**WorkforceGPS**

**H-1B Grantee Conference: Sustainability Plenary Session**

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MONICA ANTONIO: Good morning again, attendees of the H-1B conference "Strengthening America's Talent Pipeline," and welcome to those of you that are watching this presentation via webinar. We are now about to start our sustainability plenary session.

My name is Monica Antonio, and I am the program lead for Strengthening Working Families Initiative, or SWFI. I'll be facilitating today's session. Cheryl Martin, program manager for discretionary programs in the division of strategic investments, will be the panel moderator.

Featured speaker for this session is Rosa Maria Castanada, senior associate for family economic success at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Our panelists today are Jessica Cassarino, Community College of Aurora, which is a SWFI grantee; Linda Kurokawa from MiraCosta College, which is an America's Promise grantee; Phyllis Marty, Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, a SWFI grantee; and Liz Ojeda, City and County of Denver, a Ready to Work grantee.

Today you will hear from an expert about leveraging funds for program sustainability. You will also hear about important strategies for successful sustainability. The grantee panel will discuss building relationships with the community and employers, incorporating career pathways into training and employment plans, and securing supportive services, including child care. As a result of participating in this session, our goal is for you to have a better understanding of the range of strategies and promising practices needed to sustain aspects of your grant program.

So looking at the agenda, we will start with a presentation by our featured speaker. Then we'll have a short question-and-answer period. Then we'll segue into the panel discussion which will be moderated by Cheryl. Cheryl has an audience activity for you interacting with the people here in person, as well as the webinar.

Then we'll continue with the panel discussion and then a question-and-answer period. Webinar participants, please type your questions in the text box so we can address your questions during the question-and-answer period. Now I'll turn things over to Rosa Maria.

ROSA MARIA CASTANADA: Good morning, everyone. It's really wonderful to be with you here. Someone was reminding me. I thought it was last year that we were here together, but it was two years ago. So time flies.

It's an honor to be invited back with you today. I first need to apologize for being 90 percent of myself back here. It's not that the podium is large. It's that the speaker is so short. And apparently have to sort of speak to a camera back there. But hopefully, there'll be some time to move around a little bit. So it's wonderful to see you. I look forward to a little bit more Q&A and discussion with you after my presentation, as well as with my colleagues who have so much more to offer as well.

So I was asked to speak with you from the funder perspective first around engaging funders. But I want to kind of do a little bit of an introduction -- first, talk a little bit about the Annie E. Casey Foundation and what we're about, talk a little bit about some studies and findings for work that we have supported around funding sustainability and funding strategies for work that we supported.

And then I want to give you some thoughts and insights from the funder perspective around how to engage and speak to philanthropy, engage philanthropy, work with philanthropy as you think about your work going forward. So that's about what I want to cover.

For those of you who don't know the Casey Foundation, we're a national philanthropic organization. You may know our work from Kids Count annual report. Many of you partner in releasing that with us. The Annie E. Casey Foundation is devoted to developing a brighter future for millions of children and young people.

We're adding, really kind of deepening our work around young people, using young adults. And so it's for focus on children and young people at risk of poor educational, economic, social, and health outcomes. And our work focuses on three pillars to our work. One is strengthening families, building stronger communities, and ensuring access to opportunity, because children and young people need all three to succeed.

We have supported the Kids Count report, as you know, for about 30 years. And we've seen waves in child wellbeing in that report, saw it tick up in child poverty in the most recent report. But over time, we're also seeing that reality is that 1/3 to 1/2 of children whose families live in poverty for a substantial part of their childhood will experience poverty as adults.

And the data is really -- we can't help but look at our own data and ask ourselves how can we develop more effective interventions to give kids and young people a shot at the middle class? And how do we improve equity across demographic groups? The data presented really striking results. One is you certainly see these waves.

And we do see areas of improvement. But you see a persistently high child poverty rate, particular in the South and Southwest. And we also release a report called, Race for Results, about every other year where we do racial and ethnic breakdowns on child wellbeing. And the results from that are sobering and striking and also help shape our work.

And we have spent two decades promoting human capital strategies to equip parent and workers to earn, families sustaining wages, which is a lot of the mission of your organizations. And I know that we've partnered with a number of you, and certainly a lot of folks in the broader audience who are streaming in.

We've helped design career pathways, promote partnerships, increase college completion. We've promoted early education, health care for kids, earned income tax credit. We've invested in people. We've invested in place. And we've invested in power building for communities of color especially. And we're proud of that work. And we must continue to do that work and protect the resources that help advance those goals.

But we're also a learning foundation. And we're learning that we can't accomplish all of the lofty goals around family opportunity and mobility that we want to see and all the goals that we assign to our early education programs without also addressing parents' wellbeing and financial stability and vice versa.

And so, over the last two decades, the research that we've funded and have been a part of, the body of literature as a whole became very strongly suggestive that we may accelerate and improve outcomes if we combine what works more intentionally for both parents and kids together.

And so we've learned, for example, research findings that a few thousand dollars in additional family income during a child's early years can make a difference in academic achievement over the course of that child's life, a direct result from an income boost at least of about $3,000.

Parental educational attainment and peer support also identified as factors that helped move families beyond poverty. And likewise, investments in early education have been found to move children towards better economic outcomes as a result.

And there's expertise in the room that can talk a lot more about that, about the findings from investing in child care and early care; and because of this research and the suggestive work, also just the frustration of seeing progress, but not seeing as much progress as we would like to see. The foundation really leaned into two-generation approaches grounded in this research about families, intergenerational poverty, early childhood development, and family economics.

Now, I'm not going to go too deep into 2-gen. We did that last time we got together. It's been seeped into our consciousness for the last couple years. It's been great momentum in that space only to describe it as intentionally coordinating and aligning often isolated programs for kids and adults in a way that leads to accelerated progress in three areas. One, is parents with family supporting jobs, better jobs, high quality jobs, higher income jobs. Two, is children meeting developmental milestones. That may be defined in different ways for different groups depending on the services and what the goals are.

And families able to fully support and engage in their child's development, understanding their children's needs, having the time to build the attachment, and improving family functioning. Those are really kind of three top line goals for the two-generation work at the program level, policy level, and for the field as a whole.

And as these two-generation initiatives have emerged in recent years, we've supported 2-gen in building pilot programs that kind of demonstrate what does it look like in different platforms? We supported it in terms of policy reform. What would it mean for systems and policy to actually incentivize and facilitate serving families more holistically, and measuring the results of that?

And we supported it in terms of building evidence. There's a very strong need to build evidence in the two-generation space about what specifically, what combination of services and supports for which families are most efficient and effective?

But as these two-generation initiatives have emerged, some very common challenges have as well. It's not easy work to do. It's north star work to do. It is kind of an approach that you lean into, cultivate, and refine over time. But two big challenges, at least -- we can spend the whole day on the challenges, but at least two that I want to bring up.

One, is many programs, obviously, because programs and funding streams don't stream down in a way that recognizes a whole family approach; struggling with funding and coordinating child and adult services in a way that is more seamless than we do today. And the second part of it is collecting and integrating data for families.

We tend to just separately report data on parents, report data on children, not really understanding what difference are we making for the family unit? How are the results for parents' wellbeing affecting and proving in a positive or negative way children's wellbeing? So the developing integrated data systems is another big bear of a challenge for the field.

And we have profiled some solutions to that in our work, which I'll reference in a little bit. But core to 2-gen is using funds in a more flexible, coordinated way. That's key to the success of 2-gen programs.

