**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities New Grantee Orientation**

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JON VEHLOW: Welcome to "Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities New Grantee Orientation." So without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to our moderator today, Jeff Ryan, workforce analyst, Division of Adult Services and Governance, Office of Workforce Investment with the ETA. Jeff, take it away.

JEFF RYAN: Awesome. Thank you, Jon. And thanks to all of you for joining today's call. First I want to congratulate you on being – having your grant selected for the WORC initiative. And welcome to the WORC family. This is our second round. And we look forward to seeing your programs come to fruition over the next 36 months or so.

As Jon said, my name is Jeff Ryan. I work in the program office that's responsible for the WORC initiative. And we're called the division of adult services and governance. And we're part of the Office of Workforce Investment in the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration.

So for today we have a pretty full agenda. Hopefully we can share a lot of important information with you. But we'll talk about information that's specific to you in the second round of the Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities initiative. I might say WORC a lot.

So if I say the word WORC, obviously I'm just using the shorthand for the full name of the grant. But as Jon said, if you have questions, please put them in the chat box on the left. We'll answer them at the end of the webinar. We have all of our experts here who can provide full answers. And anything we can't cover during the webinar either due to time or anything else, we'll get back to you post event.

So really quickly our agenda. Obviously a welcome to you, which we've done. We want to introduce the team here in our office in ETA, and with our partners in the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority. We want to provide you with the support to be successful, so we'll talk about some of the technical assistance that's available to you and how to get in touch with those folks if you need help.

We're going to cover an overview of the program itself, to share our vision for the grant, and how you fit in. We'll also touch briefly on the performance reporting requirements under the WORC initiative. And we'll provide you some instructions on how to go through that. A lot of folks will probably have a lot of questions and we'll give you some good details on that. We'll also talk quickly about communication, how you reach us, how we reach you. And then we'll talk about next steps including sort of what comes next after this webinar is over.

So briefly before we get started, I want to introduce the folks you'll be hearing from today. We have some great presenters. Lynn Fraga is our grant officer for this program; Kellen Grode is a performance specialist who will talk to you about all of the performance requirements associated with the WORC grant; Emela Halilovic is the director of business and workforce investment for the Appalachian Regional Commission; and Aury Kangelos is the program manager at the Delta Regional Authority. They will both talk to you about some of the technical assistance that their teams can provide to you during the course of your grant.

OK. Let's do a quick just a summary of all the grantees. This is our Appalachian regional grantees. There's 14 of you. And then from the Delta region we have 13. So this is the list of all of our grantees. And again congratulations to you all for your successful application.

Before we jump into the actual webinar, I want to do a quick poll that Jon will pull up here. And as he's doing that, we want you to talk to just let us know what your three biggest concerns as you start the grant. And you can choose three if you would. You don't have to only choose one.

But we want to just see for folks if you have anything that's really critical that you're worried about or any of the areas that you want to have more information on. And we will – we're going to cover all of these topics on this webinar. And if there's anything that you need in addition to that, please make sure you ask questions or let us know after the webinar.

But it looks like sort of the performance reporting and grant modifications areas are the two biggies. That's not super surprising. Those are often a little bit complicated. And then outreach, recruitment, and assessment, okay, that's an interesting one. So that's some more on the programmatic side which is good.

All right, I think – let's see, we have a few folks saying equipment purchase process. OK, that's similar. The question would be, are we talking about the approval process to allow you to purchase equipment or the process to actually purchase. Those are two sort of separate sides of the same question.

COVID-related delays is a really good one. And anything else if you have it, otherwise we'll move on. All right, Kevin, thank you. Approval process, so that – Lynn will talk to you about the approval process for what we call prior approval as we get into it. OK. All right, Jon, I think we're good with the poll. Thank you so much. OK.

All right, so as I said, we really want you to be successful in these grants. And so we try as much as possible to provide you the support that you need when you need it. So let's briefly go over the kinds of support that we can offer you under this grant. So the first federal partner that you should get to know if you haven't already is your federal project officer.

Your federal project officer, we refer to them as the FPO. They're based in our regional offices. Under this grant that's primarily Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Chicago and Dallas. I think there are five regions that are covered by these grants. And these folks are really going to be your primary point of contact with the Employment and Training Administration.

That person has been identified in your grant package. So you should have knowledge of who that is and probably they have reached out to you already. If not, they will do so soon. But the role of your RPO is really to assist you and serve as a resource on all kinds of grant related matters. They're your primary point of contact for technical matters, and the person with whom you'll probably have the most frequent and direct contact in the government as you're working with your grant.

They're responsible for providing compliance assistance, conducting oversight and review of grant performance, and they may help deliver or arrange technical assistance as you are trying to reach your outcome goals. So your FPO is a really important resource for you during your period of performance. And they provide really a critical role in the success of your grant program.

