**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Apprenticeships: Closing the Skills Gap**

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LAURA CASERTANO: With that, though, I'm going to get myself right out of the way. I want to welcome everyone to today's "Apprenticeships: Closing the Skills Gap" webinar. And I'm going to – again, if you haven't done so already, please introduce yourself in that chat in the bottom left-hand side of your screen. If you joined just a little bit late, please don't forget to introduce yourself.

With that, I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Danielle Kittrell. She's a workforce analyst with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Danielle, take it away.

DANIELLE KITTRELL: Well, thank you so much, Laura. And good afternoon, everybody. Hello. Welcome to your first webinar for the Apprenticeships: Closing the Skills Gap grant program. So again, my name is Danielle Kittrell and I have the pleasure of serving as your moderator for today.

So now, we have some great speakers for you this afternoon. So first I want to start with Robin Fernkas. She is the acting deputy administrator and division chief in the Office of Workforce Investment. Next, we have Brinda Ruggles, who's your grant officer in the Office of Grants Management. So welcome, Robin and Brinda.

Now, we are also so happy to have Ayreen Cadwallader from the Division of Strategic Investments – or DSI; Denise Roach from the Office of Grants Management; and last but not least, Gregory Scheib, who also works in DSI. Happy to have you all.

Now, we have a very, very detailed agenda for you all today, a lot of information but a lot of great information. So hang in there with us. We do have a few polling questions and pop quizzes in between, so it's just a time for us to get to know you all a little bit and vice versa.

So with that I'm going to go ahead and pass things over to Robin to get things started. Robin, take it away.

ROBIN FERNKAS: Thanks so much, Danielle. And good afternoon, everyone. As the COVID-19 global pandemic continues to impact our communities, we wanted to reassure you at the start of this webinar that we're here to support you and committed to work with each of you to meet your needs during this time. So we understand the concern and uncertainty you may be experiencing surrounding the COVID-19 and we really – we ask that you prioritize the health and well-being of yourselves, your family, your staff, and the individuals that you're serving through the grant.

So, many of you are seeking guidance already about continuation of services, how this period of time will impact your grant performance. These are all valid concerns and we are providing here a link on this slide – and I believe it's also in your chat – to some frequently asked questions that we have already gotten from grantees. And we're thinking that this will provide some responses to some of your questions as well.

So if you have – we've addressed issues such as adjusting program budgets, where needed to adapt services, and how to record service disruptions for performance purposes. We understand you may be adjusting these services to be online only or some of you may have had to suspend some of your services, particularly for the work-based learning component. Please keep us informed, where possible. And where you have suspended services, please be sure to reach out to your federal project officer to let them know.

So obviously, we want you to defer to your organizations and your local community's policies and responding to your particular situation on the ground. Again, safeguarding your health and safety is our number one concern at the moment. And just wanted to put that out there as we begin today's webinar.

MS. KITTRELL: All right. Great. Thank you, Robin. So what we want to do now is we want to chat with you all. So we'd like you to please share any strategies that you are doing now to minimize the impacts of COVID-19, or any concerns or questions that you may have. Please let us know in the chat window any concerns, any questions that you may have, and let us know. Or please share any strategies.

I know this is definitely a very, very difficult time right now for us all, but let us know anything. Any questions? No concerns? OK, I see someone is typing. Give you guys a second to chime in here. We want to make sure we answer all of your questions and concerns. Give you all a couple more seconds. If not, we can always move on and come back later if you have any questions or concerns with that.

All right. I'm going to move on.

I'm going to pass things over to Ayreen.

AYREEN CADWALLADER: Great. Thank you so much, Danielle. And welcome, everyone, to our very first webinar for the Apprenticeships: Closing the Skills Gap grants. We're very excited to have you join us today.

We're quickly just going to go over the grant. And before we do that, let's just see how prepared folks were in launching your grant program. Which resources here have you reviewed in advance prior to today's webinar? Have you looked at the grant package? The grantee handbook? Have you looked at the Rise Module? Please let us know.

All right. And it looks like at least the majority of you have looked at the grantee handbook, have looked through your grant award package. Certainly the Rise Module is an online orientation that you can use and review at any time. So definitely excited to know about everyone's well-prepared.

Here is just an overview of the funds that were awarded. In February, the Department of Labor awarded almost 100 million (dollars) to 28 public/private partnership grants. The lead grantees were institutions of higher education, or IHE; and also nonprofit, trade, industry, or employer associations and labor unions or labor management organizations. And so you'll see the breakdown here. We had about 17 IHEs and 11 nonprofit trade organizations that were a part of our grantees.

Here is where the grantees are located across the country, just so you can see your colleagues across the board. The lead applicants are represented from 22 U.S. states. However, service areas are national, statewide, regional, and local in scope. So that has expanded for these grants to reach about 36 states across the country.

Grantees also proposed to serve participants from economically distressed opportunity zones across the country. So we really hope this, again, provides more opportunity for our participants.

Here is the – just a chart to show you the investments for the Apprenticeship: Closing the Skills Gap grants. Again, about 99 million (dollars) – close to 100 million (dollars) – was awarded. And the funding opportunity announcements require a 45 match requirement. So as a result, grantees were able to secure about 45 million (dollars) in that fund from your apprenticeship partnerships. And while leveraged funds were not required, some grantees were able to secure an additional 82 million (dollars) plus in leveraged funds.

Here is just the grant period of performance. And obviously, your grant started March 1st and the grant end date, a four-year period of performance, ends the next leap year, February 29th, 2024. But we do – (inaudible) – that approximately 92,000 participants will be served by this grant program, which a particular focus on unemployed, underemployed workers, and those currently employed and incumbent workers.

There is a specific focus on veterans, military spouses, transitioning service members, including underrepresented populations in apprenticeships and H-1B industries, such as women, communities of color, and those with prior records.

Here is a breakdown of the H-1B grants industry focus. We have about 40 percent of grantees that are targeting IT – or information technology. We also have about 37 percent focusing on advanced manufacturing and 23 percent in health care. And so almost – the funding opportunity announcement also emphasized interns in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence occupations. As a result of that, almost 80 percent of you have proposed apprenticeship training in these occupations. About 18 grantees proposed cyber, 2 grantees proposed artificial intelligence, and then 3 grantees proposed a combination of cyber and AI.

