**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Effective Recruitment and Outreaching Strategies**

**Thursday, November 19, 2020**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Menifee, CA*

JONATHAN VEHLOW: Welcome to "Effective Recruitment and Outreaching Strategies." So without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to our moderator today, Andrea Hill, grant program co-lead, Office of Apprenticeship with the U.S. Department of Labor in the Employment and Training Administration. Andrea?

ANDREA HILL: Thank you so much, John. Appreciate it and really enjoying seeing the representation that we have of grantees and partners as you're introducing yourselves. Again, please continue to do that as we just get started a little bit here, and thanks again for being here.

My name is Andrea Hill, as John had mentioned. And joining us today, I'm really excited about today. We've got a couple of your great TA coaches, which some of you are lucky enough to have been acquainted with already, Mike Laidlaw, Kelly Middleton who are here to help us.

And then we've got a couple representatives from an organization that has had a number of ETA grants and a number of different programs. So they know really a lot of tips and best practices about recruitment and outreach, having been able to garner that from a number of different programs, as I mentioned. Sara Lewis, who's the director of ApprenticeshipWorks at The WorkPlace; and Adriene Parkmond, who's the COO also at The WorkPlace. So welcome. Thank you all for being here to present for us today and help our grantees that maybe are a little newer than you've been too to figure some of this stuff out.

We're going to talk today a little bit about recruitment and outreach, as evidenced by the title, and some of the baseline sorts of things where your organization should be now about foundational kinds of practices and principles about it.

Then we're going to talk about some marketing and promotional kinds of things that you can do that may be not quite so obvious. We're going to talk about leveraging, which is really important to be able to do that well and appropriately, and then also, how to evaluate how your process is going along. How to then use that evaluation to apply to your development of your best practices.

So, again, we've got representatives here from The WorkPlace, which is located in Connecticut, and they're going to share with you some of their secrets, again, that they've learned over the years in many different programs.

So with all of that introduction, I will pass it over to Mike Laidlaw.

MIKE LAIDLAW: Thanks, Andrea. So I see we have a fairly diverse audience here. We have state boards, local workforce boards, nonprofits, and community colleges. What that means is a lot of your positions enrolled with respect to recruitment and outreach may be very different.

So I want us to sort of get a baseline and talk about certain principles about recruitment and outreach. So my working definition of recruitment is finding a new person or – person or – a person or individual to fill a vacancy or an opportunity in a program or an organization.

With respect to outreach, it's providing opportunities or services for a target population that may not otherwise have access or even know about a program like this. So it's more deliberate.

As far as skills are concerned, when it comes to recruitment, you're looking for someone who understands marketing and promotion and how to write an ad, create fliers, and also use social media.

On the other end on outreach, you want someone who's really a people person, someone who doesn't mind connecting with individuals, going out there, and meeting with people face to face and cultivating those relationships.

You may say, what's the difference? So a recruiter can actually stay behind his or her desk and do recruitment throughout the process. But when it comes to outreach, you need someone who doesn't mind going out and having that face to face. So it's a different skill set. You want that people person out there when it comes to outreach.

So if you're looking at staffing your program, make sure you're not staffing with just all recruiters and not someone who actually enjoys the people part of the meet and greet and connecting.

When it comes to time and effort, there's a lot of obviously upfront time when it comes to recruitment, but you'll be doing that over and over again every time you advertise.

With outreach, the time that you're investing up front will pay much dividends later on because you're creating a pipeline of talent with these community-based organizations.

And probably the most important thing when it comes to the difference between recruitment and outreach is relationship. When you're recruiting, you really don't have to develop a relationship with the entity or the organization that you're advertising or placing your fliers. But with outreach you want to create a long-term relationship that lasts throughout the grant. They'll better understand what your needs and requirements are, and you will also understand what sort of talent and individuals that they're interacting with.

As far as the operationalizing recruitment and outreach, you're placing ads, whether it's for TV or radio, and also using social media with respect to recruitment.

On the outreach end, it's making those calls, making those visits, developing, operating MOUs where you have an agreement as far as what you're going to provide to that particular CBO and what that organization is going to provide to you.