Next up you would have your program office staff. As I mentioned at the beginning, the program office that oversees the WORC initiative is in the office of workforce investment in ETA. So what is a program office, what do we do? We have several functions to support you during your grant's life cycle. We support your FPOs and other – (inaudible) – staff involving your grant.

We also provide policy clarification and guidance for this WORC program. We support the delivery of technical assistance, which we also call TA. So if you hear me say the phrase TA, that's what we call technical assistance. And that may be on a number of topics including performance recording, allowable activities under your grant, things of that nature.

A key role for us is in that performance management side of the house. We work closely with our research office to collect performance data that you compile for your grants and to help track your overall progress. We use this data in quarterly reports. We will touch on performance and quarterly reporting requirements in this presentation. So this is just a very high level review at this point.

We also in our office we review some grant modifications depending on the requests, depending on the type of changes that are being requested. And finally we're often asked to provide reports on grant outcomes or progress to the White House, to Congress, to other parts of leadership in the government, the Government Accountability Office, all sorts of places. So we may periodically request additional info from you on outcomes, or progress, or other things. And we really do appreciate you taking the time to provide us that information when we request it.

OK, so the grant officer is a really, really important piece of your success. The office of grants management in ETA, which we call OGM, they run the grant competition and make all the selections for the awards. Once grants are awarded, they are the ones who maintain all the official grant documents. There's a regional grant officer who can do some budget modifications and some equipment purchase approvals. And then a national grant officer is the only one who can approve changes to the actual grant agreement. They also do review some of the more complicated modifications that might include statement of work changes or other things like that.

And other staff in the grant office provide guidance on important policy issues and training in fiscal and administrative requirements on the grant. But as I say, we'll hear a lot more from Lynn Fraga shortly with a lot more detail on what the grant office does and how to work with them to address the needs of your grant as you go forward. And then for the WORC grants, ETA has partnered with our friends at the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority.

So in addition to all of the work that they do in helping develop the funding competition, they also provide technical assistance and other support to you once you become grantees across the life of your projects. And you'll hear from Emela and Aury in a few minutes about all the kind of things that they can do to help you in a bunch of different areas with your grants as we go forward.

So before we jump into the real detail, I just want to quickly go over sort of an overview of what WORC is and what we hope it achieves. You're here today because your project was obviously one of the proposals selected for award. And we want to talk a little bit about the intent of the award and what the – and the goals that we are hoping that WORC grants will achieve. As you know, the goal of the WORC initiative, as this was stated numerous times in the FOA that you responded to, is to create economic prosperity that leads to gainful employment opportunities for residents in the Appalachian and Delta regions, and enabling them to remain and thrive in their communities.

A number of different ways that we hope that this goal will be achieved, either by implementing innovative approaches that address economic and workforce related impacts, by providing enhanced training and support activities for participants, by supporting workforce development activities that prepare eligible participants for good jobs – (inaudible) – occupations that are aligned with the state, regional, or community economic development strategy, and of course helping to address the impacts of the opioid crisis and other substance abuse disorder.

We awarded about 29.2 million for this initiative. That's across 27 grantees. As I mentioned, 14 from the Appalachian region, 13 from the Delta region. Our awards ranged from approximately 275,000 to 1.5 million. And for you all, the period of performance is 36 months. So you have three years to accomplish the goals that were set up in your grant.

OK, enough from me. Let's turn to Lynn Fraga to talk to you about all things in the grant officer side of the house for this grant. Lynn, take it away.

LYNN FRAGA: Great. Thank you, Jeff. And hello to all of you. Happy to have the opportunity to speak with everyone today. Again on behalf of the office of grants management at the Department of Labor, I'd like to say congratulations to all of you once again. We're looking forward to working with all of you, of course in collaboration with our colleagues at both ARC and DRA. So again, I'm Lynn Fraga, the grant officer for these awards. Today I'm going to cover the grant management procedures and protocols that will impact your organizations as you implement your project.

I think the most logical place for us to start is the notification of award that you should have received during the last week of September. All grant award documents were transmitted at that time by way of an email to the authorized representative and the grant point of contact that was listed in your application. So the transmittal of your grant documents included the items listed on this slide, with the first document being the welcome letter that included general grant information.

That was followed by a document containing instructions on accessing two electronic systems, both of which are very important to your grant, the first being the payment management system, which is the system used to pull funds from your account, and the Employment and Training Administration's fiscal reporting system, which you will use to submit the quarterly fiscal reports we refer to as the ETA 9130. And there will be more to come on this in a few minutes.

So it's important to note that each of these systems require separate passwords and PINs. And please do ensure that you have set up the system access right away for each of these systems if you haven't already. And if you do have any issues, please do contact the help desk listed on the home pages for these systems, as they are probably the best place to start. And of course -- (inaudible) -- I'm happy to facilitate a resolution by pulling in the right people to help.