And so we do really see these grants as an exciting opportunity for training to be provided in these new and exciting occupations in which cyber and artificial intelligence is applicable. And again, we're able to expand our industry through these grants, obviously with a particular focus in the manufacturing industry, wireless technology and broadband.

We're excited about the 5G wireless technology that some of the grantees proposed, the industry 4.0 and digital manufacturing. And so the focus with an artificial intelligence and cyber occupation, we are able to expand into the transportation, trade, and logistics industry; the electrical industry; and human resources. So certainly excited to see vast differences over these project programs.

And here is just another opportunity to chat. If you can share with us specifically what you're excited about with your Closing the Skills Gap grant. Let us know if your apprenticeship model is something that you're excited about, your target participants, or your H-1B target industry. (Pause.)

It looks like a few folks are typing in, so we'll give it maybe a minute to see – oh, it looks like Robert is excited about his apprenticeship model. See other folks? Yep.

"Training individuals in the field of cybersecurity."

"Industry partners are excited about the grant and partnering with Goodwin Community College."

"We're excited to be expanding our existing program to address new needs in cyber-secure buildings."

"Bring the training right to the manufacturer's parking lot with Goodwin College's mobile unit."

"SHRM is excited to expand into HR."

Maybe one or two more. And then, "Industry 4.0 skills for industrial programs." Awesome. And being part of a multi-state project is also – will achieve our goals of expanding our apprenticeship members across the country.

So we're also just as excited as you are about what we can accomplish with these grants. I think, Danielle, I'll turn it back to you.

MS. KITTRELL: Sure. Actually, I'm going to actually pass the baton to Robin. She's going to talk about program requirements for you guys. So Robin, take it away.

ROBIN FERNKAS: All right. Thank you. And I will try to move through these slides fairly quickly. There's a lot of text on here and I feel like with your having written applications and written your project designs, you could be giving these slides as well as I could.

But just as background to kind of ground ourselves in what we were expecting from this grant program. As you're aware, in June of 2017 the executive order on expanding apprenticeships in America laid out a really expansive vision for apprenticeship that would increase the number of apprentices in the nation to an unprecedented level across all industries. So that was a pretty broad vision.

This grant program really supports that vision by, one, accelerating the expansion of apprenticeship to new industry sectors and occupations that have not traditionally used apprenticeships for building a skilled workforce. And so as Ayreen pointed out, you really already achieved that by focusing on cybersecurity as well as occupations that use artificial intelligence, and many other areas that she'd already noted.

Number two, we were promoting the large scale expansion of apprenticeship across the nation to a range of employers. So not just seeing our large employers engaged in this, but really including small and medium-sized employers as well.

Third, we were increasing apprenticeship – we are increasing apprenticeship opportunities for all Americans. So really looking at individuals that haven't typically been involved in apprenticeships before, and expanding this to our veterans and other service members.

This FOA called for the expansion of apprenticeship broadly. So this includes any programs that combine educational or instructional training with a structured, paid work-based learning component, that results in an industry-recognized credential.

We're going to – (pause). And that really was looking at our definition of apprenticeship.

Our apprenticeship programs that are funded and developed under the grant program must include, as we said, these recognized standards of high-quality apprenticeship programs. And so I'll walk through these fairly quickly because, again, there's a lot of text up here.

But number one, that's really central to all these apprenticeships, is paid work. So the apprentices are earning as they're learning throughout their apprenticeship experience.

Number two – sorry about that – is looking at work-based – a work-based learning and mentorship. In addition to earning a paycheck, we really want to ensure that the apprenticeship is learning on the job through well-designed and highly-structured work experience. So this includes access to a mentor who is providing guidance to the apprentice.

And third is the educational and learning component, or what we're calling the classroom or related technical instruction, that leads to an industry-recognized credential. We're saying that needs also to be a portable credential that's designed – and it may also be that it's designed that an apprentice receives college credit for the classroom or related instruction. But that's not necessarily a requirement.

I should be clear about that. That's not a requirement that it leads to college credit. But we know that some of you have designed your programs so that it will.

The fourth area is the industry-recognized credential. And I apologize. I'm toggling between a couple of different screens here. But the key here to our industry-recognized credential is just that it is portable, meaning that it's really not specific to just one employer.

And that we want to – in sectors in which generally-accepted credentials already exist or will be issued by industry organizations or credentialing bodies, we really wanted to see that the program completion – completing your apprenticeship – will result in one or more of these existing credentials, or that it could qualify an apprentice to sit for other relevant credentialing exams. And we know that's true for health care and some of the other industry sectors.

So in sectors where independent credentials exist and are not issued by the apprenticeship program, the applicant must describe – or we had asked you to describe for us alternative credentials that you would earn, and information on who would be offering the exam.

And so that's something we'll – throughout your period of performance we'll be providing more technical assistance. But this is obviously an important aspect of the apprenticeship programs that you're going to be working on.

And then finally, but not – number five on our list but equally important to all the others is, that you must have policies and procedures in place to ensure a safe working environment that adheres to all the applicable federal, state, and local safety and employment and equal opportunity laws and regulations.

So critical to any apprenticeship program are the employers who are hiring the apprentices. So for this grant program, we asked that these employer partners be engaged in developing the apprenticeship program and hiring and training the apprentices. So employers lend their expertise in a number of areas, maybe by defining the program goals and objectives, identifying the necessary skills and competencies, providing resources to support education, providing assistance with the apprenticeship program design, and hiring the qualified participants and providing the mentorship.

So optional partners – and by optional we really didn't mean that they were not important, but we meant that you could design – you had the option of designing your apprenticeship programs with a number of different partners involved.

And for many of you, you've done that to support outreach and training activities, your wraparound services. You've included nonprofit organizations. You've included labor unions. You've included joint labor management organizations. You've included the workforce boards. So there's just a plethora of organizations that are being involved through this grant program and we're really excited to see that.

The grant funds, as we're stating here, for your activities must be used primarily to support the training of apprentices in new or expanded programs. Allowable training and training-related activities, including the funding for the cost of developing the training or delivering the training through the educational or instructional component, covering the cost of the paid work-based learning component, and as well as some of the supportive services, which can include child care, transportation, any of those that are designed to assist the apprentice in enabling them either – removing barriers to their participation or supporting them so that they can participate and remain in an apprenticeship program.

