you may have during the webinar.

You'll also notice that we have made a copy of today's presentation uploaded into that file share window in the bottom right hand side of your screen. You can download that at any time throughout today's presentation. Also a copy of today's presentation as well as a transcript recording and the executive summary will be made available on WorkforceGPS in about three business days.

Additionally, to continue producing quality content, we will be sending out an anonymous survey concerning today's event. Please take a few minutes to fill that out once the webinar concludes. We will also be sending out a follow up survey in a month's time. Again if you haven't already done so, if you are just joining us, please make sure to introduce yourself in that welcome chat. Again we'll have that chat after today's webinar where you can type in your questions or comments at any time.

Welcome to "Engaging Businesses in Apprenticeship." So without further ado I'd like to kick things off to our moderator today Cierra Mitchell, division chief, office of apprenticeship, employment and training agency, U.S. Department of Labor. Cierra?

CIERRA MITCHELL: Thank you John and good afternoon everyone. On behalf of the office of apprenticeship, I'm excited to join you today for an interactive webinar where we can discuss innovative ways to engage businesses in apprenticeship. I'm pleased to be joined today by business engagement practitioners and experts at the federal and state level. Greer Sisson is the Iowa state apprenticeship director.

Carolyn Renick, specializes in industry engagement for the national office of apprenticeship focusing on the cyber security and financial security services sectors. Stephanie Veck works with the state apprenticeship expansion TA provider Maher & Maher, and is the former director of the Colorado State Workforce Board.

And Gina Wells is the project director for the same apprenticeship state expansion TA project with Maher & Maher. We have a lot of great information to share with you today and I'm looking forward to a good conversation.

So I'll turn it over to Gina Wells now to get us started.

GINA WELLS: Thanks, Cierra. Hello everyone, I'm so happy to be with you today. I just wanted to remind everybody that the conversation we are having today on business engagement in the registered apprenticeship space is part of our registered apprenticeship 101 boot camp. Hopefully you had a chance to join us for our previous three sessions which you can see up here on the screen.

And if you aren't already registered hopefully you will register for our closeout session on November 7th before calling our office hours. And there's a chance for us to look across the four great topics we've covered together over the last week and a half and take some of your cross cutting questions. And really think about how to apply what we have been talking about for the apprenticeship expansion work you are doing every day in your state. So thanks for being here today.

Today's session is really going to focus on strategies for building business interest and apprenticeship. We've got a great panel; who are going to talk about the approaches that they take to engaging business. We are going to talk about some really specific tools you can use, strategies. We are going to talk specific vocabularies, specific ways to shape your conversations with business that folks like you across the country have found to be effective.

And the material that we are using today is all information we've gathered from talking to practitioners and talking to states, and talking to folks just like you who are doing this work. So what we'll talk about today isn't the only way to do this kind of business engagement, but it's some examples of things that people have found to be effective. And today is going to be really interactive.

We actually have our panelists on video and so we will be moving through three conversation sections today. I'll do a little bit of talking, I'll share some tips and tools and approaches, then we will move to our video conversation. Today will really be the most vibrant if we are able to respond to the questions that you have that you might be bringing to this conversation today. So I want to encourage you to type in to the chat, you could even start now with questions that you have.

The more you put in there the more we'll be able to pull and have a really rich conversation when we get to our Q&A and dialogue section. OK. Before we get started, we want to have a little sense of where you are coming from, what you are bringing to this conversation. So we have pulled up this poll and we'd like you to share with us what is your background in business engagement?

What experiences have you had? Tell us, have you done this a lot? Maybe you are an expert, we could have had you on our panel. Maybe you are brand new to it. Maybe you've talked a lot with business but not in the context of apprenticeship. But tell us a little bit about the experience you are bringing today. And if your experience isn't listed here in these four options feel free to type into the chat, we'd love to hear about the experience you do have.

It looks like just about half of you all don't have much experience talking to business about apprenticeship. And then, the other half of you are in the – you have done it in some different ways. You have either done quite a bit of it or you have given presentations but maybe you haven't had many one-on-one conversations.

And I can see a few folks sharing a few things in the chat, so thanks for doing that too. OK, we are going to keep moving, but thanks for sharing this gives us a good sense of how to level set the conversation that we have today.

So to get started we would like to frame this conversation by introducing a few key mindsets for effective apprenticeship business engagement. This is sort of what you think about the approach, the philosophy of what it is we are doing when we are talking to businesses about apprenticeship. And these are just some that states and practitioners and experts out there have told us really work for them.

So the first one is that apprenticeship is a workforce development tool for business. I think we have all been there as busy workforce development professionals where you maybe find yourself in a promotion mode, so you are selling the benefits of a particular program that you are working on. So in this case you might find yourself selling the benefits of apprenticeship and those things have their place.

But to increase your efficiency and really maximize the quality of your engagement with business, we want you to take a more consultative approach. So think of apprenticeship as one of many workforce development tools that help meet business needs, and to frame your initial discussions with business on uncovering their recruitment and hiring and retention and upscaling challenges.

Or you might hear me talk about those as pain points; and then responding with tools and solutions that meet those needs. Even if it's not apprenticeship getting them in the hands of a person who can give them the solution they do need. That's the first one. The second one is that apprenticeship is a formalized approach that enhances existing business practices.

So folks have told us they have a lot of success when they talk about apprenticeship, not as a replacement for existing business culture and staffing practices, but as a model that builds on the ways that businesses already recruit and onboard and mentor and train and advance the employees that they have within their organization.