Also included in the transmittal of the award package was ETA's grantee handbook. And this is an excellent reference really to keep handy throughout the project period of performance. It helps to ensure that grantees have the resources and information at hand to help you succeed in the implementation of your project. And of course last but not least, the transmittal of your grant award included your grant agreement.

And moving on to the next slide, I'd like to dissect the grant agreement just a bit. It's important that you know what's here. Read it carefully. And of course contact us with any questions going forward. The first document in the agreement is the notice of award. We often refer to this as the NOA for short. The document summarizes the award, providing basic information like your grant number, the award amount, the approved period of performance, also the name of your federal project officer.

Second in the grant agreement is the document stipulating the special conditions of award. I'm actually going to come back to this document in the next slide since there's quite a bit of information I want to cover on that particular topic. The third component of the grant agreement are the federal award terms. Please do read this document carefully and also refer back to it often. Your organization has to comply with each and every element that's listed in this long document. It encompasses a variety of topics to include cost restrictions, programmatic requirements, reporting requirements, close out requirements, and much, much more.

And last incorporated into your grant agreement is your organization's approved application. It's organized into the four primary components. And that includes your SF-424, which is of course your standard federal application for funding; the SF-424A which is the standard budget, along with a budget narrative that describes each line item on the SF-424A; it includes also the statement of work, which is generally the narrative submitted with the application; and last any relevant indirect cost rate agreements, which will serve as the basis for your organization to charge indirect costs to your grant.

So as promised, let's move back to discuss the special conditions of award document, which was placed directly after your notice of award within your grant agreement. In a general sense, if a grantee has this document in your agreement, it means that there are minor revisions or clarifications that are needed for the official grant files. Your organization's response to the information requested in these conditions must come in the form of a grant modification, which is submitted within 30 days of receiving the approval of that particular modification.

For this particular group of WORC grant, the special conditions of award document was included in the agreement, but it stops short of requesting additional information. Instead it referenced that the awarded grant application would go through a compliance review to ensure that the project adhered to programmatic and grant management requirements. A review would flag any revisions or concerns to ensure that we all have the information needed for the grant file.

So ETA staff has completed these compliance reviews at the end of October. And at the beginning of November, we share the results of your review with grantees via an administrative modification to your grant. This mod indicated either there are no special conditions, so no further follow up is required, or it provided a special conditions of award document requesting the necessary revisions or clarifications.

Let me say, if you don't think you received this admin modification, please contact your grant's authorized representative, or the grant point of contact that was referenced in your initial application. These are the only two individuals that we will notify with news regarding your grant project. So to that end, I'd like to mention that it's important you notify your federal project officer immediately if these individuals change during the project's period of performance.

So once you do have that administrative modification in hand that transmits the results of the compliance review, you must respond within 30 days to the requested information. And to make that response, your organization must submit a grant modification to your federal project officer that contains all the requested information generated by that compliance review. And at this point maybe you're wondering how do I go about submitting that modification? I have a feeling your federal project officer may have provided this information to you already.

So today I was planning on doing a broad overview of that process. But of course please feel free to ask any lingering questions you may have using the chat box we spoke of earlier. I noticed today's poll did flag the need to go over this topic. So again, I'll do the broad strokes, and please feel free to follow up with additional questions. So specifically we're going to be talking about how you do grant modification requests and what the review process is.

So we were just speaking of submitting a modification request for responding to the special conditions of award. But there are actually quite a few other reasons to modify your grant. Modifications are the process you use to seek permission to make changes to your project. Specifically you must request and obtain prior written approval for revisions to an original program plan or an original budget allocation.

So primary categories of activity that require this authorization include things like change to your statement of work, a budget realignment, the purchase of equipment, period of performance extensions, perhaps you want to update or change your indirect cost rate agreement, or maybe you need to make administrative changes such as changing your authorized representative, the grant point of contact, changing an address for your entity, as well as your organization's name, all of which require a modification.

Before you submit a modification request, I highly recommend you contact your FPO to discuss the details. Your FPO will be able to provide input on how to submit a modification based on the specific circumstance and also advise you on what documents to include for that particular mod.

So the slide we're looking at now provides a very general overview of the process. The first step here indicates that you would prepare a cover letter. And it's imperative that it's signed by the authorized representative listed for your grant. And it should summarize the changes you would like to make to your project. The second step, the second square here on the slide is a reminder to include the identifying information related to your grant. And we're noting this only because it's a critical detail, but it's yet also important and easy to overlook.

What this slide doesn't note however is that other information above and beyond a cover letter may be required to make the modification request. For instance, if you're changing the budget, you'll need to provide the revised version of the SF-424A, as well as the narrative explaining those changes. And again, your FPO can guide you as to what documentation requirements are best for your particular circumstance.

So lastly, when the complete mod package is assembled, you would submit this to your federal project officer for review. And then they will ultimately share it with the appropriate grant officer for approval. So as this slide again is very, very general, I also recommend that you consult your grantee handbook that was included in the transmittal of your award. Your best reference again though, however, is your FPO. So please do lean on them for guidance on this modification process.