And the other piece is process. When you recruit, there are three main phases in the recruitment process. You market and advertise on platforms. You screen, test, and select those individuals, and then you register and enroll them into the apprenticeship program.

With outreach you're doing the connecting with that CBO, that entity. You're developing win-win agreements with them, and they'll be referring those prospects to you so you can start the rest of the process, whether it's screening, testing, and also registering those individuals with the apprenticeship program.

OK. Now, we'd like for you guys to take a brief poll so I can get an idea of where you're currently sourcing your participants, where are you advertising, and where you plan on getting your talent.

Is it social media, Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn? Are you placing ads in the papers or magazines or fliers and billboards? Are you using radio and TV or podcasts? Are you using word-of-mouth? Or if there's something else that you're using? We would appreciate you mentioning that.

I see the majority of you guys are using social media. At least 91 percent. And then approximately 82 percent using word-of-mouth. So it seems like social media and word-of-mouth are the two greatest used sources of actually getting your talent. Thank you, John.

As far as social media, I – we mentioned LinkedIn in there, and someone would say, well, why would you use LinkedIn? Most of our participants wouldn't use LinkedIn, but LinkedIn you're going to have individuals on LinkedIn, parents, family members, church members who really want that individual to participate in the program.

So if you use LinkedIn, you can always have – you will not just get the interest of those individuals, but they will also forward that information to family members and friends who they know may have someone at home who would really utilize the program.

The next process is recruitment planning and implementation, the next slide. A lot of us tend to do recruitment sort of not ad hoc but you're really – not really planning for your recruitment process. You've been doing recruitment so long. You may not really formalize it.

I really recommend looking at formalizing your process by developing goals and objectives as far as how many you want in your cohorts and looking at it quarterly and also annually. How many participants do you want in each cohort, if you have multiple pathways, this quarter and for the rest of that particular year?

And then, also, identify your primary and secondary sources for recruiting these prospects. Are you going to use a community-based organization? Are you going to use a – the newspaper? Are you going to use television? What are going to be your primary sources for that talent?

And also determine the most effective avenues for those prospects. Is it recruitment, and is it outreach? Outreach really works best when you're trying to target a particular population, especially it could be a population such as ESL students or individuals. It could be someone who may be disabled. Also, let's not forget the homeless population, those who may be living in shelters or living with a friend or someone's couch. Those individuals may not be targeted through the traditional routes. So really consider those.

 Also, determine the most effective avenues to those prospects. Measure recruitment and outreach. And then you want to develop a marketing plan. If you're going to do outreach, what is the best way for us to reach those individuals? Are we going to use success stories? Are we going to use testimonials? Are you going to use infographics? And if you're going to use recruitment, what graphics are you going to use that's going to connect with those individuals?

So definitely develop a marketing plan. Don't just use the traditional ads that you've seen. Something that's going to be an attention-getting device that gets that particular individual or community's attention.

Then you want to develop the implementation plan. What actions specifically do I need to take, and what activities? And also put some timeline against those activities or else sometimes it will never get done. And one of the things – one of the challenges we tend to face is we try to do everything ourselves, but there's some strategic partners out there that you want to connect with who their job is to actually get those same individuals that you want to recruit into the opportunities that you guys already have.

So it's really there's some congruency as far as your mission. They want to place those individuals, and you want to also place those individuals. So try to find those individuals and those organizations that are really connected to the target that you're looking for.

And then what you want to do after about 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months, start evaluating the process that you're using and your plan. How is your plan actually working out? Are you hitting those targets? And if you're not, what should you be doing?

And then look at ROI. Who's – which one of these sources should I be focusing my time, money, and efforts and make sure that you're actually getting – I hate the term the best bang for your buck, but you're going to get the most return for your investment. And then determine what shall I stop, what should I start, or what should I continue?

And probably a critical thing too, especially if you have multiple sites, make sure you outline your recruitment process. And on the next slide we'll talk about the process itself.

The three main phases in any recruitment process, one is marketing and advertisement. The next one is screening, testing, and selecting, and the rest – and the next one is onboarding.

