**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Success Factors and Characteristics of High-Quality Apprenticeships**

**Closing The Skills Gap Grants**

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GRACE MCCALL: And welcome to "Success Factors and Characteristics of High-Quality Apprenticeships, Closing The Skills Gap Grants."

So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over today's moderator, Danielle Kittrell, Workforce analyst, division of strategic investments, United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Take it away, Danielle.

DANIELLE KITTRELL: Well, thank you so much, Grace. I appreciate that lovely introduction. And good afternoon, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us this afternoon for this webinar. Again, my name is Danielle Kittrell, and I have the pleasure of serving as your moderator for today. I'm going to go ahead and introduce our speakers for the hour.

And first, I'm happy to introduce Maya Kelley, who was our unit chief for the H-1B program, house, and the division of strategic investments also known as DSI. I'm also excited to introduce Ayreen Cadwallader your grant lead, also in the division of strategic investments, or DSI.

We have two special speakers today as well, two of your colleagues. And the first I'm happy to introduce is Mr. Verne Futagawa who is the project director at Alamo Colleges District for the healthcare apprenticeship partnership grant. We also have Mr. Orion Schuh, who is the program manager for the BASIC Project at Southern Utah University. So we're so glad to have all of you all speaking with us today.

Now, what we want to do is I want to go over a couple objectives with you all today just to hit the high notes. And the first one is, we want to review the characteristics of high-quality apprenticeship programs as a refresher for you. We also want to give you a foundational knowledge on the success factors of apprenticeship programs.

And most importantly, we want to make sure that we answer any questions that you may have today. Now, we have a little quiz for you we like to say, well really it's just a poll. So which of the five components has your program made the most progress so far? And thank you Grace for bringing up the poll for us. Which of the five components has your program made the most progress so far? Is it maybe the paid or base component?

Would you say it's the work-based learning and mentorship, educational and instructional component? Maybe it's the industry-recognized credentials earned? Or would you say it's safety supervision and employment opportunities? OK. I see educational and instructional components. All right? That's always good to know. Hey, work-based component. That's good. Good. Keep the votes coming in for us.

All right. And if you recognize credentials earned at 6 percent. Interesting, work-based learning, and mentorship 12 percent. All right. Well, that's good to hear. So it looks like the winner is the educational and instructional component, which is excellent. I'm glad to see that. All right. Grace, we move on to the second poll question. Now, which of the five components has your program made the least progress so far?

And it's okay, to be honest, we're here to help you with that. The least progress, work-based learning, and mentorship. Not surprised to hear that at all. Just in safety supervision and equal employment coming in. All right. Work-based components. Interesting. Work-based learning and mentorship that's picking up a little bit there. Picking up a lot, actually. Interesting.

All right. So it looks like the winner there is work-based learning and mentorship. That's all right. That's why we're here today to help you guys out. All right. Thank you for that poll, Grace. We're going to go ahead and move on. And what I'm going to do I'm going to pass things over to my colleague, Maya Kelley. Maya, please take it away.

MAYA KELLEY: Thanks, Danielle. Good morning or afternoon, everyone. As Danielle mentioned, as a refresher, we would like to review with you the five characteristics of high-quality apprenticeships. Apprenticeship programs funded and developed under this grant program must have these characteristics which I will cover next.

So first, we have the paid work-based component. And this should be designed to pay apprentices at least the applicable federal, state, or local minimum wage, or federally approved stipend under federal wage requirements if otherwise applicable. So apprenticeship programs include wage progression information, apprenticeship programs also address how they will provide apprentices, the opportunity to gain upward mobility in the industry.

And an example of a best practice here would be an apprenticeship agreement that clearly defines the terms and conditions for starting wages and any bonuses or increases given for milestones and wage expectations upon completion of the apprenticeship, including transition from apprenticeship to permit employee.

Next, we have work-based learning and mentorship. For this one, an important aspect of apprenticeship programs is offering apprentices the opportunity to apply what they are learning to their work through well designed and highly structured work experiences. Additionally, apprenticeship programs provide mentors to support apprentices and provide guidance or an industry or company culture and industry or workplace policies and procedures.

So here a best practice would be a training program as a living ecosystem that easily adapt to changes in industry, technology, workflow, etc. For the educational and instructional component, this should provide or arrange for classroom or related instruction. This instruction should be high quality to ensure that all apprentices achieve their proficiency goal and earn credentials and earn certifications or equivalent credentials.