And finally regarding modifications, I do want to make mention of an important kind of mod particularly for the WORC family. And that would be the modifications that are requested – or that are required rather to request equipment purchases. So many of you plan to purchase equipment or use grant funds to make capital improvements in support of your grant activities. The funding opportunity announcement for WORC addressed the requirement that you must the grant officer prior approval prior to making these purchases and charging them to your grant. This topic is also covered in your federal award terms.

So please understand that including the intent to purchase the equipment or do these capital renovations in your original grant application is not sufficient for prior approval. Because at the initial – at the time of your initial award, you generally do not have the details that we require for the grant file regarding these purchases. So as a consequence you must submit a subsequent modification with those details. And again your federal project officer has that information that is required of you when you submit that subsequent modification for prior approval.

So the next slide is a very broad overview of the analysis of a modification, which is a very collaborative process on our end. Your FPO will be the first to review your modification request. They will provide feedback on the components of the request and may even suggest some revisions to ensure it complies with both the programmatic and grant management requirements.

Some modifications may be approved by grant officers in your regional office. Most however must -- (inaudible) -- proposal in the national office if only to ensure that all stakeholders in both the regional and national offices are in the loop on the progress of these grants across the board.

We also seek the concurrence and opinion of our program office contacts. And if it's a particularly unique request, not clearly addressed by a program requirement, our program office team may also help us seek legal guidance. But this is rare. And last but not least, all of you are particularly fortunate to have additional contacts to tap for technical assistance. And those would be our friends at both ARC and DRA. This group of individuals will undoubtedly help you navigate the need for modifications, and you'll hear more from them shortly. Generally speaking the mod process takes 30 to 60 days. And upon approval, you and your FPO will receive an email transmitting the official modification documents.

So now we're getting ready to transition to the topic of quarterly reporting of which there are two types, fiscal and performance reporting. I will take the next few minutes to summarize the fiscal reporting requirements and we're going to discuss the quarterly financial report.

All ETA grant recipients use the ETA-9130 quarterly financial report to report expenditures charged against the grant. This report is found in the ETA financial reporting system. Your grant award package included instructions on accessing this system, as I mentioned earlier. Hopefully by now you've been able to establish this access.

Please note that this slide references the link to our webpage dealing – or detailing rather the how tos of fiscal reporting. This quarterly fiscal report is due within 45 days from the end of a quarter. So for this particular WORC group of grants, your first report will be a report on expenditures between October 1st and December 31st of 2020. And this fiscal report would be due February 14, 2021.

So moving on to the final 9130 report, I just mentioned that you will submit a 9130 report for every quarter. However this particular slide looks way ahead into the reporting requirements as your project comes to an end. And believe it or not this will come soon enough.

The final 9130 financial report is due within 45 calendar days of the expiration of your grant, or at the end of the quarter in which you expended all grant funds. A close out financial report, which is referred to as the close out ETA-9130, is also required. This is a separate document and is due within 90 calendar days of the expiration date of your grant. So for additional information, when you start to think about grant close out, you can reference the links that are found on this slide.

So this ends my piece of at least the formal presentation. I encourage you to ask any questions you may have at the end of our collective presentation in the chat window. And now I'd like to pass it on to Kellen, who's going to cover the quarterly performance reporting.

KELLEN GRODE: Thanks, Lynn. Yeah, so I'm Kellen Grode. I'm in the office of workforce investment alongside Jeff. And I will talk to you guys a little bit about the performance reporting which based on the poll earlier sounds like something that a lot of folks are interested in and concerned about. And so hopefully by the end of this we'll have alleviated some of those concerns.

So there's two general categories that we put the performance reports into, the narrative report and the performance report which is the more data side. But for you guys, I think what is going to be most interesting probably will be the narrative report format. So we have the requirement that you submit the quarterly narrative report, which is form ETA-9179.

And you can see on this slide here there's a link to it to see what the template is. And basically the contents of this report are going to be things like places for you to identify key milestones, or achievements that you've reached within that quarter, to share successes that you've had, or to even identify your technical assistance needs and challenges. So it's really a way for you to tell us sort of what's going on with your grant on a quarterly basis, give us updates, that sort of thing.

In terms of the format, the template itself provides with you a set of questions that have to do with the progress on the grant timeline, your strategic partnership activities, grant activities, and accomplishments. It also requests that you address your performance goals that you've described in your grant proposals, both the outcomes and the outputs. So if you've identified specific performance goals in your application, you'll want to make sure that you're addressing those in your narrative updates that you're providing to us.

In terms of the submission of the report, these are being submitted via email. And what you will do is in the subject line you're going to put, WORC quarterly narrative report. And you're going to email it to three different recipients.

One will be your ETA assigned federal project officer, which that information as you can see on the slide here, it says that that is included in your grant agreement documents. And then you'll also make sure to include the Delta Regional Authority at workforce@dra.gov, as well as the Appalachian Regional Commission at worc@arc.gov. So you want to make sure that those narratives go to each of those three places.