And finally, I think – or finally for me, anyway – we wanted to make sure that you had seen and you were aware that the Department of Labor had recently published its final rule to establish a system for advancing the development of high-quality industry-recognized apprenticeship programs; or what we're referring to in short as IRAPs. The IRAPs are high-quality apprenticeship programs that provide individuals with opportunities to obtain, again, workplace relevant knowledge and progressively advancing skills.

The final rule does not go into effect until May 11th, 2020. The final rule does establish a process for the Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship to recognize qualified third-party entities known as standards recognition entities, which is SREs, which will in turn evaluate and recognize IRAPs consistent with the department's standards.

So after May 11th, organizations interested in becoming SREs can apply. The first group of SREs will be announced in the fall of 2020. Once announced, these SREs can start recognizing IRAPs. And so we encourage you, if you are interested in this, to visit the IRAP webpage on apprenticeship.gov for more information.

Why we think this is relevant for you is that now that this final rule on IRAPs has been published, those grantees that are interested in formalizing their unregistered apprenticeships may be interested in this guidance, as well as the guidance that we already have on apprenticeship.gov about registering your programs.

We have several of the Closing the Skills Gap grantees that did propose IRAPs by name. You can continue to operate your programs as long as these programs meet the FOA's characteristics of high-quality apprenticeship programs.

We did want to make it clear, though, that the IRAP programs that the Closing the Skills Gap grantees proposed as part of their statement of work will not officially be recognized as an IRAP-sponsored program until a standards recognition entity officially recognizes these programs as IRAPs.

So this is an opportunity for me to take a pause and for you to ask any questions that you may have at this point. (Pause.) And you can continue to do that throughout the webinar, but we did want to give you an official opportunity to do so.

I'm going to turn things back to Danielle. So thank you very much.

MS. KITTRELL: Well, great. Thank you, Robin, for that. That was great. So transitioning everyone to your federal team, talking about collaboration and coordination. But first, we have a polling question for you guys. So, "In which stage of implementation is your Closing the Skills Gap grant project?"

Would you say you're still in preparation? You're still hiring staff? Identifying policies and procedures? Are you in early implementation, you have your staff hired; you have participants recruited for service delivery? Would you say you're in full implementation, your project is fully implemented and staff are providing skillful service delivery? Or something else? Let us know.

Preparation, early implementation, or full implementation? So you let us know. It looks like a lot of you guys have preparation, which is understandable. All right a couple in early implementation. We have some others. All right. Thirty-nine people have preparation; totally, totally understandable. All right. All right. Thank you. We can certainly move on.

So now we want to talk to you about your federal team here at Department of Labor. Now, we want you to know that whatever stage that you are in, there will be support to move forward. So now we want to basically introduce you to the various roles here at DOL. So now – which together make up your actual federal team.

So now your federal support team includes the following. So number one, you're going to have your FPO, or your federal project officer. That is your primary point of contact for Apprenticeship: Closing the Skills Gap grants. FPOs, they'll be your liaison to two other sources of support for these grants, OK?

So the first one basically is your grant officers and ETA regional offices and the Office of Grants Management here in the national office. So you always, always – you want to start with your FPO, who will bring grant officers as needed.

And secondly, because these are apprenticeship grants, the FPO can serve as a liaison to regional and state staff with apprenticeship expertise, who are available to support your efforts in various ways.

So now in addition to your FPO, the staff here in DSI, we are the lead program office for Closing the Skills Gap grants. Now, you heard other DOL and other apprenticeship grants, you also know that this is a different program office. But DSI is already working very closely with other offices at DOL. So in particular, we will serve as your liaison to the Office of Apprenticeship and they set all apprenticeship policies for DOL; as well as the chief evaluation officer, or as we like to call him, the CEO. OK?

For the most part, especially at first, you'll be communicating directly with your FPO and the DSI at the program office.

Now – so now, your FPO, who is based in the region of the lead grantee, has been assigned to work with each grantee. Now, your FPOs should have been identified in your grant package. Now, the goal of your FPO is to assist you and serve as a resource on all grant-related matters.

Now, FPOs, they are your primary POC – or point of contact – for all technical matters, and the person with whom you will have the most frequent and direct contact. So FPOs, make them your friends. So they are responsible for providing compliance assistance, conducting oversight and review of grant performance, and delivering or arranging technical assistance to assist you in reaching your outcome goals.

Now, you may find out that there are many voices from DOL speaking to various aspects of apprenticeship, but your FPO is the only one – the only one who can tell you what you can and cannot do as part of this grant. Thus, your FPO plays a very critical role in the success of your grant program. So communication with your FPO is key.

So now, the national Office of Grants Management – or OGM, as we like to call them – they run the grant competition and they make the selections for awards. So after the grants are awarded, all official grant documents are maintained in the grants office.

So the regional grant officer can approve budget modifications and, guess what, equipment purchases. So the national grant officer is the only one who can approve changes to the grant agreement. They also review and approve more complicated modifications, such as your SOW – or statement of work – changes and signatory and (NICRA ?).

Now, other staff at OGM, they provide guidance on important policy issues and training on the fiscal and administrative requirements of the grant. So this is just basically background because you will access all of this, of course, through who? You guessed it, your FPO. All right?

So with that I'm going to go ahead and pass things over.

MS. CADWALLADER: Thanks, Danielle. And this slide is just to talk about the program office staff that's here at – in the Strategic Investments. We serve as the program office for the Closing the Skills Gap grant program, as well as some of the other H-1B grants that is here out of the Office of Workforce Investment.

We have several functions to ensure the success of your grant. We support your FPOs and other ETA staff involved in the administration of your grants. We also provide policy clarification and guidance on the grant program, as well as provide technical assistance – or TA – to support you with the implementation process of your grant.

The technical assistance may be on universal topics such as performance reporting, training service delivery, or employer engagement. We also provide customized technical assistance to grantees to address specific aspects of the grant. And also, some of this technical assistance can also include creating peer-to-peer networking opportunities, so that you can learn and engage with one another.

Another key role for us is in performance management. We work with our Office of Information Systems and Technology to collect performance data that you will compile for your grants and track your overall progress. This data is used in the quarterly reports that you submit to the Department of Labor. And we will provide more detailed quarterly reporting requirements later in this presentation.

Also, we do support the Office of Grants Management in reviewing some types of grant modifications that come through, that come in from you and the regional office.