And then that by using apprenticeship you get a more standardized and replicable and cost effective approach that feels familiar to business but gets the results that they are looking for. And you'll see us come back to this mindset again and again in our conversation today. And then the last one is one I want to explain a little bit. And that's that the pitch to business is only as good as the program that is created.

So you can get really good at talking to business about apprenticeship but the most compelling pitch in the world will not leave a sustained result if the programs themselves don't address business needs. So a strong apprenticeship program requires building and then maintaining effective partnerships between the business, the apprenticeship system and education and training providers.

And then the workforce system and intermediaries also play important roles in recruiting and program administration and funding and supportive services. So the more that you – you probably in your business engagement work may find yourself only playing one part in that larger ecosystem of support through apprenticeship.

But the more you gain a comprehensive understanding of those partners and their strengths the more quickly you bring the right people to the table, the better positioned you are to bring lasting value to the business you work with. So just some thoughts that we hope you will hold in your mind as we go through our slides and our training and conversation today.

And if you have got questions about these please toss them into the chat, we are happy to dig a little deeper into these when we come to our first dialog. So today we will be talking about business engagement and breaking it down into three phases for you. So these three phases are research and preparation, so this is the work you do before you start talking to a business where you recognize the top challenges apprenticeship can help address.

You use research to identify businesses that could benefit from apprenticeship, keep track of what you learn, and you know the value of apprenticeship and prepare for an initial conversation with the business. The second phase is building relationships, so validating the pain points that you have a hunch about, learning about the businesses culture, introducing apprenticeship in the context that they are existing business practices in building trust.

And then the last phase is getting to commitment. So I think many of us if you have had some conversations with business, you have had the experience of maybe having a great first conversation but then how do you get that business to take a second meeting with you? How do you get them to start building the solution?

So we are going to talk about some strategies for addressing concerns that might arise, building organizational buy-in via the apprenticeship model and bringing the right partners to the table. So we are going to talk about each of these three phases and share some tips and tools and experiences the panelists have had in doing this work. All right, let's talk about research and preparation.

So this phase is all about understanding the workforce challenges that apprenticeship can solve and using labor market information and other resources to help you identify businesses that might be struggling with these challenges. So this is in contrast to maybe work that definitely has its place and is important where you have open invitations to business. Maybe you do a breakfast, maybe you have a webinar but you are just talking to a lot of businesses about what apprenticeship is.

As a companion to that, this is how you look at real time labor market information and other data and identify businesses out there in your region, in your state who are having the specific kinds of challenges that apprenticeship is really suited to addressing. And the first step is to understand what those challenges are.

So let me talk a little bit about that. So here are five workforce challenges that businesses may experience, that we know that apprenticeship is really well suited to addressing. So skill gaps and hiring. So businesses need to hire and they have a lot of applicants but if applicants don't have the skills required to do the job.

So you could see that in real time labor market information. Like if you are tracking what businesses – what jobs businesses are posting and you see the same position being posted every four to six weeks you might have a hunch that that business isn't getting the type of applicants that it's looking for. And that maybe an apprenticeship solution where you are able to bridge those skill gaps might be something that would meet the business' needs. The next challenge in our list is developing existing talent.

So businesses have opportunity to advance current employees, but those employees lack the required skills for these positions, and talking to some industry associations in your region, you may hear about these kinds of trends within the industry that may give you the sense that there are some businesses out there that are having this kind of challenge. Attracting and retaining talent. So businesses might be experiencing unusually high turnover, or having difficulty finding interested applicants.

So again you might see this in the real time labor market information in terms of job openings or job postings that you might be tracking. Retiring workforce so when businesses are experiencing high levels for retirement in skilled positions, again this is information you gather because you are connected to industry, you have got you ear to the ground, you are aware of sectors that might be having a looming retirement issue.

And then advancing technology, so businesses might have enough workers but they might be struggling to keep pace with technology and industry advances. So these are the types of pain points that apprenticeship is really well suited to address. And we want you to be looking for businesses who might be having these kinds of challenges so you can open up a dialogue with them. OK.

So using research to identify these businesses. So there's several ways that you can do this, some things that have worked for your peers and for experts in this space is identifying important and growing industry sectors and businesses in your regional economy. So you are probably doing some of this already, gathering sector information, looking at your career pathway work, other labor market analysis. Maybe you want to go ahead and make a list of the most – the largest and most significant employers in these sectors.

Then you are looking for businesses with openings that indicate one of the challenges that we were just talking about. That could mean that you are visiting the websites of the companies on your list. You are looking at their job postings; you are searching job boards, looking for the same or similar openings. You are assessing the likelihood that the selected companies are experiencing these hiring or retention challenges. And maybe if you can you are validating your hunches with other data.

Maybe you are going to a regional sector strategy report, maybe you are talking to your board if you are not the board. Based on that maybe you are narrowing down this list of significant employers in growth sectors to 5 or 10 businesses that you think are most likely to be experiencing the kinds of challenges that apprenticeship can address. And from there, you could go and then review job descriptions.

So look at that narrow list of businesses, review their openings, research whether apprenticeship programs within these occupations currently exist. Are there gaps in the apprenticeship programs? There is no programs or limited capacity in these areas. You want to check to see if these are apprentice-able occupations.

And some of our greatest experts in this space say, "You know what, make sure that you keep track of your research." If this is the approach you are taking, think of a spreadsheet, get a binder, have a place to print out and put the job descriptions that you might be printing out. Organize your thoughts to help you then plan for conversations with business. Other folks might use a customer relations management system; there is several ways to do that.

And this kind of comparative work gives you a comprehensive understanding of a company's challenges that apprenticeship might solve, and it lets you demonstrate even from first contact that you are in a position to understand a business's pain point and to work to develop a solution that meets their needs.