When it comes to marketing and advertising, there's traditional routes, again, the TV, radio, and also ads that you can actually place and on social media. But also look at some non-traditional ways of doing business, whether it's outreach or using those same social media platforms and in different ways.

You can actually buy a page, an IG page. If you see there's an influencer or someone who has a lot of following, you can actually purchase that person's page and start placing things on that particular page, or you can develop an agreement with that individual.

There's also an organization called Later and they will actually do the work for you. If you want to put the same ad on LinkedIn, Facebook, IG, they'll actually do it for you, and they actually have different tiers. They have a free tier where there's no cost, but if you want them to do additional things like maybe change the content and make it more presentable, there's actually a cost for that.

So there's a lot of things that are available out there and not just using the same traditional approach. They will also help you with your messaging. And one of the things you want to do is make – whatever it is you're doing, make sure it's effective and relatable and you're using language that that particular population can actually connect with.

And also, make sure that you're using multiple languages. And so if your particular community has – is a very diverse community, make sure you're using the advertisements in at least two or three of the main languages, whether it's English and Spanish or whatever the demographics happen to be.

Phase two is screening, testing, and selecting. I've seen far too many grantees and organizations that actually have barriers in their screening, testing, and selecting process. Make sure you're not asking for resumes, cover letters, and three references. Some of the target populations, they may have a resume, but maybe that's all they have.

They may not have used a cover letter before, and they may not have references because these individuals are in a homeless shelter. So be mindful that the process you're using really isn't an obstacle and it's going to actually exclude some of those same individuals that you want to include.

And also, use optional platforms and – for your application. Again, I mentioned homeless because I've worked with the homeless before. And some of those individuals may not have access to technology. So also have a hard copy of the application, and maybe you can actually have that individual go to the community-based organization you're partnering with that's serving the homeless population. They can have those individuals fill out the applications there.

So really consider all the different avenues that you're using to reach and screen and select those individuals. And also, not just using virtual. Opportunities to actually meet and convene with these individuals. You may have to go to a particular site, whether it's a career center, One-Stop facility to have those individuals complete that.

And the last phase is onboarding. Make sure the onboarding process is smooth because your first interaction with these individuals is going to have a lasting impact on the whole retention area.

And at this point I'd like to turn it over to Kelly Middleton to talk about outreach efforts and partnership.

KELLY MIDDLETON: Awesome. Thanks so much, Mike, and thanks for walking everyone through recruitment.

We have a poll up for you to get an idea of what your outreach efforts have been. Which components of outreach best describe your community outreach effort and partnerships?

Has it been social and public events at your location? Major kickoff at a public venue? Presentations/forums at stakeholders locations like at high schools? Community or virtual job fairs? Joint events with employers and vocational schools? And also, we would love to hear if there are other outreach efforts that you've done or considering on implementing. Please enter that in the chat box. I think that would definitely spark ideas for your fellow colleagues.

So it looks like quite a few of you have done presentations with your stakeholders and – such as high schools and other stakeholders. There's also quite a bit of effort with social and public events at your location as well as community and virtual job fairs and joint events with employers and vocational schools. So that's good. It's good to see that there's a variety of efforts and strategies that folks are implementing. We can close the poll now.

So when you're thinking about effective outreach efforts, there's three phases that you can take into consideration. There's phase one where you're determining your potential strategic partners, phase two where you're establishing those relationships, and phase three where you're potentially formalizing those agreements and MOUs.

So when you're thinking about outreach efforts and really leveraging your resources and community members, you want to identify where there may be some gaps in addressing and reaching out to the populations you're hoping to serve.

And then you want to take a second to identify how best to implement effective needs of outreach. Who are the individuals that you're currently connected with that could help you get the message out? Is it a board member? And I know I've had conversations with different sites and say, leverage your board members, if you're a workforce board. If you're a nonprofit and you have a board member, leverage your board member. Leverage your advisory committee. I know some of you have those built into your grant. Those individuals are representative of the project and can very well help get the word out.