So here a best practice would be classroom and online-related instruction that is aligned to employer defined competencies, skill, and performance. Next, we have industry recognized credentials earned. Apprentices must earn industry-recognized credentials as part of their apprenticeship program and these credentials must be portable. And finally, the last component is safety, supervision, and equal employment opportunities.

As a reminder, all apprenticeship programs should have policies and procedures in place to ensure a safe working environment that adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local safety, employment, and equal opportunity laws and regulations. So here, best practice would be supervision, where the program would provide sufficient mentors and trainers for apprentices consistent with proper supervision, training, safety, and continuity of employment through the apprenticeship.

Next, I'd like to turn it over to one of our featured panelists for today. I'm going to turn it over to Verne, from Alamo Colleges District to provide an overview of their apprenticeship program and how it aligns with the characteristics of high-quality apprenticeships. Take it away, Verne.

VERNE FUTAGAWA: Well, thank you very much. Thanks everybody and thanks colleagues and peers. So let me go and advance the slide. I'm Verne Futagawa. I am at Alamo Colleges District in San Antonio and here's a little bit about the grant. So we opted to go with the healthcare apprenticeship. And our service area is the San Antonio metropolitan statistical area.

And our geographic reach is going to be San Antonio and the counties around that. So what we did is we looked at the need and we saw that healthcare within the San Antonio region continues to be high demand sector and will continue to look that way in the future. So as our grant writers looked at this, we focused initially on six healthcare occupations and we were awarded a $1 million portion of the H-1B closing the skills gap grant.

So when we did our market analysis, we took a look at these healthcare patients, medical assistants, pharmacy, radiology tech, community health workers, medical billing and coding, and health information technology. And what happens is as a result of continued conversations with our employer partners and prospective employer partners, what we started noting is they kept bringing up three additional occupations that weren't on the six original list.

So I want to give a shout-out to our FPO, Edgar Garcia. He has helped me with the grant modification process. This is the first one that I've put through. And he has helped me out tremendously with that. So we're going to be adding certified nursing assistant, patient care technician, and surgical technicians also so I have that routing for approval. Our program goal is a large one so we need to have within this four-year period have 800 participants served we need to start at least six apprenticeships.

So prior to this grant Alamo Colleges did not have any healthcare apprenticeships so that is our goal and we want to have at least 12 employer partners. And I'm going to expand on this a little bit in our next slide because 12 is going to be nowhere near the employer partnerships that we need to have to meet our 800 target. One of the huge goals that we have here is to expand knowledge and the acceptance of apprenticeship model in healthcare industry.

And I think this is very important because the knowledge and just awareness of apprenticeships in the healthcare industry is very low. I have been in healthcare for a number of years. I'm a registered dietician by training. And quite frankly, I had not heard of apprenticeships. I was also involved in training our enlisted medical technicians in the Air Force and even then I was not available -- aware of apprenticeships, I was more aware of clinical externships, internships, those kinds of things.

So our key partners, of course, are going to be the employers and the other key partners that I found that are huge to get us in front of the prospective employers are the City of San Antonio intermediaries; not only the City of San Antonio but the individuals that actually execute some of the workforce development program. So here are some of the intermediates that we have here and the one that I want to highlight also is a Biomed SA board, Biomedical San Antonio; they have been very instrumental in identifying some perspective employers for me.

So that's a consortium of biomedical technology companies, which is San Antonio. So that's a little bit about our background -- about our grant. And I will go ahead and talk about some of the characteristics of high-quality internships and where we are. So I want to do Truth in Lending before I get started on these five characteristics.

To date, I have really one commitment from a small employer, the other medium-size and large employers with respect to a commitment we are in discussion. So I don't have anybody that we had a participant that I had to upload or input into our case management system. But there's significant discussion going on with small, medium and large employers. So the first one, I'll talk about is paid work-based component.

And what I have found is the larger employers for this grant anyway, larger is going to be 51 or more employers, or employees when they find out that they are responsible for the entirety of the wage, I get questions like, well, what's in it for us kind of thing? And that's where some of the discussions go on about how an apprenticeship will benefit the employer. For our grant anyway, our portion of the grant we have really two options to go with the unregistered and the registered apprenticeship program.