Next we want to talk a little bit about knowing the value of apprenticeship, so this is not business specific research but something that you might want to do before you go out and start talking to a specific business about potentially building an apprenticeship solution that would work for them. You want to enter that conversation knowing the potential value of apprenticeship to the business that you are approaching.

That is going to help you and the business begin to explore the suitability of apprenticeship as a solution. So there is a few key things that you might want to walk in knowing. And for some of you, you are going to look at this list and say, "Yeah. That's obvious." but sometimes there is specific things happening in your state that add value to apprenticeship That you want to be aware of and if you are just one of many players in the apprenticeship ecosystem, you are going to want to do that homework so that you know what's out there.

Common things to talk to about business are, that apprenticeship offers a stepped up wage system. So a business can start a new hire at a lower rate wage while they earn the skills they need to fully perform the job. Apprenticeship has increased retention rates so businesses don't have to incur the cost and money and lost productivity of rehiring and retraining for the same position. And apprenticeships provide a repeatable organized framework for recruitment, hiring, onboarding and advancing.

And this lets a business develop a system for hiring and advancing that ensures consistent results over time which can be particularly valuable to a business that currently might be experiencing a lot of turnover and a lot of gaps and skills as they manage that turnover. So just preparing yourself to know some of these common ways that apprenticeship brings value to a business will help position you and give you confidence for these conversations with business.

OK. So I'm going to take a breath, I have given you a very quick tour into some skills that you can use during this research phase of business engagement and we are going to move now into an open discussion. So we are going to pop up the video, so you will see us for the first time, very exciting for me.

And so I hope what you will do right now is start sharing your questions with us. We just covered a lot that happens in the research and preparation phase. What questions do you have? What challenges have you experienced in this area? Have you done some research in advance of talking to business – (inaudible) – apprenticeship and it worked great? Tell us your success. Maybe you ran into a roadblock, tell us the challenge you encountered.

And while you are sharing that, I want to toss the question over too Greer. Greer, can you tell us about the process that you used for preparing, you are a state director, you talk to businesses every day, talk to us about how you prepare before that initial conversation with business. What are your preparation and research tips? What works for you? And you are going to have to take yourself off mute.

MR. : Yeah. Greer (inaudible).

GREER SISSON: There you go. You actually have covered so much of that. There is two types of businesses that you are going to meet. Some that have medium interest to high interest and already know about apprenticeship who would handle differently. I'm going to talk about those who have low to no interest or cold call or that you are meeting for the first time.

And Gina did talk about some of these things and (inaudible), is that first thing is through the research and the business. It's really important that you know the business before you walk into the business. Don't go and ask what do you do? You should already know what they do, how much they do it and how big their product is.

Another important thing is when deciding to go into a business as a cold call, you may want to look and see how long they have been in business. A company that has been in business for a year may have a varied need for apprenticeship or something like that. They are not going to have the time, they just started that business. They are not even sure what they need. I'm not saying don't approach them, but you will approach them very differently because they probably are baby steps up into that.

They may just need a clear workforce type of help which is fine. Know their occupation. That should be one of the things that you should know before you go. And make sure those occupations are apprentice-able. Not that we cannot make them apprentice-able, but there is nothing worse than you get them all hyped up and then go, "Oh, we don't have that occupation." You should already know when – (inaudible) – is does that occupation exist in there.

Know who the curriculum providers are in the area, so that when you talk to them, you can act like you are from that town, from that area. You know that the Molinari Community College is the provider and you can name other people and do they help you now? So know if they already have some kind of relationship with the curriculum provider in the area, and if they don't that's OK too; just know who they are.

I'm just reading some new things. Know who all the other companies are that are like companies that are close to them. Because employers are more comfortable – there is a lot of safety and security if other people are doing it around it. For example, in eastern Iowa there is a lot of manufacturing, advanced manufacturing.

Know who they are. So you can say, I own this company, I know they have advanced manufacturing this company. And if once you have established that relationship with them, you have that – you are talking with them and you have done all your research and things like that, just make sure that you always keep any kind of next step that you are going to do in your control. Don't say, well if you are interested, give me a call. It should be, "I'll call you on Thursday." Back to you Gina.

MS. WELLS: That's fantastic. I can see a couple of people typing, so I know we have a few questions coming in. While we do that, I wonder Greer, you probably talk to a lot of businesses over the course of the year. How do you keep yourself organized? Do you keep notes in a notebook? Do you have industry files on your bookshelf? What are your tips for keeping this kind of information organized?

MR. SISSON: Excel sheets. We do some excel sheets. Well, and we have a really good partnership with the – (inaudible) – with Iowa workforce development, economic development and we have – (inaudible) – and things like that trying to figure out exactly what you are saying. But we use an excel sheet to list companies that we are working with, when they were sent to us, if they came in from a lead, a contact.

And also when we start working with the business after the initial meeting and it's with the office of apprenticeship staff we will immediately start developing some draft standards. So we already have that momentum going, and that's how we keep up with it as far as the company itself. And as far as the research, as we are building those draft standards, that all gets folded into that, so we have that information.

But a lot of it really – what works for me may not work for someone else. It's just really important that you do have something and that you keep it. I like to keep everything very simple, so my best way to do it is to immediately start working and give that company who is going to have an apprenticeship, a registered apprenticeship program.

MS. WELLS: I like that. I like the way you bring optimism and positive forward momentum into the work that you are doing. We have got a great question in from Katrina Vogel (ph) and I want to take just apiece of it. So she is talking about how you might approach an employer who you know already has a very structured work based learning program in place, but it's not a registered program.