And organizations that we've supported had to find creative ways and creative financing strategies to make their work viable, make their approach viable. So this question of sustainability today, I'm going to speak to it from -- the topic of the panel is sustainability, but I'm going to speak to it from the perspective of a strategic national foundation and from the perspective of how we supported two-generation programs, and what we saw that they did to blend and braid services to serve families more holistically.

As you are trying to do yourselves, many two-generation programs are introducing new ways of working with families. So often what's not funded is this more holistic family assessment from the beginning. We tend to do just case management where we do eligibility -- you're eligible for this or not that.

We don't do a deeper assessment up front for families. That takes work to develop new collection up front and new triaging for families. Another key feature of 2-gen approaches is shifting from case management, eligibility, compliance-focused approach to more coaching families, strength-based work, working with families around goal setting.

And that typically is not funded from existing funding streams. Who does it? How do we do it? How do we retrain staff to do it? So that's one piece that is kind of a gap in the way that we currently serve families.

The developing partnerships -- you can't really run a 2-gen organization without developing partnerships with combining your strengths to another organization's strength. That's a lot of the work that you've done over the years. It costs money and time and sweat to develop those partnerships, as you well know. That's often not funded either in programs. We just receive funds to kind of get the money out the door.

I talked a little bit about integrating, aligning parent and child data. And we found that a lot of organizations were thinking a lot about re-staffing, were thinking a lot about retraining staff to new processes and procedures. Again, where does the funding and support for that come from?

This and other things really challenged organizations who were looking to be more effective in their work and work more holistically with families to think about how do we pull the strings to make this happen? We want to realize this vision working with families more holistically; and not doing services to families, but working with families.

And the way that we receive funding and support doesn't really facilitate that, particularly in the longer arc of time. So I want to first, share a little bit about as we were funding organizations, we developed a brief that is up on our website called, Advancing 2-Gen Approaches: Funding to Help Families Succeed.

And we really just went out into the field and looked at what are some of the more mature programs that are taking a two-generation approach? How are they supporting their efforts? And we surveyed and interviewed six 2-gen sites over the spring and summer of 2016. So things have changed since.

We tried to showcase a number of different types of 2-gen programs -- some that were just single organizations, others were broad neighborhood approaches with multiple organizations, and highlight what are they tapping into? What are the different funding sources that they're using? And I'm just going to talk a little bit about the findings from that. And we can go a little bit deeper.

But I want to give some top lines from that. There were three main funding strategies. We called them braiding, blending, and pooling. And I'm just going to kind of say what they were. And then we can talk about different models of doing it, and maybe you have some questions. And you can help each other also with how to do that.

The first one, braiding is an allocation strategy that coordinates multiple funding streams for a discrete purpose such as tapping into SNAP and TANFF to do more for families than any single funding source will do alone. So braiding can help you streamline or bolster programs.

But it does require -- the difficult part of all of this is accounting for and reporting back to the funding sources data in the way that they want. But that's one strategy. It's kind of just very simple. You're probably doing this already. You're braiding different funding sources, bringing them together towards a particular need or goal. That was the most prevalent strategy.

The second was blending. And that's a strategy that usually involves combining at least two separate funding sources for similar services to meet a family's needs. Fewer opportunities exist to blend funds for 2-gen programs. One example, though, is blending. Blending is using Head Start plus child care in the development block grant for early care and education to create full day high quality care for children. Local preschool financing could also be blended into early learning. So that's kind of a blending approach.

The third one is pooling. And that is combining funds into one pot. Rather than tying each funding source to a specific program or service with all of their different accountability mechanisms, pooling differs from blending in that no mechanism usually exists to report the funding source covered every expense. So if you pool funding, you have a lot more flexibility in how you use it. So the idea is where can you tap sources of funding and pool them together in a way that gives you more flexibility?

We saw that all of the 2-gen programs had certainly an anchor source of funding. But the two-generation field as a whole has been really very kind of spurred and boosted and sustained also by philanthropic, because philanthropy can step in with a lot more flexibility and fill in some of the gaps that existing funding sources haven't done, aren't doing.

So I want to shift a little bit to what about philanthropy? What about engaging philanthropy in our work? And there are advantages to philanthropic funding and tapping into foundation support. One is obviously a lot more flexibility in how you can use it. Usually, you tap philanthropic support often for glue money to help you kind of glue a new model of how you want to work together.

A foundation can fill in the gaps that aren't there with existing funding streams to pilot new work. So I want to actually talk a little bit more about the advantages of tapping into philanthropy. One advantage -- again, I mentioned flexible funding, more diverse package of options in terms of how we support.

So if you want to, for example, say, you want to use philanthropic support to help you build your data systems and help you integrate data systems to have a whole family look of child family services, that's one way to reach out and engage philanthropy about, we want to achieve this goal, but we need to look at the data in this particular way.

If you want to evaluate or fund the effectiveness or short-term evaluations of your programs, a philanthropic approach can support that. You either can reach into community foundations, national, foundations, corporate foundations.

So the key thing that I find is the tension. So there's a lot of advantages to using philanthropic support, but one tension that I want to bring up is, at least from a national strategic philanthropic foundation, we don't come in with a lens around sustainability. The topic of this is sustainability, but strategic philanthropy doesn't fund typically for sustainability.

We are looking for, what are you looking to learn from how you're doing your work? What results do you want to test? What do you want to show in terms of improved efficacy? How are you building evidence? How can we support you in building evidence around what you're doing, either for a pilot or to do a quasi-experimental study, any range of evidence building? Do you want to test innovation?

I'm giving you ideas about how you approach philanthropy that's not about, we're doing this great work and we want to sustain it. I mean, the reality is I just had an example where we put out an RFP just in the last two months, and we had applications from a number of groups.

Some of those were ones that had federal funding that was ending soon. And they were doing great work. And the sad part is that they didn't tell me how our foundation's funding was going to enhance something. They just kind of led with how it would sustain what they're already doing.

And that's typically not what's the most appealing to philanthropy. We're in it to kind of demonstrate new approaches, see the innovation, build evidence, help promote partnerships, and in a more dynamic approach. So things like expanding your outreach to a specific population, these are harder to engage populations.

These are ways that we need to deepen our outreach or engagement with these communities to demonstrate more effective approaches for this population. So we're kind of looking at what's the edge in what you're trying to support? Is it around evidence building? It is around innovation?

Is it around scale? And what would the scale do in terms of impact? So when you're reaching out to philanthropy, I wouldn't lead with, we're great. Let's keep doing what we're doing more. But really, what are you looking to learn? What are you looking to show from your work? Something that's more dynamic than sustainability now. There may be sustainable funding sources that are sustainable that tend to be more like the corporate sources of funding.

They want to support this work in their communities and see more of it. That's there. But if you're going to community foundations or natural strategic philanthropy, we're looking for this kind of innovation, evidence building; a more dynamic approach to working with families. The reality is we don't just aspire for sustainability.

We aspire to effect change that creates a container for families to thrive and learn from it. When I'm looking at reviewing proposals, I'm looking for a couple of things. One, is of course, data and evidence building and really leading with results. What have you been able to prove or show through the approach, even if it's just at a promising stage.

That's really what you lead with, is this is showing promise around this, which is demonstrating something new, which then we'd like to take and scale. We always appreciate when organizations lead with success stories and really humanizing it. But the best is when you can back it up with data. So that's really critical.

I would also say what I have found as a great combination is seeing a success story but hearing not just a success story, but how are you engaging and working with families in a deeper way? And not just kind of listening to a family's needs and then delivering those services, but specifically engaging the families that you're serving.

Are they in leadership roles? Are they being engaged around the redesign of programs? That's a lot more appealing to -- I mean, it's more effective for your work -- but it's also an appealing strategy for philanthropy, knowing that you are taking a more grassroots approach, that it's not just, we build it and they come; but we're working with community around a continuous improvement strategy. We're engaging leadership in community. We're tapping into community resources. We're hiring from community to help execute our work.