Key dates to remember, and Lynn just referenced one of these, but each quarter there is a set due date based on the end date of the quarter. So this chart here sort of shows you where those report due dates fall based on your quarterly activities. So for example, just as Lynn mentioned, that the first due date for the 9130 is February 14th. The same is true for the quarterly narrative.

Activities that fall between October 1 and December 31 of this year means that that quarterly narrative is due by February 14th of next year. So 2021, February 14th, make sure you send that email for your first quarterly narrative report. And then each subsequent one you just look at whatever the period was for your activities, and then you'll be able to find what the due date is for those reports.

The other side of reporting for these grants is more on the performance data side of things. And WORC grants are unique compared to a lot of the grants that we do at ETA, in that whereas typically the grantee themselves is responsible for submitting the data to DOL, the WORC grants we approach it a little differently in that instead of requiring that you all submit data to us, we require that you co-enroll your participants with the Wagner-Peyser Act employment service program in order for us to get data from Wagner-Peyser Act employment service grantees on your people that you've served.

So a few more details about what that means though, in the WORC grantees that serve individuals, we know that some of you have grants that maybe aren't serving individuals. But for the ones that are, they are required to coordinate with the state workforce agencies that administer the Wagner-Peyser Act, in order to ensure that their participants in the WORC grants also get registered in the employment service. So this is the way to allow us to collect information on things like employment outcomes data that we collect through these other workforce initiatives, while minimizing the reporting burden on you guys.

So this slide talks about some of the types of services that you can receive. Some of these are through the – could be received through the employment services. Some of these could be received from you guys. Some of these could be received by folks that have been enrolled in the employment services and then were further referred to additional services that Wagner-Peyser grantees work with. So for example, we have things like staff assisted career services, which might be things like comprehensive skill assessments, development of individual employment plans, career counseling, career planning, internships, work experience, job search assistance.

Things that might be outside of Wagner-Peyser that they could get referred to through the employment service, would be things like training services, occupational skills training, entrepreneurial training, training programs offered by the private sector. Some of these things may be things that you are providing as well. So that's in having those conversations with the state folks about co-enrolling people, that may be something worth discussing as far as what types of services maybe Wagner-Peyser would provide that your grants aren't providing, etc.

For reporting on WORC participants, this is one of the things that's important to know. And it's important for your communication with your state, is how these individuals should be reported when they're being reported by the employment service in the state that you're working with. So it mentions again here in the first bullet point that they have to register with the state's employment service. And the second bullet is the way that we identify somebody as a WORC participant in the employment service data, which is that they utilize this code value WORC001 in one of our special project ID fields.

So in the employment service reports they submit individual records for every participant to the Department of Labor. And within those records there are three data elements that we call special project ID, which are elements 105, 106, 107. If you want more information on this layout, you can follow this link here. But basically the state needs to report WORC participants that are enrolled in Wagner-Peyser as having this code in one of those three fields. So that way we know that person was participating in a WORC grant.

A little more on that, so WORC grantees, you guys, are responsible for initiating these conversations with your respective state workforce agencies. Now in this area, and I'll talk a little bit more on this slide, but this is one of the areas that I think has been a bit of a challenge in round one.

And so one of the things that we've provided for you, and you can see in the file share attachment, is the contact information for the Title III reporting people in the states that have WORC grants. So if you download that file, you should be able to find the current contact information for people reporting on the Wagner-Peyser Act employment service for each of the states that you may be working with. So that's a good place to start in terms of initiating these conversations.

I think that most of those folks should be aware at this point that they may be getting contacted by you all. But we continue to remind them and update them on this, and work with them on this initiative as well. To that point, as you see on this slide, we can – ETA can assist in facilitating the connections between the WORC grantees and state workforce agencies. If you need help, maybe they're not being responsive, or maybe the contact changed, or something like that, feel free to reach out to the regional office or your assigned FPO for the grant. And they can sort of initiate these conversations and sort of assist you all in making sure that we set up the type of reporting that needs to be set up.

And again, here you see on the third bullet point just a reminder to download that handout. Because I think that'll be pretty helpful in identifying the state contacts that you'll need to be working with.

So I think that's more or less it on the performance side. And if there's questions, we may get to those at the end. But for now we're going to talk about some technical assistance. And I think for that I'm going to hand it over to Emela.

EMELA HALILOVIC: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. As part of this initiative all grantees, both those located in the ARC and DRA regions, will receive assistance with achieving their respective grant outcomes. For those grantees who are identified as ARC DOL grantees, we will convene everyone for a virtual gathering in late January of 2021. But before that gathering, ARC – (inaudible) – will reach out to you later this month and early December to introduce themselves and gather feedback – (inaudible) – preferences you may have for the gathering.