The registered apprenticeship program, we don't have any healthcare registered apprenticeships in San Antonio. So this is an opportunity for me to have some engaging discussion with the employers about that. And the other one that's on the table right now that is really new that we're exploring is the IRAPs. So I'm asking different entities about their possibility of becoming an SRE so that's where we are.

Small employers when they know that there's a wage offset they are much more receptive. So I found that the smaller employers might be the niche that I really need to focus on. The next one is work-based learning mentorship and what I do with this is I ask them to take a look at their current training programs and how is their mentorship and traineeship working? Because the essence of a successful apprenticeship is going to be that mentorship and making sure that they have the learning opportunities.

So I talk about their current training program and there's something that we can weave very seamlessly into that. The education or instructional component, Alamo Colleges District has all the educational, the didactic programs to offer for an associate's degree or a certificate for the six healthcare occupations that we have. And to meet the 800 number I'm sure I will have some graduates coming from the other educational school systems around here proprietary as well as public school systems.

And they also have high-quality educational programs around here. The industry-recognized credential earned. This is where it's unique to the healthcare profession because what what's happening is in the healthcare world before anybody even gets an opportunity to touch a patient, generally, the employer wants to ensure that they have their requisite certification. So that's the uniqueness here. And part of the discussion with the employer is when do we want to bring an apprentice on board?

Is it going to be before they have their certification or after? If it is after maybe they need a couple more courses or some certification like with patient privacy to update that. And lastly, safety supervision, what we usually look at is the registered apprenticeship safety agreements. And that's in there for IRAP.

For an unregistered apprenticeship that's where I'm working with our legal team to have a robust employer agreement so it spells out the safety, supervision, and the EEO requirements. And my last slide really talks about where we are right now. So just to give everybody an update, I know we have a lot of conversations about the upload into the WIP system. We're getting the one flow system that is a case management system.

And the thing that I really enjoy about this too is that it has an H-1B extract that can be uploaded in WIPs and they have tech support so we'll be using that as our case management system. As I had mentioned before, we're looking at researching the viability of the IRAP model. I think this really lends itself -- this model lends itself to healthcare because of the uniqueness of when an individual is certified in the area of healthcare, essentially training has been externalized to the educational system.

So we need to take advantage of the IRAP system. And I've aligned myself with the academic advisory boards in identifying some of the employer needs and that's how I was able to see the additional three occupations that are in demand in the area. We're partnering with the city and the intermediaries to identify some potential employers and the city has some interesting and exciting opportunities with respect to relief to bring the city back economically. So I'm taking a look at all opportunities to add to the employer funding for this.

And finally, I just want to say that we're in a good situation right now. The Alamo Colleges Districts' chancellor his vision is really ending poverty in San Antonio. And this grant aligns very well with that to get certain individuals, underserved individuals into medium and high paying jobs and that's what this grant is specifically aligned for. So If I don't have any questions. I'm going to move on to the next slide. Any questions?

MS. KITTRELL: Great. Yeah. Thank you so much for that great presentation. And for me from a grants management standpoint, we're so happy to hear that you have a good working relationship with your SPO, we love to hear that. And I believe we do have a couple questions for you from, Katie, the first one. I have a question for, Verne on the work-based component, did you work with Texas Workforce Commission in finding other grants or employers who want to participate?

MR. FUTAGAWA: So I've actually been talking to many people in addition to Texas Workforce Commission. There's some resources out there, the HCAP individuals, I think I saw Rebecca on this. So I'm talking to as many people as I can to help me find additional funding. I'm casting a wide net, looking at things like Kaiser Family Foundation. I just need to understand the route to request additional funding, grant funding.

So there's all different kinds of opportunities. I really just started going after the private funding as well as the grant funding because repeatedly employers have said without external funding I'm really not in a position at this point especially with the uncertainty with COVID their revenue stream is a little tenuous at this time.

MS. KITTRELL: Thank you for that. And then we'll take one more question. We're at the 30-minute mark. And it's just simply, what case management system are you referring to? Or which one are you using?

MR. FUTAGAWA: So the parent company is called Empyra. And the system is actually called OneFlow. So my boss, Dr. Sammi Morrill is an individual that really talks highly about this and I've had several conversations with them. So it's OneFlow, the parent company Empyra, and it's a integrated case management system that will really track an individual from the point of eligibility and entry. And we can walk them throughout the entirety of their apprenticeship. What really attracted me to this was their tech support that will help with the upload into WIPs.