Lastly, we're also often asked for information about the grants by the White House, the Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accountability Office and other stakeholders. So we may periodically request additional information from you on any promising practices that you might have and what you have achieved grant-to-date. We certainly appreciate your response to these requests as they come through.

Another office that we work very closely with is the Department of Labor's Chief Evaluation Office, or CEO. This office is responsible for implementing the Department of Labor's evaluation policy. They do conduct program evaluations across all of – programs across the Department of Labor. And the outcomes of those evaluations help to determine a successful strategy that can improve performance outcomes.

So for the next few weeks, they will be working with the program office, with our team here at DSI, to provide you with more information on the evaluation process and receive – and get more information from you about your grant program.

Here is, again, some information on the national evaluation for the Apprenticeship: Closing the Skills Gap grant. As you're aware, grantees are required to participate in the national evaluation. The department's Chief Evaluation Office is responsible for overseeing the national evaluation of this grant.

The evaluation will look at how grantees implement their strategies and what strategies appear promising for increasing apprenticeship opportunities. And how that can be replicated in other industries, other occupations, other target populations, et cetera.

Additionally, the department is exploring the feasibility of an impact evaluation among a select number of grantees. This might mean that some of you could be selected to participate in a randomized control trial – or RCT. And this will help to determine the effectiveness or impact of your program on participant employment and other outcomes in comparison to individuals that have not received services from your program.

Again, as for next steps, over the next several months, the department's Chief Evaluation Office – and we do have a selected evaluation contractor – they'll be working with our team here at DSI to provide you with additional information, as well as get information from you about your programs and to determine how the grantees can support if there is an impact portion of the evaluation.

And I think with that, if there's any questions about the evaluation or our program office teams here, we can address them. And I know we have a couple questions that came through and we'll be able to address them as well as we move forward with our presentation.

Danielle, I can turn it over to you.

MS. KITTRELL: Yeah, absolutely. Thank you, Ayreen. So with that, I'm actually going to turn it over to Brinda Ruggles and Denise Roach from the Office of Grants Management. Take it away, ladies.

BRINDA RUGGLES: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. I am Brinda Ruggles from the Office of Grants Management – or OGM. I am the grant officer for the Apprenticeship: Closing the Skills Gap, or CSG for short. Again, congratulations again on receiving your award.

Presenting with me from OGM is Denise Roach, who is the lead grants management specialist for this grant. Denise will go over grant modifications with you very shortly.

So you already received from our office – you got our package which consisted of the grant award letter, which is the document labeled "Payment Management System Letter," the grantee handbook, and the actual grant agreement. This agreement includes the notice of award, which consists of the signature page; the condition of award page; the grant terms and conditions; the application for federal assistance, also known as the SF-424; the budget, which includes the SF-424A and the budget narrative; the statement of work; and if applicable, the indirect cost rate agreement.

The grant award letter, which is the PMS letter, contains important information about how to access your funds via the PMS, which is operated by the Department of Health and Human Services; and how to access DOL's grantee reporting system for financial reporting.

The systems require two separate passwords and PINs. Information and forms for these systems can be found at the above website under "manage awarded grants." You'll find information on this site about the grantee fiscal reporting system and the federal financial report form, also known as the ETA 9130. Your passwords and PINs are sent separately after you supply the necessary information. So once you receive it, please do not lose it.

Briefly we will go over the quarterly financial report. All ETA grant recipients use the 9130 quarterly financial form to report expenditures charged against this grant – (inaudible). The quarterly report is due within 45 days from the end of the quarter. And I believe Greg will cover that more in depth later on.

You also received the grantee handbook, a general resource designed to orient grantees to the grant process in ETA. We recognize that administering grants can be an overwhelming responsibility, so our goal in assembling this grantee handbook was to make sure that you have the resources and information at hand to help you succeed.

The grantee handbook is presented in seven sections. Each section contains pertinent information that you and your staff need to know regarding the goals and expectations for managing an ETA competitively-awarded grant, such as how to manage your period of performance, where to find your grant, the audit phase, and the closeout phase.

The first page of the grant agreement is the notice of award, or NOA. This page has the project title, which is the "H-1B Apprenticeship: Closing the Skills Gap." And it contains the grant recipient's identifying information, which is the name of your organization, address, EIN number, and DUNS number. It also contains the federal award identification number, otherwise known as the grant number; the period of performance; award amount; uniform administrative requirements and cost principles; and signatures are also included in this document.

The NOA page also outlines the requirements to resolve the funding restrictions for grantees that are conditionally approved. I will discuss what conditionally approved means on the next few slides.

As grantees, you are required to fully comply with all applicable statutes, regulations, and cost principles in performing your responsibilities under this grant agreement.

Cost principles that are a set of government-wide rules that apply to all ETA grantees are outlined in 2 Code of Federal Regulations 200, or the uniform guidance; and 2 Code of Federal Regulations 2900, the DOL exceptions, which define the conditions under which grantees may charge costs within federally-funded grants.

These regulations provide guidance to help you determine whether specific planned expenditures are allowable, unallowable, or allowable with conditions. There are also other requirements included in the terms and conditions of the award.

ETA has reviewed your statement of work, budget, and accompanying materials to identify potential unallowable costs and compliance issues. The purpose of all of these reviews is to catch potentially problematic items upfront, so that they don't become bigger issues later on in your grant. We know there are a lot of rules and regulations to keep track, so we want to do our best to help you make sure your projects are in compliance.

In addition to the cost and all compliance items, a separate review of your outcomes and performance measures has been completed also.

After the NOA page of the award grant agreement is the condition of award pages. Again, ETA conducted compliance reviews of grant award packages, identifying areas of concern within the submitted applications that required either clarifications or modification from grantees. So those areas of concern were described as additional conditions of award and are the first few pages in your grant award package. You will have 30 days to work with your FPO to respond to those items outlined in the conditions of award page.

So first let me discuss about conditionally approved funding.

Before I do that, though, let me just show you about the actual conditions of award pages, and those are grouped into three. The first part – (inaudible) – conditions for grantees that are conditionally approved. I'll cover what that means very shortly. And the next group of conditions are statement of work related conditions. And the last group of conditions are pertaining to your budget.