And topics roughly to be covered during the – (inaudible) – sessions include, but are not limited to, review of your contractual requirements with DOL, activities designed to assist you with marketing and recruitment for these programs, data and collections, role based discussions, and other relevant topics. Additionally during the gathering, you will have the opportunity to hear from ARC and DOL subject matter experts, including other experts and speakers.

In addition to the virtual gathering in January, ARC will provide on demand, one on one, and group based TA, which will be conducted via email, phone, and virtual meetings. Where appropriate, we will also connect round one grantees. You are considered round two grantees. Round one grantees, these are the WORC grantees who are in their second year of grant implementation.

We will connect you with them through activities such as topic based discussions and other relevant discussion topics that we have in mind for you. And we will conduct one to two voluntary discussions with grantees to check in on progress, discuss any pitfalls with program delivery, operations, data tracking, and to identify needed resources and assistance with project implementation and program delivery.

Now I will turn it over to my colleague, Aury, who will discuss technical assistance for DOL DRA grantees.

AURY KANGELOS: Thanks, Emela. And good morning, everyone. And congratulations to each of you on your successful proposal. Like our colleagues at ARC, DRA will be providing both issue focused and request based technical assistance to 2020 Delta region WORC grantees. DRA's technical assistance will consist of three phases, consisting of an initial one on one kickoff call and two peer exchange workshops.

The kickoff call provides an opportunity for new grantees to be introduced to DRA staff, discuss project specifics, and how DRA staff can assist with project implementation, reporting compliance, project timeline and benchmarks, and additional funding opportunities to support project delivery and expansion.

The first peer exchange workshop, which will hopefully be held in person in the first quarter of 2021, will bring all 2020 WORC grantees together, as well as, as Emela mentioned, the round one WORC grantees, to support the development of a regional community of practice. The workshop will focus on developing cross-sector partnerships, program recruitment, job placement strategies, program implementation with a specific emphasis on innovative service delivery, and financial sustainability. DRA staff will reach out to each of you in the coming weeks to schedule the kickoff call and discuss potential dates for this first workshop.

Finally in the second half of 2021, the second peer exchange workshop will bring WORC grantees back together to discuss project implementation and progress, data collection and reporting, challenges and successes during project implementation, and ongoing challenges and opportunities in creating or expanding cross-sector partnerships.

Here you will find the contact information for both ARC and DRA's technical assistance team. Emela introduced you to Nicole just a moment ago. As Emela and I mentioned, we will be reaching out again within the coming weeks to begin scheduling our initial kickoff meetings. Again, congratulations on your award, and thank you to our partners at ETA for allowing us to participate in this training. We look forward to working with each of you in the coming weeks and months. And with that I will turn it back over to Jeff.

MR. RYAN: Great. Thank you, Aury. Before I move on, just a reminder folks, if you have questions that you want to ask, we'll address them all at the end of the session. But if you type them into the chat window, you'll have –we've got four or five more slides, so this is a good time to start thinking about anything you want to add, so that we don't have to rush when we get to the end. If you have thoughts that you want to put down now, feel free to do so.

OK. So really quickly I wanted to give you a sense of the difference between the role of the FPO that we talked about earlier and the TA providers that we just heard from Emela and Aury about. They are different, but they have – there are some similarities in the types of roles they do. But if we think about it this way, the FPO can really help you with processes and requirements, clarification of the FOA and the terminology, alterations to your statement of work, fiscal questions including allowable expenditures and budget issues, quarterly performance outcomes, etc., and other sort of policy related questions that you might have.

The TA providers that work with ARC and DRA can help you with sort of things about how your grant operates, whether that's staffing systems, procedures for that, whether it's participant services, supportive services, helping you understand like case management options, helping you with job placement activities, things of that nature, helping you design training, helping you share across grants, and promising practices, things of that nature; and helping you understand or work with employers or participant placement, and things in that sort of realm.

So sort of the difference is the FPO can help you in sort of the grant management elements, whereas the TA providers can help you more with your operations, with new ideas, with sharing what you've done, with other challenges that you have in your sort of day to day operations.

OK, really quickly we'll talk about communications, how do we best communicate with each other. For – (inaudible) – assistance, so obviously if you're a member of the grant team, you should contact your grant lead. But if you have questions about the performance reporting system, again email your FPO. That's a very – we often see challenges in that realm. If you have difficulty accessing the financial reporting system, there's an email address here which is the help desk for the financial reporting system. And your FPO can obviously help you with that as well.

So for communication guidelines, just a few things, a few tips to make sure that everything is – we can track questions and make sure we respond effectively. When you reach out, particularly to your FPO, including your grant number and the name of the grantee is always helpful. Be very detailed in your question. We often see a question that appears to ask one question, but it really means something else.

So if you do have questions, try to be as clear and detailed as possible. And be patient. We try to get back and respond as quickly as possible. But as Lynn mentioned earlier, sometimes we have to go through a bit of a process with legal advice and other areas to get answers to various questions. So just be patient, but we will be getting back to you as quickly as we can.