I would also say taking funders on a data walk, combining a humanistic story with a data walk, which is presenting data around a room and walking through and helping understand what does this mean? And I would say that building relationships with funders over time is really important. We learn with and through you.

And getting to know our interest and priorities is great. But we also want to know what are you aspiring to demonstrate? How are you shifting the paradigm of how you're working to achieve longer term, more impactful results around mobility and a more transformative approach? That's going to be more appealing to families.

I will also say that from the Casey Foundation perspective, I mention that reducing racial ethnic gaps, we have studied the data on that. That's really critical and core to how we think about the work. It's not just, well, we're working in these communities and are reaching families of color.

We have really evolved to a place where we're asking ourselves, is this not just serving and improving family well-being, but is it disrupting, addressing the core issues that create inequities in community, that create inequities in how we deliver services? Is it looking at the fundamental system and policy issues? And have you done the work around that?

A way of demonstrating that you've thought about, if we keep doing it this way, we're going to replicate existing racial ethnic differences rather than disrupt and improve those and really help build community power. So I'm getting the time signal. I can talk a little bit more about different funding sources as your questions come in. There's a broad field of supporting two-generation approaches tapping into community action agency sources, community foundations that are funding peer groups. So there's a lot more resources that I can share with you.

And the last one I'll leave you with is a group that we funded called, 2-Gen ACT [ph], accelerating -- I don't remember what it stands for. But if you look online for 2-Gen ACT, that's kind of a robust learning community that includes profiles on how programs are operating in a two generational way, how are they supporting their work through different funding streams, and what are they achieving? So I think I'll end with that and take your questions or move to the panel.

MS. ANTONIO: Thank you so much Rosa Maria. We're going to take some questions now. So if anyone has a question in the audience, just raise your hand and we will get you a mic so that you can ask that question.

AUDIENCE: I wanted to give you a chance to speak to the additional funding sources.

MS. CASTANEDA: Of course. So we actually had a -- right, get to the money -- we actually had a companion piece. I talked about the different funding sources. And actually, other folks, you all can also talk about the funding sources that you're tapping. I think I might mention a lot of what you know. You are tapping into WIOA funding sources.

Funding sources that have a little bit more flexibility is the SNAP employment and training dollars. That one has been used both for innovation, partnerships, and sustaining work, and is much more flexible funding streams. The (toweled Gina?) community development block grant, child care development block grant is a funding source. Gina can talk a lot more about that.

We also have seen tapping into P3s, public private partnerships. Now, that was supported at the federal level. It's no longer a federal program, but there are still private foundations and others that are very interested in demonstrating public private partnerships for these.

In states where you can tap into the ACA, that is the funding source that obviously can support engaging families around home visiting, if that is a part of your early care strategy. It allows you to support families who are home visiting and reach into family's homes. And it is a deeper way of engaging and supporting child wellbeing.

I mentioned the National Community Action Agency Network, because in some states, the state community action agency -- in a number of states -- Maryland, Tennessee, Virginia, Colorado -- they're already kind of re-strategying in how they will support community action agencies developing peer groups and providing technical assistance to sites to help them tap into other funding streams and -- but that requires to have a community action agency as a partner in your work. So those are some kinds of funding streams that have been tapped into by yourselves, other -- I wanted to actually mention one more.

This one is one that -- I'm not sure if you'd be familiar with it, but the Family First Act that was passed to support child welfare and foster youth, that is a funding source that has been very significantly redesigned.

And there is an opportunity to think more about preventive services and approaches and to think -- and that means that you can think not just for -- use it for services, not just for child welfare families or foster care, but you can now tap into that funding source for more preventive strategies for reaching families.

That's something that is just at the beginning. States are just starting to think about family first and how to use it, how to tap it, how to support its use. So that's another one that, depending on where your state is at, it's a tremendous opportunity to tap into. Those are some funding sources that I would lift up for you all.

NEWTON SANON: Good morning. OIC of South Florida, Newton Sanon, president-CEO. I really appreciate your comments, especially when you talk about working with families, kind of the coaching through strategies. Our organization also has a social enterprise where we actually hire some of our students, because we leverage our political capital, we go after the contract so we can meet our goals in that regard. But I want to talk about your specific comment related to working with people to come through poverty.

I often say a lot of times we get in our fancy offices, come up with these best practice models, and go into these communities and not engage them and say, hey, look, we figured out what's wrong with you. Take two of these and call me in the morning, right?

And I just think it's disingenuous and not the way to do it. But part of the challenge sometimes, and understandably so, we all believe in outcomes. And these training periods of follow-up, etc., those models where you have to engage, go through, and take systematic approaches take more time.

And so how do you work with the funding community -- whether it's federal, state, local, or foundations -- to develop models that talk about how do we -- they can be informed about how to make sure this provision for us to be able to do that more effectively?

MS. CASTANEDA: I think that's the hardest thing. A lot of the funding sources that we're talking about are temporary and expire or have thresholds in how long families can receive the services. We know that the systems and supports that we currently have, I would say, breed instability. They don't support this whole family approach.

And they tend to breed instability and all the kind of cutoffs and hurdles that they put families through. There's not an easy answer for how to do that. There are some examples in the profile in our funder's brief about these are six ways that these organizations are funding and braiding and blending sources to do that work longer term. But to really change that I would say you have to talk to local leaders.

You have to represent, look, you guys have a national profile. You were part of an exciting federal program innovating in different ways. Use that leverage to talk to your local leaders -- whether it's agency leaders or engaging legislatures -- and say, we're trying to work in new ways.

These are the things that are interrupting our work. That's not the short-term strategy. But that is the longer term strategy. And I think reflecting back and asking -- even at the local level or at the state level -- asking for, can we have a source of funding that allows us to have this kind of flexibility? Can you just pilot it? Can you pilot it with us? Can you pilot it in our community?

So it takes organizing. It takes joining hands around new ways of working in what you're trying to demonstrate to feed that information back to policymakers, back to administrators, to be able to make the case for it longer term. Look, there's a great program in Maine called, Family Futures. They're a terrific program in that they're very comprehensive, holistic. They support families around community college engagement.

They brought in some philanthropic funding, because to support families around kids going to Head Start and engaging parents and getting to completion around a college education, the reality is their families had debt loans that they had to pay. They had a tire that broke that got in the way. There was no funding stream to support families around that. But they went to philanthropy and said, we need a pool of flexible funds to address these things that stop families from sticking with us for a long time even if they want to. And so philanthropy came in and supported that.

After that, the state came in and said, you're doing something really interesting. You're not doing it with that many folks because it takes a lot of support, but you're doing something really interesting that we feel like we could learn something from. We're actually going to support this program.

They got like a million dollars in support to fill in some of these gaps that then the state said, we could learn something from this. And this was in Maine. This wasn't a particularly progressive state. And so it doesn't matter. But they were engaging administrative leaders around what they were doing. And the administrative leaders over time said, there's something to learn there. We're going to support this with a million dollars and maybe more for some time.

So there are not simple solutions, I'm afraid. I'm too high level of philanthropy. Other folks can give you more tangible. But often you have to demonstrate what you're trying to do and what it looks like. At least with a couple of groups call it a pilot, represent it up and say, these are the hurdles to it, or these are the gaps that we need filled in order to accomplish these results. And if we do so, we get five times the return on investment than you're currently getting from your work. And you can sell that to philanthropy, or you can sell that to state agency leaders.