So OK, conditionally approved funding. All grant applicants are required to submit a completed Financial System Assessment form, or FSA. Grantees that did not provide FSA forms are provided one but incomplete. These grantees received conditionally approved funding.

Also, grantees that are new to ETA, their funding are also conditionally approved. This means that these grantees are placed on drawdown restrictions and can only access up to 80,000 (dollars) of their grant's funds until they resolve condition one. Condition one is – (inaudible) – condition of the (one page ?) in the grant award package.

The release of additional funds, up to the amount approved for the budget, will be based on the grantee's ability to address condition one. Until condition one is resolved, the grantees authorized – (inaudible) – about 80,000 (dollars).

So submission of the requested information – (inaudible) – condition one does not in itself constitute approval by ETA. The restriction will be lifted only when condition is resolved – condition one is resolved, and that the provided documentation is found accurate and satisfactory. Please work with your FPO on this one. They can really provide you some really guidance and assistance in this.

So the next group of conditions are relating to your statement of work. Please note that when chief – (inaudible) – have received all of the conditions noted in the slide – let's see. You should not worry if you don't see a specific addition listed here in your grant – (inaudible) – award. It would simply mean that you met the specific requirement.

So Ayreen and I both share our present in the section. So Ayreen, your time.

MS. CADWALLADER: Sure. Thank you so much, Brinda. And again, these are some of the statement of work related conditions (we call ?) – things that we found from your statement of work that we either had additional follow-up questions and/or wanted grantees to confirm your understanding of the policy that was noted in the funding opportunity announcement.

So the first one is acknowledging that your apprenticeship – your proposed apprenticeship model will meet the five hallmarks of quality apprenticeship programs. Again, not all grantees receive this condition so you may not have seen this.

The second one is we asked grantees to clarify the type of apprenticeship training model that was proposed in your – (inaudible) – statement of work. Our team here at DSI did comb through and we tried to identify the apprenticeship training model as much as possible. And so as part of your condition, we wanted grantees to clarify that training model. And this will really help us to further tailor our technical assistance to meet your needs in responding to the apprenticeship training model that you are providing.

We did provide guidance here on the allowable use of grant funds for pre-apprenticeship. I know that is a question that was posed in the chat window. So pre-apprenticeship training is not identified – (inaudible) – allowable grant-funded activity in the funding opportunity announcement. Therefore, in the conditions of award we provided guidance that pre-apprenticeship training activities can be provided with leveraged funds only.

And so we also provided guidance that individuals enrolled in pre-apprenticeship training – that individuals must receive grant-funded services in addition to being enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship training program that is paid for using leveraged funds. Those individuals can be counted as a participant for the purposes of the grant.

And so we do acknowledge that this may be an area of concern. And so please reach out to your FPO to discuss further. And again, we'd be open to talking to the grantees on a one-off basis to further clarify how pre-apprenticeship could be incorporated into your grant.

Again, like I mentioned, some of the conditions of award was used to ensure that you're fully informed of the specific policies required by the grant. These are the participant eligibility, participant co-enrollment, and grantee participation in the national evaluation.

We also provide the grantees with the option to revise your work plan if specific start dates were noted in your work plan before March 1.

Brinda?

MS. RUGGLES: OK. Thank you, Ayreen. The other use of – the other (wonderful ?) use of funds for supportive services. Grantees may use up to 10 percent of grant funds only to provide supportive services. Examples of supportive services could be transportation, such as transportation cards or tokens, child care and housing, to mention a few here.

Please note that only individuals who are participating in education and training activities provided through this grant, and only when they are unable to obtain such services through other programs, and such services are necessary to enable individuals to participate in education and training activities, may receive supportive services and associated costs; again, not to exceed 10 percent of grant funds.

The other one is the use of grant funds to support wages for apprentices for businesses with 50 or fewer employees only. So organizations may only use grant funds to reimburse a portion of the apprentice's work-based learning costs for small employers. Again, small employers is defined as those with 50 or fewer employees.

For those businesses that have more than 50 employees, grant funds may not be used to reimburse work-based learning costs. The negotiated reimbursement percentage of work-based learning costs may be as high as 50 percent of the participant's hourly rate for employers with 50 or fewer employees.

Ayreen?

MS. CADWALLADER: Great. Thank you so much, Brinda. And then the last statement of work related condition is performance outcome measures. And again, each grant has different areas of concerns. Some can be as minor as mathematical cumulative outcomes from the annual or it would be also provided – for those of you that it applied to, there are definitions that we provided for some of the target performance outcomes so that you can – so that information can help you further review if your target outcomes are where you'd like them to be.

I do want to point out that ETA generally does not reduce – we don't reduce grantees' proposed outcome measures, since these grants were competitively awarded and the grants were awarded based on the strength of your application, including your proposed target number of participants that you proposed to serve.

So if you do have specific questions related to the performance target outcome measures specific to your conditions of award, please again let your FPO know so that we can discuss further.

So moving on to the next slide is how we will process and approve these statement of work related conditions of award. Your responses must be submitted to both your FPO and the ETA Apprenticeship: Closing the Skills Gap mailbox at closingskillsgap@dol.gov within 30 days of the receipt of the grant award. But we acknowledge that this might require some additional time. So please let your FPO know, and as long as we're aware that you're working on them and that I think we have the flexibility for – to meet your individual needs as needed.

All right. And here I'll – (inaudible) – back to Brinda.

MS. RUGGLES: Thank you, Ayreen. Thank you. OK. Conditions of award – (inaudible) – match. So one of the screening criteria for this funding opportunity is the 45 percent match requirement. So if the applicant did not meet that requirement, the application is considered incomplete and nonresponsive and not move forward through the merit review process. So you all met that 45 percent match requirement. So I would really like to spend some time on this.

So in accordance with the funding opportunity announcement, it says that all grantees are required to provide and expend cash funds committed specifically to support this grant project, not prior investments; in-kind or third party resources equivalent to exactly 45 percent of the grant award amount as matching funds.

All matching funds or contributions must be expended on allowable grant activities and in accordance with the cost principles outlined in the uniform guidance at 2 CFR 200. Match must meet the requirements found in 2 CFR 200 and there is a lot of sections there which your FPO will go over that with you in depth.

But specifically, I want to mention 2 CFR 2900.8 which is the – (inaudible) – exceptions. It requires that match is recognized at the time in which the funds are expended. So matching funds revenue or contribution are recognized when expended on grant activities and valued at the amount expended, not received.