And you want to think about inviting them into the registered apprenticeship family. So we are going to get to talking to business in just a minute, so I don't want to get to that piece of how do you talk to them about it. But what research might you do ahead of time? Is there anything special or particular you would think about arming yourself with before going into a conversation with the business that you know already has a really strong work based learning program in place? That's for you again Greer.

MR. SISSON: OK. I wondering if that's for me. Who already have a really strong and work based learning?

MS. WELLS: Yeah.

MR. SISSON: Well Gina, I'm going to turn that around to a known company who has that. And really it's really important not to tell a business what they need, or what they want. Let them come to that conclusion. If they already have a strong, one of the best, I think first questions is, do you have enough skilled workers and are you able to maintain those workers?

And that starts the conversation and usually, especially now that answer is always no. So then you start talking with them to build that relationship with them where you left. And sometimes I have literally found, it's not apprenticeship that they need. It might be another workforce program. And sometimes it may not be anything.

Honestly if somebody says I get so many applications, I never have a skilled workers' shortage, my guys are real great, I would go, that is wonderful. You don't need a registered apprenticeship, and then look is there other things maybe in the workforce arena that can help them?

MS. WELLS: Yeah I love that Greer. I think you have raised such an important point that we tend to celebrate the success of businesses that have systems that are working for them and that there are – you learn something from that too. But to acknowledge and lift up businesses that are, where their current systems are working great.

And we are going to get a little bit further into this conversation about how to go in and talk to a business. So let me go to that. But in just a second, before we do that, Stephanie, I just want to put you on the spot. You worked with businesses all over the state of Colorado when you were in your role, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about from a straightforward perspective, what you all were doing to prime business to be thinking about apprenticeship. Can you just tell us about a thing or two that you get in Colorado just for a minute or so?

STEPHANIE VECK: Sure. I'm happy to do that. I think the important thing to remember is no matter what state you are in or industry you are in; you are not in it alone. And I think that was the key message, is really rely on the partners that you have. Think about the access that you have in having those conversations with business.

You have an army of advocates out there, so if you can leverage on your boards, yours states boards, your local boards, your community college advisory boards, your chamber of commerce boards, on all of these businesses with the facts about apprenticeship, the facts about base learning. And the critical importance of collaborating and working together, and building a really strong work based learning program and the benefits of registered apprenticeship when that is the right solution for those businesses.

That we could go sell it all day long every day that businesses are going to listen to each other. But you really arm your business partners with the right message the true understanding of the value of apprenticeship then you create an army of advocates for your registered apprenticeship program all across your state. As well as your other workforce development program and internal programs.

MS. WELLS: That's fantastic. I love that, an army of advocates. OK, so what we are going to do we are going to switch back to a little bit of skill building and knowledge sharing here. So we are going to turn off our video and go – talk a little bit about phase two. So phase two of your business engagement plan is building a relationship.

So you have done your homework, you have identified some industry sectors, you have identified major employers. You have gone into their job postings. You have got a hunch of a few businesses where you think you can see in the labor market information through your conversations with your partners with your industry sector partners.

You think you have got a good hunch about a business that has got the kind of pain points that apprenticeship can really help to address. And so now you have decided to move forwards into building relationships with that business, with that group of businesses. So we are going to talk a little bit about some steps you can follow in this building relationships phase. We are going to talk about validating pain points. We are going to talk about getting curious about a business's current culture.

We are going to talk about how to introduce apprenticeship if that's the right solution in the context of a business' existing business practices. And then we are going to talk about how to build trust. So validating pain points and learning about business culture. So when you go in to a business for an initial conversation, we want to encourage you to really focus on listening and understanding. So approach that initial meeting as a listening and information gathering experience as the charge you are giving yourself. It's not a sales call. You are going in to listen and learn.

And your goal should be, if you are a person who needs a bench mark about this, your goal should maybe just let the business do 75 percent of the talking in that initial conversation. And you get there by asking insightful questions and honing in on the issues that matter most to that business and Greer talked about this a little bit. You are going to briefly share what you learn through your research, what brought you to them, why are you initiating this conversation?

And then maybe consider using a few of the following props to move your conversation forward. And Greer talked about this, how is it for you? What positions have the highest turnover? Are you anticipating the retirement of any of your workers? What challenges have you encountered helping workers keep peace with industry advances? If you have diversity goals? Are having difficulty attracting new or more diverse talent pools?

What solutions have been successful for you in terms of recruiting and onboarding and retaining workers and what's the most successful? So obviously you wouldn't ask all of these questions, you wouldn't run down this list. But we wanted to offer up a few different conversation starters, but really what you want to be doing in this initial conversation is validating your hunches. Like is it really the case. You have seen the same position posted over and over again. Are they having trouble filling that position?

And maybe they are going to tell you yeah, you know what, I post that position and I get hundreds of application and none of them have the skills that I'm looking for. Well that's going to be, you are going to dig a little deeper into there and then there is a hunch that you can follow up on as you think about how you might engage entrepreneurship solutions for that business. So if you take nothing else away from that slide, take away from this slide, spend 75 percent of your first call listening.

When you are ready to start talking about apprenticeship as a potential solution to a business' challenges, we want to encourage you to use this very business centered approach to that conversation. So speak in business' terms and rather than introducing apprenticeship as a formal government regulated registered apprenticeship program, what you can do is relate the elements of apprenticeship to what the business is already doing.