MS. KITTRELL: That's awesome. So again, that's the OneFlow system. Thank you so much, Verne. We are going to move on to the next portion of the presentation. And you all please keep your questions coming. Verne, I see you have a lot of questions coming up here in the chat line, which is great.

You guys keep them coming, it will give, Verne a chance to answer some out there in the chat or definitely during the next portion of the open questions during the presentations. So now this time, we're going to transition to the apprenticeships, closing the skills gaps success factors. And what I'm going to do, I'm going to pass things over to my colleague, Maya, and Ayreen. So, Maya, you're up first.

MS. KELLEY: Thanks, Danielle. All right. So we have just covered the five characteristics of high-quality apprenticeships. And now we will expand our conversation to look at factors that will help you be successful with all aspects of the grant. The success factors identified key areas that the closing the skills gap grantees can focus on to support success. The success factors will guide technical assistance efforts, and grantees can use them for self-assessment.

And over the many years of us supporting grantees we've observed that organizations and staff that effectively engage in the activities described here are more likely to be successful. So in the next few slides, you'll provide an overview of the success factors. And you'll note that the factors are organized logically not listed by rank. And the bolded factors are ones for which grantees should focus on during the early stages of their work.

So first up, we have success factor one, strong organizational management. Grant success is supported by effective use of personnel resources, and communication to implement and operate a high-quality project. A few of those success factors of strong organizational management include all of these points listed here but in terms of the early focus, we'd like to call out identifying and onboarding grant-funded staff in a timely manner.

Instituting strong grant fiscal management practices, having project staff utilize sound project management tools, and maintaining communication with the federal project officer. So here were our second success factor, strong operational system. The practice of data-driven decision making, program evaluation, and continuous improvement, and data collection tools that are integrated into project design supports grant success.

Here, I'd like to highlight the following three factors of strong operational systems. Identifying and using a performance management system, implementing data collection tools and processes, and training staff on the performance management system and data collection tools and processes.

Now I'll turn it over to Ayreen to cover the next few success factors. Ayreen?

AYREEN CADWALLADER: Hi good afternoon, everyone. And I'm really excited to be on this call today. And really appreciate the comments on the chat and the questions that you've had for, Verne thus far. The third success factor that I wanted to address here in the way you're managing your grant programs are really to ensure that sustainability principles are woven into your grant program design, from day one.

As you know, H-1B grants are designed to have a greater level of flexibility along the lines of the funding opportunity announcement, of course. So that you can use these grant funds for a lot of innovative uses. These grant funds can certainly be used as a sustainability tool for organizations to move forward or expand statewide, regional, or local initiatives; apply training strategies to meet the needs of workers and workforce strategies to meet employer needs for a skilled worker.

So the sustainability principles provided here can certainly be used as a guidepost in the way you incorporate these factors in your grant design. I do want to address the first two bullet points, as these are success factors that you can start to do now. Which is to really identify the grant-funded improvements in your programs, policies, and practices that you can target for ongoing sustainability, during and after the grants period of performance.

And I'm just going to slide right back because I'm still on sustainability principles. The second one is to implement ongoing communications with your stakeholders such as your organization's board members, your leadership, your training providers, and other service providers to really gather their thoughts and ideas for what can and should be sustained from your grants program design. The rest of the principles noted here can certainly help you expand your programs to new service areas or new industries and occupations.

Again, as you develop and implement innovative strategies to support your workers and employers. In the next slide are success factors for effective apprenticeship design and as we discussed earlier, grant success is supported by the effective implementation and ongoing operations of these new and/or expanded apprenticeship programs that incorporate the five characteristics of high-quality apprenticeship programs.

So the factors of effective apprenticeship design include understanding the labor market, and HR needs and goals of your employers and other partners. Engaging multiple employers in your proposed target sectors to design your apprenticeship programs that meet their needs; implementing formal and informal partnerships and/or subrecipient agreements with your employer partners and primary industry partners; and leveraging your employer partners' resources to advance your apprenticeship initiatives in your communities.

So there's other factors noted here which include mapping your training, design, and credentials to the competency models developed for your industry. Certainly having systems to document how your program adheres to the five characteristics of high-quality apprenticeship programs is important not only for grants management and monitoring but also for the sustainability factors that I discussed in the earlier slides.

And then the last two principles noted here, it's implementing systems for data-driven decision making, and then ensuring that if you are providing pre-apprenticeship opportunities or training activities, that these do prepare your apprentices to have the skills that they can use that will lead to their success in an apprenticeship program. Certainly, these factors are just as important. And with that, I'd like to turn it over to Danielle who'll go over our next success factor five, Danielle.