So for example, your award is 5 million (dollars). The 45 percent required match is 2 million, 250,000 (dollars). This amount – this match amount – is only considered matched when it's been expended on allowable activities by the end of the period of performance of this grant, which is February 24, 2024.

When the match funds expended do not equal to the 45 percent match requirement, you will be responsible for reimbursing ETA that amount of unmet match. When the grant is closed, there will be a debt owed to the government and subject to debt collection. So – (inaudible) – require you to work very closely with your partners, especially those that committed to the match requirement.

And again, you're not alone. So please work with your FPO. They can provide you guidance and technical assistance as you form partnerships with your partners that committed match – or will commit match. That's very important to remember.

OK. Your grant award package also included the terms and conditions of your grant, starting with the order of precedence, if there is income (flex ?) in federal law required; this is followed by any other applicable federal statutes in the implementing regulations; and finally, by the terms and conditions of your award.

Next is the reference to the funding opportunity announcement – or FOA – and amendment one, followed by other pertinent grant information.

There are five attachments to the grant agreement: the SF-424, 424A, budget narrative, statement of work, and the indirect cost rate agreement, if applicable.

One very important term of your grant deals with equipment purchases. ETA defines equipment as any tangible personal property, including information technology systems, with a per-unit acquisition cost of 5,000 (dollars) or more, and a useful life of more than one year. This includes the purchases of automatic data processing equipment.

Grantees must receive prior approval from the grant officer to purchase any equipment. Even if the request to purchase equipment is already specified in your statement of work or budget, prior approval is still required. You are to submit a detailed list describing the equipment you plan to purchase for your program to your FPO for review as early as possible in the period of performance. Your FPO will review these items and submit the list for approval. Modifications to your grant will be processed approving the equipment purchase.

Attachments A, B, and C of the grant agreement contains SF-424, 424A, and budget narrative, respectively. All three of these documents were taken from your proposal.

Attachment D is your statement of work, commonly known as the SOW. This also comes from your application and includes the project narrative and all required attachments, such as the abstract; budget work plan, if included as a separate attachment; your performance outcomes table; and documentation of commitment from required private sector partners and optional partners that make up the apprenticeship partnership.

For those applicants claiming indirect costs, attachment E includes the negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, also known as the NICRA. So if you claimed indirect costs and did not provide the NICRA from your federal – (inaudible) – agency, you report on a 90-day temporary billing rate. If that is the case, please send your approved indirect cost rate agreement to your FPO.

Please note that until a negotiated agreement is received, spending on indirect costs will be limited to the lesser of either total indirect cost or 10 percent of the personnel budget. The remaining funds you claim as indirect costs which have been awarded for indirect costs are restricted and may not be used for any purpose until the awardee provides a signed copy of the NICRA or cost allocation plan.

That concludes my presentation. Any questions before I bring it back to Danielle? (Pause.)

MS. KITTRELL: All right. Any questions? (Pause.) All right. At this time we can certainly transition and we can pass things over to Denise to talk about grant modifications.

DENISE ROACH: All right. Hi, everyone. I hope everyone is doing very well this afternoon. I will be covering the grant modification process. So the process for modifying a grant can take between 30 and 60 days to complete and requested changes cannot be implemented until final approval from the grant officer is provided. This section will help you better understand (the staff ?).

Grant modification. Processing of grant modifications – oh, sorry. Processing a grant modification is vital in the grant process. During the next few slides I will outline the modification process, the what, why, how, and when.

That leads us to this question: What is a modification, or mod? It's a tool used to make a change to your grant agreement for clarity between the grantee, the regional office, and the national office.

Why should you do a mod? One reason would be a change in scope. Note that a change in scope is rare and not always approved. Your scope of work is based solely on the requirement outlined in the FOA and this is how you competitively won your grant. For instance, if your proposal was to create apprenticeship programs in cybersecurity and you would like to change the industry to cosmetology, this would not be allowable because this grant specifies the variety of H-1B industries and occupations that are allowable under this grant.

However, there are other types of changes to the scope that would be considered. Number one, a change in service area, expanding or shrinking the area to be served. Number two, a change of partners. Your partnership structure is crucial to the success of your grant. So it something happens to one of these partners, let us know immediately.

Number three, changes in the project management. If things have changed with key personnel, let us know immediately. And number four, target program outcomes. Proposing a change in your target number must be discussed with your FPO, the program office, and the grant officer. Please note that the request to modify the grant must only come from the authorized representative.

When the FPO receives a request for a mod, they will review the request. He or she will ask, how will services and staffing be impacted? Is the change effective and beneficial? What about the enrollments and expenditures? Are they on target? If not, why? Does the change conflict with the requirements of the FOA? Is it an allowable change? Prior to submitting the modification to the grant officer for approval, the FPO must first concur with the changes.

Requests must be submitted on the organizations letterhead and signed by the authorized representative at least 30 days prior to the effective date you are seeking. Include the modification purpose, why the modification is needed, and how the change will benefit the program, along with supporting/required documentation as needed.

Two requirements for supporting documentation. If the modification is to change the authorized representative, the letter should not come from the new or incoming AR. The letter should come instead from either the departing AR that has not left the organization yet, or someone in a supervisory or oversight role over the AR; for example, the president of the board of directors or, in educational institutions, the president of the university.

And second, if a budget realignment modification is being submitted, you are required to provide a revised SF-424, SF-424A, and a budget narrative. The budget narrative should have a clear, delineated description of costs associated with each line item on the SF-424A, and a narrative format which aligns with the subtotals and total provided in the narrative, and aligns with the totals indicated on the SF-424A. It should also justify amounts and changes requested. The amounts listed in the budget narrative should match the amounts listed for each line item on the SF-424A. When in doubt, always consult your FPO for guidance.

To recap, to submit a modification you should start by discussing the potential mod with your FPO. This will save you a lot of time. After that, you will draft a letter of request addressed to your grant officer. The letter should be written on your organization's letterhead and include the modification type, the CSG grant number, and justification for the requested modification. Your FPO will review the letter and provide feedback if needed. A final letter signed by your signatory should be submitted to your FPO, who will then forward it to the grant officer.

Your FPO will be the first to review your modification request. They will provide feedback on your request letter and then submit it to the regional grant officer for approval if it's a simple budget modification or equipment purchase.