I did mention a couple times Head Start. But Head Start has been anchor funding for 2-gen approaches because there is flexibility. There is already in Head Start a lens to understanding families and addressing families' needs more holistically, including an early Head Start. So those are some funding sources that tend to be flexible that have tended to be anchor sources of funding for 2-gen work or for just more innovative approaches in how we serve families. We really believe we can't just keep doing what we're doing.

MS. ANTONIO: OK. Thank you. I see one more question maybe. And then we can go ahead and segue into the panel presentation. Let me get to the mic.

CAREER SOURCE BREVARD: So I'm with Career Source Brevard in Florida, and we've tapped into our state and federal politicians to be a source of funding for us when those things are coming up. Are there any other generic funding source people within different marketplaces that can help us that have a pulse on what other funding is available, that know that kind of thing generally?

MS. CASTANEDA: I'm sorry. The question is --

CAREER SOURCE BREVARD: We've tapped into our state and local politicians to identify funding sources. But are there other types of resources like that in each area that have a pulse on what kind of money is available from various other organizations within your locality?

MS. CASTANEDA: I mean, have you talked to and reached out to community foundations? Have you reached out to the women's funding committees? Those are some of the state and local sources that have a sense of where else can funding be tapped. But I want to get to my colleagues too, because they have a lot of ideas about how they've been innovative and can give you more tangible sources of funding and how they've tapped in at that local level. But I've mentioned some of the national ones.

And going to community foundations I think is a really critical one. Community foundations have been very innovative, and I think building relationships with them is really important. And they're influencers for the states as well. So I will end there and join an expert group to keep the conversation going.

MS. ANTONIO: All right. Thank you very much, Rosa Maria. We'll turn things over to Cheryl now, who will facilitate this next portion.

CHERYL MARTIN: Great. Thank you. Thank you, Rosa Maria, for this idea of sustainability not as keeping ongoing everything that you've done before, but– (inaudible) – on it, because I really think that that's consistent with how we see it at ETA as well.

It's not that we think that when you sustain a grant program that you're going to keep doing all the things that you did when you had the grant funds. It's more picking one or two things out of that and saying, how am I going to continue that? How are we going to take what we learned there and build on that? So maybe we need a whole different word. Maybe we need to call it building instead of sustaining or something. I don't know.

But anyway, just to refresh memory here, we have, of course, Rosa Maria joining us. We also have Jessica Cassarino from the Community College of Aurora. So we've got Colorado. So we've got Rosa Maria and I are from D.C. Then we have Colorado, Colorado. Then we have Florida and California.

So we're doing sort of I don't know what here, but weather wise. Phyllis Smarty is a SWFI grantee from the Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board in Florida. And then Linda Kurokawa, who is an America's Promise grantee with MiraCosta College in California. And then Liz Ojeda -- who is kind of like an alum almost -- joining us as a Ready to Work grantee with the City and Council of Denver.

So a special thanks for joining us here today. So we're going to start out with each of our grantees to just ask you very briefly to talk about one or two things that you are sustaining, that you are building, taking, and moving forward from what you're doing. And we'll start here with Liz.

LIZ OJEDA: Hi. Good morning, everyone. I think probably the most critical piece that we found is sector partnerships. And that is engaging your industry employers to help you build and sustain the work that you're doing. They're key to it, because if we're going to get people employed, if we're going to understand what those needs are -- both current and in the future -- they have to drive that. It's not always about our money, federal, money, local money -- it's about employers coming to the table. So I believe that is probably the key piece that we have found for sustainability.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you. And that's great, because you were talking about how many grants don't necessarily fund partnerships. But H-1B grants do. That's a big part of what to do there, so thank you. Linda.

MS. KUROKAWA: Our sustainability plan is a little different. We work at a community college. And we leverage the TAACCCT-IV grant into the America's Promise, which allowed us to expand the programs we had begun. But as I began to think deeply about sustainability and realizing that at my college we are the self-funded part of the college, so my department is not funded by tax dollars or the general fund.

So I had to really go to my thinking spot -- which is my bathtub -- and I thought and I thought, just like Pooh Bear. And I realized I really needed to shift the way in which we think about funding a not-for-profit, a self-funded entity at a college. And so many of us have that aspect to what we are doing.

So I realized we needed to engage the aspects that we had incorporated in our training programs, and where were they going, and what was that going to bring us? And so as we expanded our training programs, we began to see graduates who were being successful and graduates who were beginning to have businesses of their own.

And why couldn't we host those businesses in our building and have them use our equipment, and our current students to help them grow their business? So then they could then feed back profits into our program.

Our sustainability plan is really threefold. It is engaging industry to partner with us to help bring new ideas, help grow our students up into entrepreneurs as well as employees, find philanthropists in our area who would help donate. And I'm hoping that Bill and Melinda Gates are here, right?

We did invite them, because I'm looking for $50 million dollars. And that 50 million will help me buy a building that is three times the size of the building we're in that will bring all of our work skills programs, and not just a part of them, but an expansion beyond the America's Promise grant that will take the TAACCCT-IV, which expanded into America's Promise.

Now there's 12 different core programs from 2, and grow that into 15-20 core programs. And have entrepreneur offices available for new startups, who will then use our equipment and our students and our knowledge and run it in a way where you have this synergy between where education is accelerated and happening in the building, where you've got entrepreneurship and innovation and become centers of innovation. And where the two marry and blend and grow up together and then feed back funding into that building.

And so that 50 million as the start to buy a building where we're not having to pay rent will help us then develop this replicable model of innovation and business and education. Because, quite frankly, industry does not necessarily trust education, shocking as that might seem. So there's always this challenge of how to synergistically get them together. And they're always kind of knocking. And sometimes there's little inroads. But there isn't a place where it grows up together.

And so that's the sustainability plan that I thought of. And so we're working on that. I have a team of philanthropists who are trying to find our huge donors in California that are excited and interested in a new workforce training model where this type of synergy happens. So that's our sustainability plan.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you. All right. Phyllis, I bet you've got a whole different thing to talk about in terms of that.

PHYLLIS MARTY: Actually, it's a little similar as our workforce board focused on developing customized entrepreneurship training. We have one class. It's called, Startup Quest: Bootcamp. And it's an eight-week course designed to teach our participants how to start a business all the way from planning the budget to writing and pitching their business plan. And our other quest that developed is called, Own Your Future. And it's a two-week course designed to teach business basics, but also to motivate the participants into becoming more accountable for their own future, hence, Own Your Future.

And we learned from over the last three years that this training not only taught them the entrepreneurship mindset, but it allowed them to become better employees, because they really understood what a business goes through on a day-to-day basis.

MS. MARTIN: And so those are things that you're going to be continuing.

MS. MARTY: Yeah. That's what we focused on, are a couple of areas that we focused on to sustain.

MS. MARTIN: Perfect. Jessica.

JESSICA CASSARINO: OK. At the time we have two kind of big sustainability plans. The goal is to embed scale and sustain 2-gen policies and best practices both at the state policy level, as well as at the community college system level.

So we're working at the policy level. Number one, we're looking with a learning community group comprised of state-level represents, Department of Human Service Early Childhood Development. We're also working with our Early Childhood Development Councils. We have the Bell Policy, which is a policy-focused organization that works on research, looks at legislation, helps to advocate at that level. So they're sitting in there helping us to convene.

They also have started their own Future of Work Advisory Council to look at the workforce development goals and needs of the state, as well as how to incorporate educational partners and industry into that. So that's also part of this group.

But we're taking the lessons learned from the SWFI program, so interviews that we've done with students over the last couple of years, surveys, panels; also what we've learned at the program level at the Community College of Aurora, as well as at the Community College of Denver to really kind of chronicle that information, look at the statistics, look at the data. And the goal would be to then use that information to advocate for specific bills at the legislative level.