And sometimes the way that you do this is (inaudible) and you are getting curious, 75 percent listening says you might also be drawing the business out and having them share with you how they currently recruit, how they currently onboard, how they currently upscale and advance their workers. So I just want to show you a little bit about how that can work. So you can introduce apprenticeship as an effective formalized approach to recruiting and onboarding and mentoring and advancing that's going to give them the results they need.

So your businesses need to hire, businesses need to promote staff. You can be asking them how you currently post, how do you recruit, how do you get applicants into your HR office or whoever is reviewing when it's time to hire someone? Every business, has to onboard new staff and when you onboard new staff, you have to fill knowledge gaps.

Nobody walks into a business with absolutely every piece of knowledge they need to be successful with that particular business and that particular job within that business and function. That's the same as related instruction and apprenticeship; right? You are going to use related instruction to fill those knowledge gaps but you want to know how that business is currently filling knowledge gaps, or do they have a binder on a shelf that gets put in a cube of the new person?

Do they have to go talk to Bob down the hallway? Maybe they have an onboarding class. You want to know how they fill knowledge gaps and you can talk about how related instruction does that. Every company has some way of supporting new staff after hire with mentoring and maybe a really strong formal program and maybe really ad hawk. They might wish they did it, but its dicey and then your hire and have to find their own mentor.

But something happens there to help someone understand the culture of the business and 'how we do things here'. Structured on the job training and apprenticeship provides a replicable formalized approach to that. Every business has some way of conducting performance reviews of assessing whether someone is on target with the skills that they need to develop in the firm and with their performance.

And then you can reward that with merit based increases of some kind or another. Businesses have these kind of processes built in that's a form of reward for skill gain and registered apprenticeship that formalizes that approach. And then businesses need to promote staff. What does that look like in the firm that you are talking to? How do they, when someone does a great job, do they get a new level, do they get a bonus, do they get a new job title? In apprenticeship, that's our national occupational credential.

So we want to help you see how you can take a business's existing culture, understand it and then take your understanding of that culture and use it to help that business understand the way that apprenticeship can formalize and strengthen their approach to onboarding, mentoring, training and advancing workers. So I talked a little bit about speaking the language of business. If you spend a lot of time in the apprenticeship space, you have lingo, you have jargons that's pretty technical and that isn't commonly understood in the business world.

So we want to encourage you to use business speech instead. So in apprenticeships I don't know if we have talked about outreach and selection of apprentice. Businesses are going to talk about recruiting and interviewing. In apprenticeship we talk about work processes and competencies. In business we can talk about job descriptions and position responsibilities. In apprenticeship we talk about related technical instruction, but businesses are more comfortable talking about internal or external training, education or onboarding.

And you can see the rest here. Graduated wage scale, talk instead about merit based increases. Certificate of completion, talk about a position or a title change. So by using this language that you see over here on the right, again you are anchoring that essential component of apprenticeship into an existing conversation that business is comfortable with and helping them see how it's a solution that gets them what they need.

Rather than a technical government program that might feel unfamiliar or bureaucratic. So as you've started to have this conversation you are understanding the business culture, you have started to talk about the pain points the business is having and how apprenticeship might be helpful in addressing some of those pain points. You want to start to build trust. So maybe you have had initial good conversations, and the business is open to pursuing a solution with you that might look like apprenticeship.

Greer talked about always leaving that conversation with the next step that you can control and so we want to offer you a few thoughts about what that could potentially look like for you. As Greer said you can definitely say I'm going to call you again next Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. But here are some other things that you could also offer. So you are going to cultivate these relationships and build trust by ending each meeting with a clear next step and a plan to meet or talk again.

So you could provide examples of how other businesses have used apprenticeship in the target occupation. So maybe you are going to follow up next Tuesday and talk to them about how a few other of their competitors are using apprenticeship, or maybe help someone in another state in the same industry and occupation are using apprenticeship. You can offer opportunities to connect with other businesses, even if it's not in the same sector.

As Steph said businesses are going to be your greatest champion, and businesses often appreciate hearing from others about how they have used apprenticeship. You might think about providing an apprenticeship solution proposal. So maybe you talked about their pain points, you talked about apprenticeship as a potential solution, maybe you can come back to them with a document that describes an approach you might propose with a training provider.

Maybe some structural ideas about how you can use some of the flexibilities of apprenticeships to meet their needs. Maybe how you can bring in a partner for some different kinds of recruitment to help them meet their diversity goals. You can think about coming to them with that sort of proposal. And then depending on how the conversation has gone, and where this business' mindset is, if you want to provide a return on investment calculation.

So maybe you are in a state that has a tax credit. Maybe you have got access to some resources to offset the cost of related technical instruction or on the job learning. You can start to think through what that might look like for a business. Or maybe the business has already shared with you how much it costs them to do their current recruitment process. And you have got some information you can work with to help them see how the apprenticeship program can return some value to them.

Those are just some different ways that you can build trust and value. And now we are going to move in to our conversation again. Again, we really want to hear from you I know there are folks listening in today who have tried some of these things who have had really great success. Maybe you can counter some challenges we definitely would like to hear from you. So again, go into that chat, share with us what surprised you about the approaches that we just talked about.

What are you curious about, what do you want to know more about, what challenges are you encountering. And while we are doing that I want to come back to our panel. So Carolyn, I actually want to turn to you. Can you tell us a little bit, you work with two really critical industry sectors in the apprenticeship and expansion space cyber security and financial services? Can you tell us a little bit about what you are doing to build trust within these sectors for apprenticeship as a solution?

CAROLYN RENICK: Hey Gina, thank you so much. Sure, I would love to share with you some of the jewels or the trick of the trade that I have. So there is four that I would like to cover today. Number one is listening. I know that Greer had spoken about that earlier. Number two is helping to make connections that really help support what you are saying and connecting them with other employers. Number three is actually providing numbers that support what you are saying. Numbers that are supporting apprenticeship.