If it is more complicated – if it's a more complicated modification, your FPO will send your request to the national grant office for final review and approval, after the regional management team provides their OK. (Limited ?) SOW changes also require review by the program office. Your FPO will send these requests to the program office for review. The grant officer will review the request and may ask for additional information or revision. If there are no additional questions, the grant officer reviews and signs the modification. Both you and your FPO will receive a copy of the signed modification via email.

There's more detailed information about submitting a modification in your grantee handbook, so please use it as your guide when submitting modifications.

And that concludes my portion of it. And I will turn this over to – no, let me ask if anybody has any questions. If not, then we'll turn it over to Greg. (Pause.)

MS. KITTRELL: Hey, Denise. It's Danielle. I believe we did have several questions for Brinda.

MS. ROACH: OK.

MS. KITTRELL: So Brinda, the first one is, "When should we expect to hear decisions on our response submission to conditions?" So Brinda or Denise?

MS. RUGGLES: OK. Thank you, Danielle. So, "When should we expect to hear a decision on our response submission to conditions?" OK. So what happens is when you submit the required information to your FPO, and when the FPO finds the information accurate and sufficient, we will then process a grant modification. And you will receive by email – the authorized rep and the contact for this grant, they will receive a copy of that grant modification. And that's how you would know that you've resolved that condition.

MS. KITTRELL: All right. Great. I think we had another question for you. "What is the timeline to receive annual funds? We have institutional restrictions for actively hiring personnel without adequate funds."

MS. RUGGLES: Sure. First let me say that for those who – for grantees that are conditionally approved, you have access to only 80,000 (dollars) of your grant funds. The sooner you resolve those conditions, the quicker you can have access to the rest of your funds.

So I mentioned earlier the Payment Management System. The letter that you received, it outlines there on how you can access your grant funds, either if you're a new user or – a new account, excuse me. New to DOL and you have to create a new account in the Payment Management System. Or you are an existing grantee or have previously received grants from DOL and there's a section there for existing accountholders. So read that document and it'll walk you through the process on how to access those funds.

Specific to as to how much you can draw down, please work with your FPO and they can provide you (super ?) guidance on that one. Thank you.

MS. KITTRELL: Thank you so much, Brinda. OK and Robin, I'm going to ask you one question. "Because IT is one of our areas, including cyber, would it be permissible to have an apprenticeship experience remotely?"

MS. FERNKAS: Hi there. I think we – we are working on some guidance around that with the Office of Apprenticeship. It's a great question and I think that we definitely can work with you on how to make that happen, because we recognize that that's an occupation that definitely can be done remotely. So I would just say stay tuned and we'll give out more specific guidance soon.

MS. KITTRELL: Perfect. All right. Thank you so much, Robin. So with that, I know we have some other questions, but in lieu of time – time is flying by. I'm going to go ahead and pass things over to Greg, our performance guru.

GREGORY SCHEIB: I don't know about that, Danielle. But hey, everybody. This is Greg. It's good to be with all of you this afternoon. I'm just going to go briefly over a couple of things about performance reporting. And let's see here.

We first of all just want to talk about, obviously, I mean, performance management and performance reporting is a key component of managing your grants and tracking reporting on outcomes to us. It's obviously important for lots of reasons, including demonstrating the impact of our grant programs, documenting the results of program design models and service delivery strategies, providing information on the success of our programs to the White House and Congress and all sorts of other stakeholders.

And of course, it also helps you in terms of making informed decision – data-driven decisions to improve your own programs. So there are just many reasons why, obviously, performance takes – can often be seen as kind of front and center with things.

In terms of closing the skills gap, as part of your awards you guys are required to submit a performance progress report to ETA on a quarterly basis. The reports must be submitted on time each period in order to comply with the reporting and recordkeeping requirements that are part of your grant awards.

Each grantee must submit their quarterly progress reports, which actually includes two pieces. There's a quarterly performance report, which is your qualitative numbers for your grant; and a quarterly narrative report, which is an opportunity for you to describe the good things that you are doing in your program and also any challenges or things that you have – you may be facing.

You'll also be submitting a final report at the end of the grant. And you'll certainly get a lot more information about grant closeout, which is a long way off yet. But the reports are generally the same format as your quarterly reports, just a little more detailed in summarizing up the entirety of your grant.

So for those of you who have had DOL grants before, these dates may be familiar to you. If you're a newer grantee, these are our quarterly end dates and when these reports are due. The quarterly progress reports are due no later than 45 days from the end of each quarter. And each quarter you're going to be reporting on the activities that occurred through that reporting quarter.

So for example, our next reporting quarter is May 15th and grantees will be reporting on activities that happened – under other circumstances – from January 1 to – January, February, March – March 31st of that quarter.

For this first reporting quarter you're going to be reporting on activities that occurred starting with the grant until the last day of this reporting cycle. So for you guys it's a little funny. Since you all started on March 1st, you're only literally going to be reporting on four weeks' worth of work, which is not a whole lot, especially at the starting of a grant. But nonetheless, we'd like you to fill out the quarterly narrative report and tell us about what's going on in terms of your grant startup. Those reports are going to be due on May 15th of next month.

Let's see here. So we are going to be in some interim reporting guidance for now. And this will change somewhat as you guys come online. Eventually, you will all be submitting your quarterly progress reports – both your quarterly narrative reports and your quarterly performance reports – through the Workforce Integrated Performance System, or WIPS.

So every quarter it really is two pieces. It's a quarterly performance report is basically generated in WIPS with the participant data that you submit every quarter. And then there's also quarterly narrative report that you will actually upload into the WIPS system, and that is used to help in particular – to help us identify technical assistance needs you may have, challenges, and certainly successes as well.

In preparation for reporting participant performance in WIPS, grantees are going to need to start collecting and tracking participant-level data on demographics and services and training and all the other things that you need to track for your participants. We're not going to be going into any detail today about this, but do rest assured that we have extensive technical assistance materials and we have a number of upcoming webinars in the works to get you guys up to speed on what you'll be reporting – (inaudible) – reporting and answer your questions.

For the time-being, as I sort of alluded to – for right now, this first quarter it's a little different just because of a number of a number of factors, one being that you've only had a few weeks under your belt with this grant.