We're also working with Department of Human Services and their Early Childhood Leadership Commission where they are looking at issues and developing a plan related to infant and family child care, such as residential zoning issues that we've got going on. We know that residential zoning is a barrier for child practitioners in our area, as well as buildings and fire codes has also been a barrier for child care practitioners in our area. They're looking at that, and we're helping to inform some of that information and advocate.

We're also working with our Colorado Office of Early Childhood to improve state services and delivery. So they've got some grants in the last couple years. Colorado has been unique in that. Right now our governor, early childhood development is very high on his priority list. So there's a number of early childhood grants coming into the state. The state is doing a lot of work at that level as well. So we're capitalizing on the opportunity to be able to provide feedback to those institutions and those departments.

So we've had SWFI students, participants, families involved in various interviews and also other panel discussions. They'll talk to them about the services, how they experience services at the state level.

So it's the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, which is our state funding for child care assistance. So getting feedback from the families on the access and availability, the ease of services, the platform that is being used to help families navigate that system to really improve at that system level. So that's kind of our big policy and system-level strategy.

With this learning community group at the very beginning about a year and a half ago actually with Gary Community Investments, which is part of the Piton Foundation, had given us some money to do a kind of market survey analysis of the area. So what we looked at was family incomes. We looked at the amount of child family care centers in those areas, as well as just demographics of the family. So we kind of layered these researches to identify child care deserts in our area.

And then interesting enough, from that research, what we also found was that the lower -- and this is probably no surprise to anybody -- but the lower the income of those demographics or in those communities, the bigger the desert. So what came from that discussion with the learning community and at the state level was understanding that child care providers could charge more and actually get more reimbursement dollars if they were in affluent areas. So the impact to lower income families was much greater in specific areas. And then how can we advocate at the state level to change that?

CCAP is giving more money to providers in affluent areas than providing the providers in the areas where their families are actually taking advantage and qualifying for CCAP. So it was just really an interesting find. But that's our policy-level strategy.

The second big strategy we know is we want to make sure to try to embed and incorporate as much of the SWFI services as possible, both at the Community College of Aurora and at the Community College of Denver, which we've already started to talk with our other departments and look to see how we can leverage our scholarship dollars and that kind of thing.

But our goal in these next few months is to really start to scale it at the community college system level. Colorado has 13 community colleges. Community College of Aurora and Community College of Denver are two of those. And so the goal will be then to work with our Colorado Community College system departments to look at some of the best practices and help other community colleges that are interested in this work scale.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Well, thank you. I'm going to stop with my thought on that and come back to you guys, because we are wanting to hear as much as we can from each of you. So I'm going to ask you on this round to say two words, literally. When did you start thinking about sustainability? Jessica. With respect to your grant. Very short.

MS. CASSARINO: All right. At the program level, very late, unfortunately. But at the learning community level, at the system level, we had applied for those Piton Foundation grant dollars within the first year to leverage that during this time.

MS. MARTIN: Excellent. How about you, Phyllis?

MS. MARTY: At the beginning during the planning process.

MS. MARTIN: There you go. How about you, Linda.

LINDA KUROKAWA: Within the first year.

MS. MARTIN: And Liz.

MS. OJEDA: September 2015 when we initiated our advisory council program to work.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Right answer. But, you know, it ranges, right? You start and then you can start on these kind of efforts throughout. But we found with TAACCCT that those who did weave this into what they were doing from the very beginning and who, as some of you said, essentially looked around and said, where's the horse I'm going to hitch this wagon to?

And sometimes you think you've got a leader who is interested in early childhood education and that's great and you can go in that direction. And then that leader changes and some of the priorities change. And then it's like, OK. Now where am I going to? But if it's linked to the larger strategy of what's going on, you're going to have a better chance of success with that.

I'm going to move to -- I don't know. Rosa, did you have any comments on what you heard here? You want to keep going. OK. Before I go to our audience activity, I'm going to ask the question about how are you planning to approach funding for sustainability after your DOL grants end. And I know that we could all talk a lot about that, but just give one idea or so. I'm going to start here with Liz and ask, what are some of the main ways that you're looking at funding?

MS. OJEDA: I'm going to provide an example that we recently put together. And it was a cyber-security pilot for training for individuals outside of the Ready to Work TECT grant. And what we did at that point, we got innovative with the training organization's secure set. We're the local funding organization that does income sharing, our workforce staff and employers, to identify how do we braid and blend funding in order to pay for $12 thousand dollar training?

And secure set provided a five-week, free, pre-training activity to help people, one, assess, prescreen, and identify whether they even wanted to go into this after five weeks. Took those 21 people, brought them into 14 for that session. And at the end of that, we identified 7 individuals that we were able to use the funding from WIOA, from Veteran Services, personal loans, and income sharing agreements. That was our first stab at doing this kind of funding and finding a model that could potentially work moving forward.

MS. MARTIN: Great. What's one model of funding that you are looking at?

MS. KUROKAWA: Leveraging local, regional, and state funding, tuition, and profit sharing.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you. Phyllis.

MS. MARTY: So as a workforce board, our federal block grants are constantly dwindling. So we are, I mean, constantly, weekly writing grants. And we were recently awarded three state grants -- two for expanding apprenticeships and one for assisting– (inaudible) – population with barriers to employment. So we're currently providing our own entrepreneurship class developed through this grant to that population.

MS. MARTIN: Great. And Jessica.

MS. CASSARINO: So we're working with our state and local funding. We are going to be leveraging some of our financial aid assistance monies, as well as our foundation, the internal foundations at Community College of Denver and Community College of Aurora. But interesting enough, with the Bell Policy Center, they're actually working with a -- I'm not sure if other states have this type of educational dollars -- but it's the COSI scholarship grants.

So those traditionally go out into all of the community colleges at Colorado. But with the help of Bell Policy, we're actually communicating with them about setting aside student-parent scholarships so that COSI can then start offering that at the state level to all community colleges. But we're also looking at SNAP employment and training to leverage some wrap-around services, and of course, Gary Community Investments.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you. OK. We have such a wealth of information here and in some ways so little time. We're going to do something a little bit different right now. You've been sitting for a long time. So in a minute, I'm going to ask you to stand up. And we're going to be very brief about this. But for two minutes -- and for those of you on the webinar, you can respond in the chat window. But in a minute, I'm going to ask you to stand up, turn to somebody next to you, and ask this question about sharing one aspect of your grant strategy that you would like to see sustained or built on.

But before we do that, we're going to rehearse how we're going to stop doing that, because once we get started, I know that it's hard. We're going to have 60 seconds. And I will time. And at the end of that, I'm going to raise my hand. And I'm going to ask you all to raise your hands, and when you raise your hands to stop talking.

OK. So person number one will address this question to the other person. And then we're going to do what? Raise our hands and stop talking. Thank you. OK. So let's do that. Let's stand up. And just find somebody right next to you. Person A, tell the other person what you want to sustain.

OK. Raise hands, raise your hand and stop talking. I know. I'm sorry. It's hard to tell you to stop talking when you just got going. But we're going to swap that now. And whoever started, the other person gets your chance to share something you'll sustain, and then we'll do this again. OK. One more time. Thank you so much.

There are so many ideas floating around in this room. And this is just the beginning. This is a question that you can ask anybody at lunch or at breaks, and ask other folks what they're looking to sustain. You may have a seat now, and we will keep going. Thank you. Thank you so much.