We have a number of different statistics and return on investment. A lot of other numbers that, numbers talk and they tell that story, so that's number three. And then number four is tools. So tools for example apprenticeship – (inaudible). Let's go back to listening. So when you are talking to someone like Gina was saying, listening is critical. You can actually start forming what you are going to say after you hear what they are saying.

So when they talk about the challenges that they are having, whether it's in retention or if they want to diversify or if they want to attract veterans to their program. Those are really key things. For example, the veterans we have a number of different employers who have veteran's initiative, and you can talk to them about the value of bringing a veteran into your program. They can access their post-911 – (inaudible) –benefits.

And it's really I think everybody should learn of the basics of those finances so that you can portray that to the employers. So making connections number two. As Greer said earlier, connecting them with another employer in that industry sector. So every month, actually every other month, I hold a phone call for those apprenticeship programs, those registered apprenticeship programs that are in financial services.

And it's the time for these employers to share what they are doing, talk about some initiative, innovative things whether or not if they are expanding to youth apprenticeship programs, whether or not they are developing a regional initiative. It's really a great time for them to share what they are doing and also share things that are not working very well for them. So that others (inaudible) can say, hey have you tried this or have you tried that?

So kind of building that community of practice. Also, connecting lines with our U.S. Department of Labor industry intermediary contractors. We have a number of them that are in specific industry sectors such as advancing and structuring, transportation, healthcare, telecommunication, hospitality, construction, logistics and IT. And they are there actually to help you.

So if you need some extra support in an area, if you just want to learn what is going on in these areas to them educated before you go out and talk to an employer feel free to connect with them. Again I'm from financial services and cyber security so please I would welcome anybody who wants to learn more about that. Or even I can help connect you with other employers. And that they can, that you will be able to then connect with the person who, they might be interested in, in moving forward.

And then also, connecting them with like, for example, the NICE apprenticeship sub working group. So this sub working group is open to anybody who is interested in apprenticeship programs that are focused in cyber security. Maybe you just Google NICE apprenticeship working group that will come up and anybody can join it. And so that actually can educate you and yourself on cybersecurity apprenticeship programs as well as see who else is interested.

Because people when they sign in, you can see which company they are from and where they are located. Another thing is for example regional initiatives that are going on. There is a Chicago apprenticeship network that started a few years back, it started with three different companies AON, Accenture and Zurich and now it has grown to over 25 different companies and they have over 400 different apprentices participating. It's the time for employers to collaborate together and network as well as networking amongst the apprentices. So again, regional initiatives, getting that group together to talk about apprenticeship and how its helping them as employers.

So moving on to tools. So apprenticeship.gov so. I encourage everybody to go to our website apprenticeship.gov, we just had this new release about a year ago and we are continuing to add things. We have got a new partner finder tool. Gina do you want to put that website up on the screen so people can see that. As we are waiting will talk about our partner finder tool. So if you are looking to start, if an employer is looking to start a program, they can go in there and they can type in where they are and they can see the other sponsors that are in their area.

They can see the various technical providers that are there in that area as well as American job centers. It's a really great tool for them to want to connect with others in their area. We also have a new job finder tool. So if someone is looking to become an apprentice, they can go in there and type in for example, cyber security in (inaudible) Virginia. And they can find other apprenticeship programs that are focused in that area in that industry sector.

We have an employer page; we have industry landing pages. We have different stack sheets. And also we have youth and educational resources. So we have had a connection with Selastic (ph) that we have been working with to develop these tools for educators, parents, to help them learn more about youth apprenticeship programs. So that there you can see right there in your screen is our apprenticeship.gov website.

We really encourage you to look at that. We have got different tabs for career seekers, educators and all different resources for you to explore. As well as resources for our national office as well. So I'm going to stop there and see if you have any question for me.

MS. WELLS: Thanks Carolyn, that was fantastic and I was particularly interested to hear the resources that you were sharing with the sector focus. And how exciting is this that you all are convening registered apprenticeship sponsors, to talk to each other and give each other technical assistance and support in strengthening their other programs. That was really great.

And I said there were folks who were interested in that cyber subgroup, but I couldn't quite understand the words you were saying. So maybe when we move to our next training section, when you are off the video, if you could type it over in the presenter chat then John will pop it over so everyone can see it in the main chat. Because I thought there were some folks who want to follow up on that.

MS. RENICK: Sure.

MS. WELLS: Greer, I want to pop the question to you. You started talking about this on our last segment, but can you talk to us a little bit about how you structure an initial conversation with business? What does a typical – maybe you don't have typical, but a recent conversation that you had with a business for the first time? What might that conversation look like for you? You have to take yourself off mute.

MR. SISSON: I did i. I removed my phone to charge to see that the button is on. But anyway, everyone has standards. The most important thing is to actually just look into the employer. When I'm talking with an employer, an initial conversation with them, I won't, the introduction, trying to put them at ease. You know, they hear the word government and they are immediately fearful.

So I explained not so much what apprenticeship is but who I am and what my goal is. And just wanted to learn more about their business and see if there I anything that what I do, registered apprenticeship could fit in. I really avoid telling a business what they need or what, this would work for you because I don't, I think a registered entrepreneurship would work for everyone but not necessarily does it.

So therefore you have to be very careful of that. So our initial conversation would be the introduction of the person. If they feel comfortable with who you are they are more up to listen to what you are trying to tell them or say. So I can't stress that enough a lot of times we want to go in there and just start, get really excited about registered apprenticeship and just want to just, vomit everything out. (Inaudible) and here's what we can do and this is why you should have it.