In future quarters you will be submitting the quarterly narrative reports and your quarterly performance reports in WIPS, as I mentioned. But in this first quarter what you're going to be doing is you're going to be submitting your quarterly narrative report directly to your FPO and copying the Closing the Skills Gap address that you see here on the screen. In future quarters you'll be submitting that into the WIPS system.

As far as participant data files, chances are the majority of you probably do not have participants yet. If you do in fact have participants yet, we'd want you to be collecting data on those folks, but you won't be submitting any data this quarter. The way the WIPS system works is that in the following quarter, which will be August 15th, you'll just submit all the information you have from the start of the grant through that quarter, which is typically how you would be submitting participant information into WIPS.

Wow. That's it. You know, I just would like – I would just say that performance can be a little bit daunting at first, especially when you're just getting your grants, getting going. But we have a lot of expertise in our performance team and we are going to be offering extensive technical assistance and lots of resources to you to make sure that transition into performance reporting goes as smooth as possible.

So with that, certainly if there's any questions that we can try to answer, we will try to do that. And I'm going to go ahead and pass it back to Danielle.

MS. KITTRELL: All right. Thank you, Greg, so much for that great presentation. You guys, I'm going to keep things moving but keep your questions coming.

But we did have a question from Michael Maklin (ph), "Do you have to submit a quarterly report if the condition of award hasn't been approved by the end of the quarter?" Now, Greg, you touched on this, but the answer is yes, essentially. You do.

MR. SCHIEB: Correct.

MS. KITTRELL: OK. All righty. OK guys. So transitioning to talk about communication, your communication plan.

So now as you begin to hire your staff it's very importance to provide the staff's contact information to ETA as soon as possible. Again, as soon as possible. We recommend that you have at least one primary project point of contact – or POC.

And one of the most important members of your team is the individual you designate as your primary point of contact. And this is because they will receive all future communications regarding training webinars, policy guidance, or any other important information as it pertains to the program aspects of your grant award. So that POC is very, very important. The POC is also responsible to communicate with the consortium members and partners.

Now, if your project POC happens to change, please make sure to provide updated information to both your FPO and the program office by email. We can't stress this enough. Please let us know if your POC changes. And please also note that the POC is an additional staff person or persons for the grant's authorized representative who is officially listed as the grant's authorized rep. So changing the authorized rep of your grant, it does require a formal modification. So please remember that. Changing your authorized rep, it does require a formal modification.

So now let's talk about your communication plans more. So now you should always contact your FPO first. If you have any questions, to check Workforce GPS for resources. And if you are the grant lead, you want to contact who? You want to contact your FPO.

Now, if you have any questions or difficulty assessing the WIPS performance system, as Greg talked about, please email wioa.feedback@dol.gov, and make sure to always copy your FPO and the Closing the Skills Gap grants mailbox.

Now, if you have any questions or difficulty assessing the financial reporting system, please email ebss.help@dol.gov. And make sure you copy who else? Your FPO and the actually Closing the Skills Gap grants mailbox.

Now if you have any questions about evaluations, please email the grant mailbox as well and copy your FPO.

So now, also as the grantee, when you need to contact the ETA national office or the program office, you should do so by contacting your FPO first. Contact your FPO first and copy the Closing the Skills Gap grant mailbox as appropriate.

Three things we want to remind you of, OK? That first one is, include your grant number and the lead grantee organization name. We can't stress that enough, all right? Make sure you please try to be as brief as possible when describing your question or your issue. And please, last but not least, be patient with us. We have so many different grant programs that it sometimes takes us a while, but we'll get back with you. Just be patient with us.

So now typically ETA, they will contact you through your FPO and the Closing the Skills Gap mailbox for basic requests and information. So FPOs and the national office regularly send out email blasts to you, so please make sure that your email system does not confuse our email communication system as spam.

We get this all the time. Grantees say they didn't receive our email, but sometimes it does go to your spam mailbox. So please be on the lookout for that. Now one way to do that is to also send an email to the closingskillsgap@dol.gov, which can help your system recognize emails coming from our mailbox as legitimate communications.

So now in addition to that, we like to share information to the CoP, or community of practice, on Workforce GPS. Now be patient with us because we are still in the process of setting up the CoP. But once it is set up, you'll want to visit often for pertinent and very important information. So now you can actually go to WorkforceGPS.org right now and go ahead and register and get your account set up. And go ahead and take a look at some of those other resources that are now available to you.

All right. So with that I'm going to have Ayreen close us out. Ayreen?

MS. CADWALLADER: Danielle, thank you so much. So rather quickly, just next steps for grantees. Please respond to your conditions of award in your grant award package. Please send them to your FPO with a courtesy copy to the closingskillsgap@dol.gov mailbox.

There was a question about the timeline for when you can expect to hear back. Again – (inaudible) – process these as soon as they are – as soon as we receive them. But as Danielle mentioned, please be patient with us on our end as we address all that come through.

Please review the Department of Labor's fiscal training tutorials from the SMART 3.0 Webinar Training Series. Especially if you're new to Department of Labor and receiving our grants, these training tutorials would be really helpful to support you in your financial management aspect of managing your grant.

Again, a reminder to have the grantee handbook and the Rise Module readily available and accessible to you as refresher and/or if you have new staff on board. These would be great resources to have.

(Inaudible) – interim performance reporting guidance for the quarter ending March 31st via email in the next week, so please be on the lookout for that. It will include the quarterly narrative report template that you will use to report for this reporting quarter.

And then we'll also, as Greg mentioned, we'll be providing detailed technical assistance on performance reporting as we get closer to our performance deadline.

Again, your funding opportunity announcement – the Closing the Skills Gap FOA – is your policy document to refer to, as well as your statement of work, what you had originally proposed. And please update your grant's points of contact. Again, we've received those folks – (inaudible) – but if you had additional people that you'd like to add, please certainly send that our way.

Here are the resources that we referenced in today's webinar in this handy-dandy guide. They're also included as web links on this webinar platform.

We did respond to a lot of the questions that we received via the chat window. If you have anymore, please send it our way and we can follow up shortly after this webinar.

But we are very much at the end of our presentation. So on behalf of our team here – at one minute left – I do want to thank everyone for being available for today's live webinar. We had about 100 people plus that were – that logged into this presentation and we're very excited, again, to meet you all and to work with you within the next four years.

With that I'll turn it over to Laura.

(END)