OK. So next steps. Again as Lynn mentioned, if you have conditions in your award, in your grant package, noted in your grant package, and you need to – or in your compliance review, make sure you do that. Reviewing the training tutorials that we have available, reviewing the grantee handbook is also really useful. And of course getting to know your FPO and anything that you might need that they can help you with would be really important.

OK. I think that's the end. So while you guys are typing in questions, I want to thank the panelists today, Lynn, Kellen, Emela, and Aury, for taking the time to share your information. We have a lot of great grantees and we're looking forward to what you guys are able to achieve. And as we go forward, as questions come up, we've got lots of folks here who can help you. So please, as I said, if you have questions, let us know in the chat window. And we will answer any that we can.

It looks like currently we have a couple. The first one I'm not exactly sure. It says, I understand that our regional program officer is changing. When will we know who that person is? If there's a change, that should happen fairly quickly. So we'd need to know which region. So that question is from -- (inaudible). If you can let me know what region you're in, we can check on that. The next one, I think Lynn this one is going to be for you.

MS. FRAGA: Yeah, Jeff, I'm here. Thanks. So in order to update the point of contact or the authorized representative that was listed in your initial grant application, you have to submit a modification request to your federal project officer.

That modification request for that change would entail drafting a cover letter or letter from your authorized representative that indicates who the authorized representative is and their contact information, as well as the point of contact and their information, their contact information. Your FPO would then submit that information to us in the national office. And we would review and process that modification. And then email the approval back to the grantee and the federal project officer.

MR. RYAN: Great. Thank you. OK. So we got – (inaudible) – your question is answered by the Atlanta region folks. Thank you, Sonja. Kellen, do you want to address the comment from Cathy about the services being more connected to Title IB rather than Wagner-Peyser?

MR. GRODE: Sure. Yeah. So Cathy's comment was about in Illinois a lot of the services that I was discussing on one of the slides in the performance section being more connected to the Title I programs under WIOA than the Title III which is the Wagner-Peyser programs, or program I should say. And I think that that is a fair point. And then in a lot of cases, depending on each state, they may provide more of one type of service versus another with different programs, rather than the same types of services with every program.

So it may be that when you – grantees in these grants are sending folks to be registered in the employment service, that the folks working in the employment service may say, hey, in addition to what you're already getting from WORC or from employment service, we think you should enroll in the WIOA adult program and get this service as well. And that's totally fine.

And that's one of the additional advantages in my mind of this co-enrollment with the Wagner-Peyser program, the employment service, is that it opens up more additional types of services that could be received to help improve outcomes for these individuals. So I think it's a good point brought up by Cathy. And it's one that's going to vary to a degree from state to state. So it's worth discussing when you're having those conversations about the best way to make sure that your participants get co-enrolled and reported in the employment service.

MR. RYAN: All right. Thank you, Kellen. All right, Lynn, there's a question about the process for equipment and renovation related purchases outlined in the statement of work. I don't know if that's enough info for you to answer that question or if we need to get a little more detail from Josh.

MS. FRAGA: No, sure, I can address it. I touched upon it briefly in my presentation, but it bears repeating actually. And I can provide a few more details around that too if it would be helpful. So I mentioned that many of you did indicate in your initial applications that you planned on using grant funds for purchasing equipment or doing capital renovations, which is allowable.

However, at the time of the initial application, those details that we require for the grant file are not available. So we require that you submit a subsequent modification request to your federal project officer which outlines the details of those either equipment purchases or capital renovations.

That would include a letter that must be signed by your authorized representative. And you need to provide the required details for those purchases. And again, your FPO has this information. But for the purposes of today's conversation, I'll run down them quickly. We would need to know the specific equipment that you're looking to purchase or the type of work, the renovations that you're looking to do.

We would need to know the basic specifications that are associated with that purchase. We need to know the estimated useful life of the equipment or the improvements that are being made. We would also need to break out the item or the improvement costs, which can be actual or estimated.

And also most importantly we need to understand the purpose of the acquisition and how it supports the activities that you've outlined in your statement of work. We need an explanation on that to the greatest extent possible. Because that is what's going to make that expenditure allowable for you to charge those costs to the grant.

And of course we'll need a contact name and telephone number regarding that particular purchase as well. Grantees should follow their procurement procedures that they always use. We do not need to see the nitty gritty specifics of that procurement process. However, it's imperative that you do include that information in your grant file because you will be monitored on that.

Let's see, I think that will cover it. Again, the approval process I guess is what was asked specifically. So you would submit that modification request with all of the required information to your FPO. The FPO would review it to ensure that it's complete. And then they would forward it on to the appropriate grant officer for approval. Both the regional grant officer and here in the national office, we are also able to make that approval. And again generally those approvals take 30 days.