MS. KITTRELL: Sure. Thank you, Ayreen, so much everybody. And speaking of number five when you talk about effective partner engagement which is extremely important; right? That's what we have that we want to go ahead and hold the high points, so the most important points that we like to focus on here are the national office. Obviously, you want to coordinate those partner activities and the foreign partner relationships to the appropriate project and staff.

We can't stress that enough to really all of our grants, and DOL. Secondly, you want to continue to engage in regular communication with all partners, that is extremely important. So that means essentially special attention to employer and industry partners who are providing competency and credential identification. Those who provide a pay – (inaudible) – based component, on the job training. The providers of related training instructions, community partners who are providing support of other services that positively impact participant outcome.

So engaging and regular communication with all your important partners is very, very important. Now, number six, now one of our favorite success factors and that's when you talk about effective participant engagement with an apprenticeship experience. And again, we went ahead to bold the high points of these specific factors. So number one, you want to conduct effective outreach and recruitment. We can't stress that enough – (inaudible) – that it's extremely important.

We mean by understanding participants' needs challenges and their characteristics. We want to use best practices to recruit diverse participants very important. You want to employ effective assessors to match individuals with apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities. And then as you can see there you want to develop an onboarding process.

We want to implement a case management approach, which is what, Verne touched upon, and as tailored to work and learn opportunities which is also important. And we want to develop employment plans that outline the work experience and those -- the individual employment claims for each individual, which is very important. Now we know we went through that very quickly, but we also have a presentation that will be provided for you once we are complete with the webinar.

But now, we want to move on to the next feature of panelists and that is, Mr. Orion Schuh, again who was the program manager for the basic project at Southern Utah University. So, Mr. Schuh, you have the floor.

ORION SCHUH: Thank you very much. Hello, everybody. My name is Orion Schuh, and I'm the program manager here at Southern Utah University for the building apprenticeship systems in Cybersecurity project. And we received a $4 million four-year grant and have committed to serving 3,200 participants. We are working in southern Utah, in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

These are the regions that we're looking to serve in the energy and advanced manufacturing sectors of cybersecurity. So on the slide here, all right. So I've broken down some of the components of the program we're developing as they relate to the aspect of high-quality apprenticeship programs. So under the educational instructional component, every apprentice is going to take three cybersecurity courses offered here at Southern Utah University.

Southern Utah University is a National Security Agency Department of Homeland Security certified center of academic excellence in cyberdefense. We consult regularly with industry partners to review the content of the courses and keep them up to date. Some of the introductory topics that are covered in the courses are user awareness training. These are these are subjects that can benefit participants at any level of an organization, from entry-level to upper management.

Creating strong passwords, avoiding phishing attempts, securing logging information, avoiding suspicious software, securing personal information, securing software on systems, security updates, and patches; securing physical devices, preventing unauthorized access, locking computers – (inaudible). And then some of the more advanced topics that will be covered are layers of computer and network defense, such as firewall, intrusion detection systems, and policies and procedures such as acceptable use policy and access policy.

We are also in partnership with some training organizations; industry-leading training organizations in the energy and manufacturing sectors. And they are also experienced in providing training and certification with regard to industry-recognized credentials earned. The Participants will earn a cybersecurity certificate on successful completion of the SUU courses.

And our partners in industry training are also experienced in providing training that allows them to sit for certified portable and industry-recognized credentials exams. So if we move on the next slide, while we have not yet served any participants, we've mostly been focused on finalizing program and systems development. And so to that effect we have energy and manufacturing industry groups contracted to recruit employers.

One of those is EnergySec, and they've recently been designated as a Standards Recognition Entity allowing them to oversee industry-recognized apprenticeship programs. So right now, we're currently exploring that as an option to work under and considering submitting a modification to our work plan to allow for that. These industry-leading groups are heavily involved in our program development and participate in our weekly meetings.

We have a data group and a competency model group that – (inaudible). We also have the full consortium that meets semimonthly with the academic and industry partners. So we're currently developing a competency model. Two models, one for cybersecurity in the energy and one for cybersecurity in the manufacturing sector. Five-tier competency models adapting and in line with the DOL models.