So coming back to our panel here, you've talked a little bit about funding. And I'm sure you could each say way more about that. And that's good because we all need more than one idea, right? But let's move now. I'm going to ask Jessica and Liz to ask how you worked with local employers to determine their longer term needs, and just one component of that. So Jessica, something brief on that that you've done, how you've worked with them and what kinds of employers have worked with you and how you've incorporated their needs into your sustainability plan.

MS. CASSARINO: We've worked with employers in two different ways. We have, obviously being a community college, we want to work with them to ensure that our certificates and credentials that we're offering meet the needs of the industry. So they're part of our advisory panels. And we've done some apprenticeship type and work based learning type programming.

We also have leveraged our WIOA dollars to do on-the-job training where we would blend that with some classroom training. But interesting, we're also looking at employers on an ROI model. So with the learning community and that bigger policy initiative, we've contracted with an organization called Work Life Partners where they are serving.

And the mission of this organization is to help up-skill and retain employees. So they're in Denver Health. They're in some of our largest employers. But they're actually working with us to look at an ROI model and to figure out whether employers would be interested in actually setting aside benefits.

So similar to health benefits, we would ask that they might consider setting aside monies to help with subsidized child care for their employees and those kinds of conversations. Are they more interested in that? Or are they more interested in TAACCCT subsidies. So just kind of exploring that right now.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you. And, Liz, I know you've done some really exciting things with this.

MS. OJEDA: Right. I'm going to talk just a second about the sector partnerships I mentioned earlier. That was a key piece that was developed by our original advisory council on the Ready to Work grant in partnership with the Colorado Technology Association, which is a premier IT association in the state.

We listened and listed employers for their input and guidance from that group, which is about the first two years. We developed two sector partnerships. They're called Tech Talent Denver, and Tech Talent Boulder. And they actually incorporate five workforce regions. Those have come together. They are industry-led.

They focus on in-demand occupations. And they look at helping to develop work plan and career pathways. And what we do as workforce regions, we are there to support their efforts. We do not lead or guide them. They've been able to identify what the needs are, look at different planning and collaborative efforts.

One of the regions, Boulder Broomfield has identified the first IT apprenticeship nationally registered, the only one in the state of Colorado, Techtonic. And they've helped to leverage those resources in order to identify employers that have a need and will provide funding resources. So we're really emphasizing that and starting to grow and develop in that area.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you. That's very exciting. Now I'm going to turn to Phyllis and Linda and ask a little bit of a different question. When you're going to employers or foundations or any other source of funding, how are you developing your story? How are you marketing? Are you using data? What data are you using to show that there's something worth there? What is it that you're doing to develop that story that you're using to sell what you're doing really?

MS. MARTY: We're working on providing success stories and testimonials not only as the participants going through the program, but from the employers that are hiring the people that are being trained in this entrepreneurship. We also contracted with a third-party evaluator to provide a report on the return on investment and the success in order to allow us to apply for more funding.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you. Linda.

MS. KUROKAWA: That was really smart. As an educator, I really like the hand-raising thing to get them quiet. It's great. We have been working with our industry partners to take backburner projects that we have and assign them to students.

Actually, the students sign themselves throughout our various work skills programs. And the students start working on those projects. And if they complete them, a new SOP, a new prototype -- whatever is it that they're doing -- it helps the employer, it helps the student, it helps our center. They come to our center. So it's a win-win-win.

And this is how we've, slowly over the three years of the America's Promise grant, been able to really entice and engage our industry, have a track record of success. And now they're willing to give us money for graduates because we're saving them money on the recruitment end. So that's been a great strategy.

MS. MARTIN: All right. Thank you. So Rosa Maria, when you hear these ideas and thoughts that people have, does anything come to mind? Is there anything that you would want to dig in a little bit deeper on or ask somebody about?

MS. CASTANEDA: I would just kind of put a point of emphasis on two things. Really appealing when you can say we've done our own research or we've partnered with students at a local university and learned this out of it. Really appealing when you can say you have already learned something that you want to build on; even if it's a small investment up front.

So think about partnerships with university students. What data can they collect for you? What might be studied for you that then a foundation might find appealing in terms of representing yourself as already taken that step, as really being a learning organization, like you talked about.

Like, we already sponsored our own research. Can you help us take this to the next level? Or these are promising early findings. And the other piece that I want to put more emphasis is engaging families in the work. It's good to lead with success stories.

But at least in our foundation, we ask how deeply really are you engaging families? Did they help inform how you're newly doing the work? Where do you think the hurdles and challenges are? Are you developing the people that you're serving as business partners, as staff, as leaders, as helping go into community to also kind of represent your work?

So that deep engagement with who you're working with is something that, at least at our foundation, we have a very strong antenna around. Because if you're not representing that, then we're often just kind of doing the same or just kind of serving in the same way. But if you can show, we've had a strategy, we've run through these steps, we have a committee of parents or the workers that we serve that already sit on our board, that sit on our thing, that sit on our planning community, and this is how they've informed our work, and that's what distinguishes us from other places, that is really appealing.

And again, I think there's a lot of national community and local foundations. This is a moment when we're recognizing inequities in wellbeing and opportunity. And so being able to demonstrate how the work is cutting into those inequities, addressing them, addressing the core issues that affect those, and demonstrating better results for people who are typically left behind, and that your staff represents that, that you've thought that through, that you're engaging with communities who are working with you on that. Those are things that really resonate. And I would also ask sometimes issues have specific population focuses. Like, we now are particularly interested in using young adult opportunity.

So go find out that about what are the specific populations that funders are interested in supporting, and certainly tailor around those ideas. The only thing I wanted to add is I didn't mention as a source of -- I don't know if it's funding or partnerships -- but community schools, the community school money and support, that tends to be more holistic an approach. And to that, I've heard a lot of, oh, there's a community school's work locally that we were able to partner with.

And the college promise grants may be a source of funding out there for supporting college completion, if that's something that you're working with.

MS. MARTIN: Great, thank you. I wanted to come back to you, Phyllis. I don't know if this puts you on the spot, but you said you were doing a study to get an ROI. Do you have any data on that yet? Or are we still at the pre-data points?

MS. MARTY: No. We're still at the collecting data. They're actually doing their last site visit in January. So they conduct on-site visits along with evaluating the data that we send.

MS. MARTIN: And how many companies are they going to go talk to about this?

MS. MARTY: They picked three the first time. And they're going to talk to three the next time.

MS. MARTIN: Great. OK. Good. Well, we'll be looking forward to those results. Do any of the rest of you have data collection efforts like this that you already have any data on or that you're working on? Go ahead, Liz.

MS. OJEDA: Actually, what we're doing in Colorado goes back to the State of Colorado, their job system, called Connecting Colorado. They've made some recent changes in terms of how they're collecting data to allow for more -- we of course have the WIOA outcomes in there. But what they're looking at doing is putting together the work that we have, the employment piece of it -- both short-term, 3, 6 months, 9 months, and 12 months -- to identify what that looks like from a return on investment, and putting it in together with an economic profile. This has been a lot of work in the startup phase. And they've just recently come out with that.

Because of the fact that with the Ready to Work TECT program, we put all our information in the system and coded it under a program code. We'll be able to pull out the information that we need, and will be looking at it in the same way that other workforce regions look at it throughout the state. So hopefully, more information to come.

MS. MARTIN: That's great. Is there one other example of data that folks are using, pulling out? Or we can move on to other questions too. OK. So we want to leave some time for some questions and answers here. But before we do that, I want to give each of you the opportunity to talk about one thing that you would do differently if you could start over.

If you could start over and you're thinking of the sustainability in this building and you'd been through this panel and you'd heard Rosa Maria and you've been to this conference already and you knew then what you know now, mainly with all the experience that you've had, what is one thing that you would do differently? And what is one thing that you would do the same? Let's start with you, Liz.