MR. RYAN: Great. Thank you, Lynn. OK. So does anyone else have any other questions? I don't see any in the chat box at the moment. We'll give you another minute or two to put in some questions.

MS. FRAGA: Jeff, I did see a question about COVID delays. It was just a general mention of it in the chat box. Regarding COVID, of course this is a unique time. And understandable that it would significantly impact your project. We recommend that you stay in touch with your federal project officer, also your contacts at ARC and DRA.

And probably most importantly you include any kinds of barriers or challenges that you're encountering in your quarterly narrative reports. Because if you submit subsequent modification requests to change your project in any way, the first thing we're going to do is look at your performance reports to see if you've been documenting what some of those challenges are.

And then of course if you do need to submit a modification to change your project in response to COVID, then we would need the details and those challenges also laid out in your modification request.

MR. RYAN: OK. There's one more question. And Kellen, this one I think – I noticed when you were doing your slides, that I was wondering if we needed to address where – for the quarterly reports, it says to send it to three entities, to the mailbox for ARC and for DRA. And the question is, do they need to send it to the region if they're only – to the other region, to DRA, if they're only in ARC, for example.

MR. GRODE: I mean, I guess in my mind it's maybe a question for Aury and Emela. I mean do they want to see all of them? Or do they care, folks, do you have a preference with that? Because I'm fine either way, from my perspective, as long – from the DOL side, we want to make sure it gets to the FPO. But Aury and Emela, do you have a thought on that?

MS. HALILOVIC: Thanks. This is Emela from ARC. I would say for now, feel free to just cc everyone to the email, because sometimes ARC and DRA we do coordinate on technical assistance efforts. So we want to make sure we have data on both regions. Aury, what do you think?

MR. KANGELOS: No, Emela. I agree with you completely. I think that's exactly right. I was going to reiterate the fact that we coordinate on our technical assistance efforts. And it would be great to see all those reports in case there's some commonalities as we're working to do TA.

MR. RYAN: OK. Great. Thank you. There were three or four questions all about the same – put out that same issue. Kellen, here's another one for you. Are they understanding correctly that they do not need to submit a quarterly narrative for the six days in September, where there were no expenditures? Or do they have to cover those six days in a report even though there were no expenditures?

MR. GRODE: Oh, I guess I didn't realize there was any that were awarded for September.

MS. FRAGA: Actually, Kellen, I can chime in here, because we – this is Lynn – when we awarded the grants, they were awarded prior to October 1. But we made the effective date of the award October 1st, so that grantees did not have to report for those last – for those few days in September for that quarter. So they can begin reporting from October 1 and on.

MR. GRODE: OK. Great. Yeah. Then I would say that it would be the same on the narrative then. You wouldn't have to submit a report for those days in September. Jeff, I'm going to jump in because I see another question here that I can answer. So there's a question about are WORC grantees not reporting within WIPS, and then a follow up from somebody else in the chat about what is WIPS. And the answer to that is, no. So for those of you that are familiar with WIPS, you don't need to worry about it for these grants.

For those of you that aren't WIPS, it's the Workforce Integrated Performance System. It's the system that we use to collect data for a lot of our other grants at ETA on the performance side. But for these grants, the data that will be submitted into WIPS will be submitted by the Wagner-Peyser employment service grantees. It looks like maybe some folks can't here, but I think Jon's taking care of that.

MR. RYAN: OK. We'll wait one second and see if folks can – all right. Hopefully the found issues are resolved. Anybody have any last questions before we wrap up and let you get back to your day? OK, so Jennifer, you're saying trouble downloading the contacts list. OK, so Jon says we're going to add it to the event page. So what the event page means, when this recording is posted, there'll be access to it on the Workforce GPS site. And we'll let you know where that is when it's done. But it will include the downloads as well. But – (inaudible) –

MR. GRODE: Yeah, Jeff, I was going to say, I believe that when those get added, there should be an email sent out to everybody that registered for the event. So you'll get an email letting you know that the update has been made to the event page. So that'll be one way for you to know that it's available.

MR. RYAN: Yes. Perfect. All right, there is one – sorry, before we go – Nicole is saying she's having trouble registering for the – (inaudible) – Lynn, is that the financial system?

MS. FRAGA: Yes. Can you hear me? Yes. Yes, it's the payment management system, the system where they draw down their grant funds. I can go ahead and type my email address into the chat, and you're welcome to reach out to me, and I'll help you resolve it.

MR. RYAN: OK. Great. Thank you, Lynn. All right, so looks like we are done with questions. Anybody have any last questions before we go? OK. Appreciate you all taking the time to participate in this webinar today. Hopefully we answered your question. But obviously as we've mentioned several times, if you have additional questions going forward, your FPO is a great place to start. And they've got all of us here to support them. And we can hopefully answer whatever questions you have.

Otherwise best of luck as you get your grant programs off the ground and running. And we look forward to talking to you all soon. Really appreciate it. And thanks so much. And have a great day. Jon, I think it's you now.

(END)