We have three collaborating partners right now working to finish developing those. And we are also finalizing the contract execution for our data management system and the case management system, designed specifically for apprenticeships, it's called AGS – (inaudible). And we're trying to push that through and get that finalized.

We've received some training and up to this point, we've mostly been organizing our data governance policy, user access, and responsibility, and other procedures that we'll need in order to effectively serve 3,200 participants. That system also has the CSV exportable files that can be uploaded directly into – (inaudible).

So it seems to be very well-designed for this purpose and we're just looking forward to getting in that system and getting some participants very soon. So with regard to the work-based learning and mentorship, we have not made a whole lot of progress on that thus far. One thing that is going to help support the apprentices is we are hiring an apprenticeship navigator to advise the apprentices and help them navigate the program and coordinate articulation agreements with community colleges.

And of course, that will be meant to supplement mentorship received through their employer, which is something we still have work to do on. So that pretty much completes my overview of our program and how it relates to the aspects of apprenticeship programs. So if there are any questions, please feel free to ask.

MS. CADWALLADER: Orion, this is, Ayreen and this question can certainly go to Verne as well and we are at the second quarter of implementing our grant programs, actually third now that we're in October. But as you're looking at the apprenticeship model that you proposed originally. And then now that the Standards Recognition Entities are now in place, how are you looking at the IRAP models as a potential solution or as a potential way to add to your program design?

MR. FUTAGAWA: So I can take that a little bit, Ayreen. I'm going to give you my perspective on the registered apprenticeship program. So where we are now is, I started with going down two registered apprenticeships with pharmacy technician, as well as medical assistant; and some of the length of a registered apprenticeship a year and the fact that we went with competency-based and taking a look and approaching an employer about if somebody has an apprentice for a year.

So the rigidity associated with a registered apprenticeship program was a hard sell and I know it is for an employer when an employer is used to having an individual with a certification already coming to their door and applying. So they have no investment in training these individuals. So that was going to be hard. The IRAP, I see as a model that can fit healthcare because when we get these SREs together that's when they can go ahead and decide what are the apprenticeship standards.

So it's good. They will determine and they know already that these individuals have already graduated with associate's or certificate award program. But these are the gaps when they get these new graduates. Maybe they just need more training in the computerized system that let's say a local pharmacy has here. And it's not going to be necessarily a year. They want a full up employee, much sooner than a year.

So that's how I see working the SRE and fitting the IRAP into this. It'll be about how length of -- how long would a medical assistant be considered an apprentice? What are the standards? We already have some standards available from the Urban Institute as well as apprenticeship.gov. And we can tailor-make it to the competencies locally here in San Antonio. So that's how I went and started thinking about the IRAP here in San Antonio.

MS. CADWALLADER: Excellent. And so would you -- do you agree that perhaps IRAP is providing a little bit more flexibility for your employers to sign on to an apprenticeship program?

MR. FUTAGAWA: Ayreen, I think without a doubt. Some of the employers have experienced a hearing about IRAP -- I mean about a registered apprenticeship program and understand the rigidity of it. And when I tell them a year, they're like, oh, my goodness, my staffing needs are now it's not a year from now I think.

And I don't know how much paperwork is involved. I've heard some people tell me about the rapid system. So I want something that the employer knows that the administrivia will be borne by the sponsor, more so than by the employer. That's what I'm trying to address to them.

MS. CADWALLADER: Got it. And certainly, Orion, you had an earlier question about incorporating IRAP programs and I just wanted to repeat that to the rest of our grantee colleagues on the call. Certainly, industry-recognized apprenticeships are allowable under the H-1B closing the skills gap grants. If it was originally proposed as an apprenticeship program design model, you can certainly continue to do that.

But if you are exploring IRAPs and it was not originally proposed it would be a statement of work modification that you should really discuss with your FPO and really makes sure that that is a part of your approved program design and that grant funds can be spent on doing these IRAPS and even supporting SREs or any work related to SREs. There is a question that came into, Orion, about talking more about the industry-recognized credentials that employers value the most in the cybersecurity area. Orion?

MR. SCHUH: Yeah. Some of the industry-valued credentials in cybersecurity are like CompTIA, A+, Network+, Security+. There are a lot of certifications in the cybersecurity field and some of the certifications we are considering developing are certified critical infrastructure protection compliance professional, certified critical infrastructure protection technician. And a secure power systems professional in the energy industry. Those are just a few of them that are currently industry-recognized and then a few that are looking towards developing.