And I think that's probably one of the worst things that you can do, so get to know them. Find out, listen to them, find out what their needs are and where they are at. We have a company Accumould, I would love to have that program registered. They have a fantastic scholar program. And it is not registered; they are not going to get registered. They work with the community college. And we met, we had lunch, and they still call me by my first name and they are great when they see me.

But we were honest with each other. You would realize that you have what you need. So find out what their needs are, listen to them, and then instead of saying, "Well, here's what registered apprenticeship can do." Then say, "Here is areas that might meet your need that we can do in registered apprenticeship. You are having a hard time with finding skilled workers, well registered apprenticeship will partner with other people in the state and nationally."

You have trained people and you may think well you want some continuity in there. Registered apprenticeship provides that. And so then you just start saying, here is what is in here. Till they find out, okay yeah, my business needs and my business works inside of that box of registered apprenticeship.

MS. WELLS: That's fantastic, thank you so much Greer. Again, I love your examples of talking to specific businesses and the examples that you have given of how to walk away from that first conversation with a hook. And to continuing to build those relationships. I've got a question here from Hellen about working with businesses when you might be in the territory of an occupation that is not currently on the apprentice-able occupations list.

So I want to speak to that briefly, because this is Apprenticeship 101 Boot Camp and we are talking about the introduction. I want us to talk a little bit about why we shape this business engagement session the way that we did. If you are new to engaging business around apprenticeship, building a solution for an occupation that isn't already on the apprentice-able occupation list is not your entry level assignment.

And that's why we are giving you the skills and tools to identify businesses in your community who employ people in occupations that are already on the apprentice-able list and who are having pain points and workforce challenges for which apprenticeship is a clear solution. So if you are new to this work, we want your first couple of encounters to be successful and lead directly to new programs.

And so we want to encourage you to be working at the beginning with these kinds of businesses who have clear pain points, the solution is going to be relatively straight forward put together. And you have got examples of businesses already using that occupation.

So start there and work with your coach, work with your federal project officer, work with your state director for when you encounter those businesses where you are thinking of moving into some new spaces and some new occupations which we are all excited about and there is a big group of people to support you in doing that work as well.

So there is another question here from Carolyn about pre apprenticeship, and he role of pre apprenticeship in building solutions into a registered apprenticeship. So I'm going to open it up to the three of you. Can you talk a little bit about how building onramp to apprenticeship can be part of a solution for a business that needs a registered apprenticeship program? I have got a couple of examples in my back pocket too. Steph?

MS. VECK: Yeah. One of the things that I think really helps Colorado be successful and speaking from my years there, is this embracing an entire work based learning continuum. So that when you go in and you talk to a business, they are not feeling like its registered apprenticeship or nothing.

And understanding that registered apprenticeship is the gold standard, is the highest level somebody can possibly get to with a work based learning program, then helping them understand that they can get their toe in the water in things that are similar to apprenticeship but maybe not jumping all the way in and being open to that. So be willing to have these conversations and say what are you already doing?

Oh, you already have an internship program, well what elements of your internship program might be similar to an entrepreneurship program? And let's focus on strengthening those first and getting those really strong so that then we can help you look at the elements that you are missing and start to figure out how you might fill that gap. And that way, they are starting with what they are already so good about, what they already do well.

And you gradually ease them into, look, you only have these one or two other things that you need to do to set yourself up for a registered program so let us get you some help to be able to do that and connect them with your own resources or with someone else in the apprenticeship system that can help build those last couple of elements.

But being open that is okay if people start small and build up to a registered program rather than people thinking that if they aren't ready to go all in right away, that they can't still be successful and eventually get there. I think that is a real key for Colorado with embracing that entire work based learning continuum. Always shooting for the stars which is registered entrepreneurship.

MS. WELLS: I love that Stephanie, I think you really built on Carolyn's comment here about the importance of building relationships first, solutions first and then into apprenticeship. And we have seen some really exciting models around the country of pre apprenticeship as a great solution for business that wants to see some indicators in success in their training program before they commit to an individual.

You can structure a great pre apprenticeship into a registered apprenticeship program where folks are demonstrating their commitments to the program, are building skills, demonstrating their abilities of those skills and then transitioning into registered apprenticeship. It's a great way to knit these different solutions together to create something that is really powerful for business.

Thanks Carolyn. OK. We have a couple more bases we want to cover; this conversation is so rich. There is never enough time to talk about everything. But I do want to talk a little bit about how to get to commitment. Just a couple of quick things. I'm not going to linger on these slides. We have got some links at the end that will take you to resources that explore everything we are talking about in greater detail.

But we have taken you through the step of research, we have taken you into some successful initial conversations with business. We have helped you to target your outreach to businesses that are primed and ready for a type of workforce solution like registered apprenticeship. We have shown you how to structure those conversations. Now we want to talk about getting to commitment.

So what are some things that you are going to do after that initial conversation or two, that are going to build a business's comfort with the quality of your solution and get them to a place where they are ready to register our program. And Greer talked about take that optimism away from your first conversation. You are already starting to build out that program from that first conversation.

So you have got something to build on with that business. Something that often happens in this getting to commitment phase is addressing concerns. So a business might raise a few challenges, you might need to address those head on. Another thing that often happens is building organizational buy in to the apprenticeship model maybe your initial conversation was with HR or some business leadership.

But there weren't the technical frontline folks in that conversation. The people who would play that mentorship role in a registered apprenticeship that will talk about how to build, bring those people into the conversation and then we are going to talk about bringing the right partners to the table so that your apprenticeship solution is really strong.