MS. OJEDA: I had a big list. But we've already completed our grant. It's been five years since we were awarded the grant. One of the things that I would do while we have the state system, which was great, the state system didn't pull together all the information that we needed for the Ready to Work grant or upload to the hub system, and also didn't take into consideration that each of the workforce regions did things just slightly different. And when you're pulling together and gathering the data, it makes a difference.

So I would say the big thing we learned, get a data system that's going to work for collecting everything that'll work if you're working with other organizations, pull everything together, and let it effectively upload to the hub system so you can have successful outcomes in terms of what you're seeing and what Department of Labor is seeing as well. That was our big lesson learned.

MS. MARTIN: So would you say that's a lesson learned around data, or a lesson learned around the whole larger sustainability issue?

MS. OJEDA: No. This is around data, capturing the data accurately and being able to reflect the work that you've done. And it's easy if you have 100 enrollees, 200. Once you start getting past that -- 600, 700 -- it makes a big difference. It's a lot more work to make sure that you've got everything gathered correctly.

MS. MARTIN: So you need a sophisticated system for that. Do you have one thing to add that you would say in terms of sustainability? Like, if you were thinking about -- the things that you are continuing. Obviously, you're doing some things that you want to continue. Is there something else that you would have done differently around that -- started sooner or whatever?

MS. OJEDA: I think it's in terms of the outreach. We had adults that we were looking at within the Ready to Work program and outreach. It was the higher skilled individuals for high end H-1B occupations. Our average wage worked out to be about 78, $79,000 a year, a little higher than what our target was. That's a different group of individuals that don't normally walk into a workforce center.

Even though they may need the help, they don't walk in. In developing an outreach, it really pulled together and tapped into those individuals, and yet word out would have been better to do that at the beginning. We did that after about a year or so. We actually got better at it. But I think it's something that needed to be in our plan.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you. Linda, what about you? What is one thing with respect to keeping going the things that you want to keep moving forward? What is one thing that you would do differently if you knew then what you know now? And what is one thing that you would continue to do.

MS. KUROKAWA: One of these programs that are accelerated work skills programs that are advanced manufacturing, innovative technologies are expensive. They are incredibly expensive to run. And to run them tuition free, it was such a great idea and for four years. And I'm self-funded. So you know what I'm going to say next. It is hard to stay in the black even with a large grant like this. And I'm very, very grateful for it, and so are my students. And they wanted me to tell you thank you.

But to spread that money so that your grant package -- and I'm being very honest -- so that your grant package looks really good, like you're sharing the wealth, and you're spreading it to your EDCs, and you're spreading it to the web, and you're spreading to other colleges, and by the time you're done and you're running these tuition free, you start thinking, oh, my gosh. It's not covering everything. It's not covering enough.

And so I would have somehow saw that and taken it into consideration and greedily put more in my pocket -- no, I'm kidding -- not in my personal pocket. And what I would have kept the same is absolutely everything else because it worked like a charm. It was amazing. And it's been amazing. And it's changed lives and changed our staff's lives in the way in which we think and where we're going. So, yeah. It's amazing. And I love to have more.

MS. MARTIN: What you said about changing your staff's lives and how you keep going, that is another way of thinking about sustainability as well. I mean, we heard in the TAACCCT program and in many of the H-1B that you learn something, you learn something, you learn something. You take that with you to your next opportunity. And you use that and build on that. So that is another way of thinking about that. Phyllis, what is your answer to that question?

MS. MARTY: I would have started the entrepreneurship training in the first year instead of the second. And I would also offer more cohorts. We did two cohorts a year for each training. And we've learned from those that have been able to go through the training how beneficial it was. So that's what I would have done differently.

MS. MARTIN: Will it – (inaudible) – to start it in the first year?

MS. MARTY: Well, we took the first year to develop it, so, no. It wouldn't.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah. Got it. Great, thank you. Jessica.

MS. CASSARINO: I think I'd have to agree with Liz. I think our biggest challenge was really putting together a data tracking system and really thinking through that and being very intentional about what outcomes we wanted to see, what we wanted to be able to track so that we could then go in, look at a return on investment model.

We could seek additional fundings beyond the grant. I think it was really tricky at first. You know, we had Department of Labor guidelines and the performance measures there. So that was great because that did help us look at outcomes from the student parent.

But as it related to the children working with the families and looking at child care outcomes, even looking at -- because the Piton Foundation was very curious as to see what student parents, so higher education, students accessing higher education that were parents, what were those demographics of the family?

And then were the families accessing formal versus informal care? because we wanted to really strengthen the community. And so we just didn't have the mechanisms in place or the data tracking system in place to be able to really report that out and really have some concrete. So that would have been my biggest, maybe if I had to do it all over.

MS. MARTIN: Your do-over, huh?

MS. CASSARINO: Yes. My do-over. I would definitely have thought through that a lot more in that first year. And then I think as far as what I would do exactly the same, I'm going to have to agree with you. I think the program was fabulous.

I think what I've seen is a cultural shift at the Community College of Aurora and at Community College of Denver where I think staff have a greater awareness of the amount of student parents in the community college system. So I know this isn't part of the question, but I'm going to throw this out there. It's estimated that there are 8.3 million student parents in higher education. Of that, the majority of them are in community colleges, almost 48 percent; that's almost 1 in 5.

And so I don't think that people understand -- especially within higher education -- maybe in other industries -- realize that that is the students that you are serving are parents. We think of them just as students. We don't think of them as parents. And we don't treat them as parents or look at that holistic, and then even the statistics that come with that.

So if you look at some of the outcomes by serving student parents -- and I think this is a another big impact on the college in really changing that cultural shift -- was you're going to, number one, increase your enrollment of adult students; number two, by providing those wrap-around services and by really embracing the student as a parent and as a family, we're going to increase retention, we're going to increase completions, increase transfer rates, increase employment. And it's that whole cultural shift. And we're pretty thankful for SWFI to be able to do that.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Rosa Maria, I saw you excited about some of the things that they said here. Before we move to questions, what --

MS. CASTANEDA: I want to take her point home, though. That is really terrific. I think two things from that. One, is we often say 2-gen, and kids are like the default, like, oh, yeah, and it'll trickle down to the kids. We don't know that. We have some analyses that are suggestive about that, but there are also sacrifices that parents have to make to credential, to combined work and education.

And we need to know a lot more about that. You can tap into funding sources that are around antipoverty, that are around children's wellbeing if you kind of expand the lens out to children intentionally a little bit more and maybe try to collect data, but maybe also collect it from parents.

Let's not think of the kids as, oh, and to the kids, and add on, and the default. How really is this affecting kids? And second, I want to make a point that Gina has made to me and we have talked about, which is for this large and classic of student parents, we really don't know a lot about what -- we know that there are child care needs, but we don't know, as Gina has said how, when, who, in what way do they need this care and support. What centers, what families supporting care, how are they making it so that they are both parenting and going to school and working? We need to understand that better so that we might serve them better.

And the system for family, friend, and neighbor care is so paltry, so underfunded. That's what they're relying on. And look, there are some costs to instability for kids. And we need to know that. And we need to address it. And we need to think about how do we tap into resources to better understand that. If you can have more of a child lens in your work, you might be able to also make a case around kids' wellbeing and maybe tap into and expand your funding possibilities, if you're able to say, we also have a lens around child wellbeing, the second generation.