MS. CADWALLADER: Excellent. There is one last Q that I want to address before we move on. And Verner, Orion, are you seeing any success in placing apprentices with employers for paid wages?

MR. SCHUH: We have not reached that point yet. We've focused on program and systems development and now we're reconsidering the IRAP which we've just begun doing. So we are probably a matter of months away towards having a fully developed program of systems to serve apprentices.

MS. CADWALLADER: Excellent.

MR. FUTAGAWA: We are at the same point as Orion, I believe. We need to build the product first and we need to get all of our employer partners. And that's where I'm spending the bulk of my time meeting with employers and letting them know about apprenticeships. And then the next step is going to be recruiting apprentices that may be interested.

MS. CADWALLADER: Excellent. And I did pose this question on the chat. So if there are any grantees that are finding success, please go ahead and share some of those strategies there. And we'll certainly move on as we get closer to the top of the hour. We do want to point out some of the foundational grant resources that you should definitely have the access to.

Your funding opportunity announcement where that exists, any amendments to the FOA that we issued. And then we did issue a policy FAQ for the apprenticeships closing the skills gap grant. So please be sure to keep an eye out for these foundational resources. Our performance reporting webinars have been ongoing. I am happy to say with this group that we have seen about 250 participants served with this grant program.

And that was really exciting to see those numbers. And certainly with this next reporting quarter reporting deadline in November, we're excited to see these numbers go up. And then there is a link here to the office of apprenticeships, basics of apprenticeship, and some of the five-part toolkits and quick start toolkits that you can use.

A lot of this is on registered apprenticeship programs but we feel that there are elements here that you can use and incorporate in your apprenticeship program design. And I'll turn it over to Maya for upcoming events.

MS. KELLEY: Thanks, Ayreen. So you'll see here on the slide, we have three that we'd like to highlight for you. One is coming up in the next two weeks it's our H-1B apprenticeship virtual convening. You all should have received the save the date. And this convening is designed to bring our scaling apprenticeship through sector-based strategies, grantees along with you all the CSG grantees together to discuss some common topics of interest and to learn from experts and your peers.

The convening will take place October 20, through the 23rd. Registration information is forthcoming hopefully within the week. And we hope that you all will join us. It is virtual so we encourage not just the representatives but your partners. We're hoping that we have wide attendance at these virtual meetings. And then next we have National Apprenticeship Week, that is --

MS. CADWALLADER: Did we lose Maya?

MR. FUTAGAWA: I think we're back.

MS. CADWALLADER: Maya, are you back? So she's saying her phone dropped. Danielle, I could take it from here until?

MS. KITTRELL: OK.

MS. CADWALLADER: Maya, are you back? Not yet. All right. Why don't I? National Apprenticeship Week is in November. The links are provided here. And certainly, there's different ways that you can get involved in celebrating National Apprenticeship Week in your local communities. Also provided here is National Cybersecurity Career Awareness Week that's sponsored by our colleagues at NIST.

It looks like some of our colleagues are also losing audio. But Maya, hopefully, you're back. The apprenticeship week, I thought we had published dates. And I can certainly pull it up now. But really these two events are really geared -- OK. So it overlaps. National Apprenticeship Week is November 8 through the 14th. And the National Cybersecurity Career Awareness Week is November 9th through the 14th.

So again, I think there's opportunities here for our grantees to get involved in these nationally federally sponsored programs. But really, the celebration is in your communities; right? The celebration is to really talk about apprenticeships, talk about the programs that are available to support your workers, to support your employers.

And then really to promote cybersecurity careers is certainly important as we move forward in this new -- as we start to apply apprenticeship in this new cyber and AI occupations. So, Maya is back. Any further thoughts and comments about these two events that we're inviting our grantees to support?

MS. KELLEY: No. I think you covered it well. My apologies, everyone. I appreciate everyone being flexible. But we do hope that you find these events to be beneficial for your grant success overall. So please do join. So with that, I will pass it back to, Danielle to close it out.

MS. KITTRELL: Sure, well, great. Well, thank you guys so much. Thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you to our presenters, Orion and Verne for such great information today. And thank you to Maya and Ayreen, for your feedback as well. But I believe we are out of time. But if you have any more questions, you all please feel free to email the grant mailbox at ClosingSkillsGap@dol.gov and someone will certainly be in contact with you.

So again, thank you so much for joining us today and have a great day.

(END)