Quick tour of some common concerns that a business might raise and then ways in which you can structure your apprenticeship solution to address those needs. So this is not like a standard rundown of apprenticeship-ness. But it's really action oriented towards conversations with business. So we know that businesses sometimes come back with some concerns about the paperwork and administration of a program particularly for small companies.

We talked about new companies that don't have the bandwidth for that sort of administrative function of apprenticeship. And that's where an intermediary sponsor could come in to ease the burden so if you are in a rural area, you are talking to many small employers or maybe you are just in a community that attempts to have smaller employers, you might think about whether bringing in another organization to create that sponsor goal might be a part of your apprenticeship solution.

You may sometimes hear from business the myth, that apprenticeship is very rigid. But you are going to come back in to show about how all aspects of apprenticeship could be customized. That you can structure the instruction, the mentoring, the timing of those things to really suit a business's needs and their business life cycle so that they can see the flexibility of apprenticeship.

You sometimes might hear some pushback about the expensive apprenticeship but you are armed and you are ready to talk about, how much that business already spends. In recruiting and hiring and onboarding and upscaling their employees. You are ready to talk about the steps of wages of apprenticeship, you have got partners in your back pocket who you know we are going to bring value to this business in these various stages of their work.

So you are ready to talk a little bit about cost and ROI in a way that will make sense to that business. You might hear some concern about retention and what if the apprentice leaves. And you can talk about, you know every employee might leave any business at any time, but apprenticeships have a higher retention rate than other forms of hiring. And as Carolyn said the data talks.

Apprenticeship is just for construction (inaudible) obviously not and you are prepared to give great examples in respect to that you are there to talk about, right. Part of your research is coming in to show how other businesses in that sector are using apprenticeships. On the union piece, we have heard that challenge before, (inaudible) some ways that you can talk about it.

Other tips on getting to commitment, I shared a couple already but I want to turn out, I want to give Stephanie a minute to explore a little bit more deeply this idea of bringing the right partners to the table to build a solution that is really going to work for business. So we can take another couple of questions, so please feel free to share your questions over here on the left, we are going to bring our video back and Stephanie, can you just talk a little bit more.

You mentioned before the way that you like to bring partners and to create a really customized solution for business. Can you talk to us a little bit more about what that can look like in terms of getting a business to commitment and giving them a lot of confidence in their apprenticeship solution?

MS. VECK: Sure, of course. I think it's really important. We all talk about how businesses get overwhelmed and they have everybody knocking on their door. Is this the work force – (inaudible) – is this a workforce center, is it a community college, is it the chamber of commerce, is it the local high school.

Everybody has a request of businesses. And for a while now – (inaudible) – has been working, and local areas have been working to collaborate better across partners. So that you can leverage your relationships and help each other in that outreach to businesses, without overwhelming businesses by everybody asking separately.

So that's my biggest recommendation, is think about who else is already partnering with businesses working with businesses, what relationship do they have. Partner with those organizations, figure out, be honest with each other, share which businesses you are all working with and then help each other out.

You help them with the request for some guidance on an advisory board or work on some other workforce projects where they might be willing to have that apprenticeship conversation or do an introduction for you so that you can go in and have the apprenticeship conversation. But really understanding whatever your situation is. Whether you work at the state level or you work at a local level.

If you work at a state level but you work with local partners in different regions and local areas across the state. Just know who those partners are and build strong relationships and remember that this is a huge challenge and there is plenty of work to go around. Everyone can be better when we all work together and collaborate and help that business be successful. The number one goal should be to help the businesses be successful and have people get connected to really good jobs that can turn into great careers.

Is there will always be challenges with who gets to count this or who gets to count that, but at the end of the day if you go into it as we are going to partner, we are going to help our businesses create and fill great jobs and we are going to help our citizens get connected to those great jobs. Everybody wins, everybody's program wins. So know your partners, build strong authentic trust and partnerships. And then leverage the existing relationships that people have instead of walking all over each other trying to all get to the same business.

MS. WELLS: Thank you Stephanie, again I think that army of collaborators, and we are not in this alone and we are all bringing some strength to the table to do this work. I think it's such an important message. Well its top of the hour, I feel like we could talk about this for hours. Thank you for spending time with us Carolyn, Greer, Stephanie and thank you for sharing your wisdom and experience with us.

We can continue some of those conversations in our office hour session on the 7th and there is always more opportunity to dig deeper into this business engagement piece. A couple of final notes, if you have the link you can click on it right now to register for our office hour (inaudible) our business engagement wrap ups. We hope you can do that. I want to turn it over really quickly back to Cierra to just do a quick recap of these resources and then we are going to close right up.

So I promise we will be done in the next minute and a half. Cierra, over to you.

MS. MITCHELL: Great, thanks Gina. Hey again everyone. Just a reminder and useful links to all of the great approaches that we have discussed today, and also a reminder to check out apprenticeship.gov to view the apprenticeship job finder, partner finder, educator resources including this classic material for teachers, students and parents.

And the industry landing pages, and one important note is that one of the best resource that I think we have on top of these great resources is our business engagement team industry liaison. I think Carolyn did an excellent job talking about the work that she does as the cyber security and financial services liaison.

And we want to let you know that we have new members of the team that will be doing that same work to connect sponsors with partners, potential sponsors and – (inaudible) – and industry intermediary contractors across all industries. And so we are happy to share that contact information with you following this call. Thanks everyone, and I will turn it over to John to close us out.

MR. VEHLOW: Thank you so much, Cierra.

(END)