We're doing this about the future. Yes. We're trying to help families move into jobs now, but what about the mobility implications for their kids? So I just want to bring that piece home because that's the reality that families are living. As we're trying to have them credential and work and whatever, there's a second generation that we need to know more about and how to serve families more holistically.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you, Rosa Maria. So we have a little time now for questions. I wanted to ask, do we have any questions from people on the webinar? Not yet. OK. So we're going to go to questions in the room. And we've got two mic runners here. And there's probably things that people said here that you're like, I wanted to hear a little bit more about that. And so that may be specifically directed to Liz or Linda or Phyllis or Jessica or Rosa Maria. Or you might have a general question, and then we'll have one or two people answer that. What kind of questions do you have? Right here. OK. Here's a question back here.

AUDIENCE: Hi, everyone. I have a question. It's specifically for Linda and Phyllis because you talked about the marketplace incubator and the entrepreneurial hub that you have at each of your institutions. The question is -- two questions actually. The first one is, would it be possible for you to share your work plans, such as the syllabus, on how you pitched your program with the rest of us?

MS. MARTY: I have an entrepreneurship curriculum, two different ones -- the eight-week boot camp and then the two-week course. So I definitely have syllabuses for both that I would be willing to share.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Sounds like a good connection to be made.

AUDIENCE: All right. Great. And my second question is, we talked a lot about working parents. So my question to you is, I own my own business. It took about three years for us to become cash positive. So my question to you is, do you have any alternative pathway for those students that go out and they set out to do these businesses and start new careers but then they're not successful? Do you partner them up with organizations within your network so that they can continue to work and support their families?

MS. MARTIN: So how do you handle that first critical few years of getting started?

MS. KUROKAWA: So we are at a center that has the small business development center for the region of San Diego there in that same building where we have our work skills programs. And then in addition, we have a mentor who comes in three times a week to mentor small businesses aside from what the SBDC already does in mentoring businesses. We also offer office space at no cost. Now, if they're in the restaurant business, that doesn't help them much.

But if they're trying to develop a prototype or do IT work, having free office space with a contract for 1-2 years to then return a very, very small percentage of their profitability, once they are profitable back to the center becomes another vehicle to help subsidize a new business. So those are some of the ways in which we help those who are starting a new venture. Once they've tried and they're not successful, again, going back to the small business development center to have them coach that individual is the best that we offer.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you. What other kinds over questions do you have? We've got a wealth of experience up here to tap.

AMANDA: Hi. My name's Amanda. I'm an AP coach. My question is specifically for Rosa Maria, but I'm open to anyone else's take on this. Earlier you were talking about kind of the strategy to use philanthropic funding to fill the glue and fill in some of those auxiliary things that maybe the other sources of funding can't cover. My question, I think a lot of grantees in the room may have some grant fatigue for constantly applying to grants.

You talked about the importance of relationships with philanthropic partners. What advice do you, or what experience do any of you have to help break down that initial gatekeeper? A lot of grants require you get an invitation before you can apply for a specific grant. What advice do you have in terms of how you get past the initial letters and get that invitation and build on those relationships?

MS. CASTANEDA: Yeah. That's true. That is the reality. I wasn't always in philanthropy, so I know what that feels like. And you got to work hard. If you can show up to philanthropy as a consortium, if you can show up as already a partnership, something there that is already kind of operating, has taken X number of steps forward -- I say that because if you show up as a collective, you're more likely to get attention rather than just as an individual seeking support for a particular thing. I think it really is about developing relationships with philanthropy longer term that actually breaks down those -- the gatekeepers and the kind of wall to receive funding.

We also don't take unsolicited grants, I should make clear; and much of national philanthropy doesn't. But inviting philanthropy to your events, inviting philanthropy to site visits, inviting philanthropy to committee meetings so that they in a very noncommittal way can start being a part of looking at, learning with you, getting to know your work.

Inviting them to a data walk, inviting them to some kind of profile, inviting them to what they call fishbowl sessions with listening to families and having families make the case for you about what's needed -- these are all kind of softer ideas. Rather than trying to make a pitch and then getting rejected, it takes a little bit more creative thinking. Does this resonate with you guys?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

MS. MARTIN: Can you say a little bit more about the data walk?

MS. CASTANEDA: The data walk is something that we've used in the Kids Count world for a really long time. And literally it's we have posters on the board. We invite a group of whatever it is -- grantees or partners that are on a particular initiative for a kick off or an event. We have literally posters on the board that represent different aspects of data, maybe with a story around it.

And you invite folks to walk around the room and look at surprising data or things that they might not have known or might not have seen. When you can combine that with a family perspective, families talking to each other -- not just families speaking -- I hate it when it's sort of a sob story of a family representing. No one likes that.

And I say sob story only because sometimes it is done in this non-respectful, pejorative kind of way. Not that always. But when it's really done in a specific way and it's more of a fishbowl conversation between families themselves that kind of reflects some of the data in the room, that is really impactful. I mean, the reality is a lot of philanthropy is not connected to your work. They don't understand. They're not on the ground with families. So bringing them in to be, listen to be a part of it, to learn with you is really important.

And it takes some layering approach of doing that over time and just kind of cultivating the seed so that you can walk in the door with a little bit more openness rather than just the cold call to philanthropy, which often doesn't work because there's so much coming at them. So those are a few ideas about show up in groups, engage them in soft ways. Come to us. Come learn what we're doing. And over time, that kind of softens it and helps build relationships.

MS. MARTIN: Do any of you remember a time when you first started a relationship that is now a more solid relationship? And what helped you get that started? Are there any other examples here? Phyllis.

MS. MARTY: Well, we partner with our local early learning coalition, who's the recipient of the childhood block grant. And we partnered with them before, but this grant, we actually solidified that relationship and strengthened it.

And I would go to the table with a group. We're partnering with our local community colleges, university, our city and county housing authorities, the childhood child care resources. So when you're partnering with a group like that, even if you don't get invited to submit a proposal, one of them will. So you can leverage your resources and your partnerships in that way.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Any other? Liz.

MS. KUROKAWA: I was going to say that we have made such good industry partners that they've made us now they're annual contribution. So we have three companies that -- without me needing me to write much more than a page to tell them that we're going to use their money -- they now annually give to us, which is very helpful. They're not large amounts, I have to say. But it's something. And it's important. And it is this grant fatigue that made me think in the tub about going to a different model of actually making money; and since we're entrepreneurial anyway, to become entrepreneurial and start to think like a business person. So that's one way to do it.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you. Liz.

MS. OJEDA: A recent application that we did in Denver and we didn't get it was the RESTORE grant. That's the women that have been directly and indirectly impacted by the opioid crisis, and is a training grant. So at that time, I knew we didn't have all the resources within workforce -- identified one of our agencies, the Department of Public Health and Environment and the Behavioral Health Services there, and three women-based organizations within the community. Now, we tried to put this together in three weeks. Everybody thought I was crazy. I was a little bit crazy.

But what came out of it, we didn't receive it. We found out that we had so much in common with the work that we were doing. We would have never thought of this, that had we identified a way that we were going to be looking for other grants in the future where we can collaborate. I've already identified four in my research that I do weekly that could impact one or all these organizations. And I sent information out to them.

And part of that was because I know more about what they need. And I know that there's more of a cross-collaboration and an overlap on the things that we're doing that we could really do well working together. So it's really brought together some very powerful discussions and excitement about the future and going after other funding.

MS. MARTIN: That is a great example of partnership and the power of it that comes out of that. Thank you, each of you.

MS. CASTANEDA: And if you can demonstrate it with memorandums of agreement, even better.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Great. Do we have other questions? OK. I think maybe the next question might have something to do with what do we get to do next. Let me say thank you to Liz, to Linda, to Phyllis. (Applause.)

MS. ANTONIO: OK. Thank you, everyone. That concludes our sustainability plenary. Thank you, again, to our panelists. And also, thank you to our virtual participants.

(END)