Also, develop a pitch. As we look for jobs, they've always said make sure you have your elevator pitch ready. Same with your program. What's in it for me? Or as you're working with your different partners and stakeholders in the community, you want to be able to communicate how this partnership and how these efforts could not only help you reach your goals in recruitment but also help that particular agency reach their goals for possibly finding employment or support or workforce development support for the population that they're serving as well. So those things are important.

And then as you look into phase two with establishing relationships, as mentioned, you want to leverage your existing partnerships and really look at the bench of partners and stakeholders that you're currently engaging with and understand how and what you can work with them to possibly continue to put out information and connect with different populations, the youth population, for this particular project.

And you want to definitely collaborate with the community-based organizations. Those individuals who I know organizations that are serving the same population you're hoping to get in contact with because there's a likelihood that you both have vested interest in helping this population become educated, helping this population find work, become self-sufficient, and become great parts and members of the society.

So aligning your interests and goals with those community stakeholders and community-based organizations can help you further your outreach effort.

And then in phase three what you want to consider is, in some instances you may be well-positioned to formalize that particular agreement and the stakeholder – with stakeholders and partners. So developing an MOU with a partnering organization to talk about creating that pipeline where they may, for example, provide some of those additional services to help support youth. And you could help provide some of the workforce development services.

The formalizing the agreement ensures that there's continuous engagement with that partnering organization, and it clearly states how those – how you and that organization would work together to meet a common goal.

Now, when you think about outreach, a lot of times you think about outreach and recruitment. And the funny thing about that, Mike and I both agreed that outreach and recruitment definitely impacts retention.

And so when you're thinking about the impact of outreach and retention, you want to be mindful of the value of the partnership and ensuring that you're connecting with the right community-based organizations.

And what that means is you want to be able to understand the target populations that you're hoping to work with, and you want to be able to establish a pipeline of qualified participants, which is the reason why you make the efforts to make those phone calls, schedule those meetings, and have those conversations in order to build the relationship to continually have access to the populations that you're hoping to serve.

The other part about the partnership that you may embark on is that those individuals that are serving a similar community can also serve as a primary or secondary case manager. They could be a secondary checkpoint for that youth as they're moving through the program. And it's always helpful to have some additional support and services in respect to that.

And you also want to be mindful of early intervention. And when you make these partnerships – embark on these partnerships with other organizations, they can assist you with that. As you identify maybe additional barriers that a youth may be experiencing, the partnerships that you've established can help address that, identify additional resources, and you all can together come up with a plan to help and support that youth.

Another thing with the partnerships is you want – this is an opportunity for you to expand your supportive services. And it's important with the retention piece because a lot of times there's not the – the desire of the youth is not there and the motivation, but there are barriers that they may have to overcome.

And by expanding your supportive services to wraparound and comprehensive services, it allows you to create an environment for the youth to be successful. And some of that may be happening through the partnerships and organizations that you build relationships with.

In addition to that, you want to be mindful of participants with similar backgrounds and experiences, and with that you create opportunities for mentorship and bonding. And that leads to encouragement of those participants to know that someone who was like me in similar situations was able to be successful. Then maybe I can be successful too.

And you can do that through peer groups and role models, but that's also a part of the way in which outreach plays a role in retention because some of the things that you would be establishing could very well be assisted by the partnerships with different stakeholders and organizations.

And when you think about diversity and inclusion, you want to get to know your population. You want to create diverse communities. You want to consider inviting members of your community, members of the populations you're hoping to serve and get involved, to be a part of these communities.

You also want to be mindful of how you communicate the program and how you communicate what's going to be offered. You want to use a mix of outreach efforts, traditional, non-traditional. I was excited to see that the variety of strategies that's been implemented that you shared with in both polls. But that's also important into reaching a broader audience.

We all take information differently, and so having different strategies on how you approach this information, how you present it is important.

Also, perception matters. Having the different language tools that you use in getting that information out is important as well.

You also want to promote the success stories, and I know as some of you all are getting started, you may not have specific success stories to your current project, YARG project, but you do have success stories for some of your other work. And being able to show and establish history that this is not new to you all, you've done this work, you've worked with this population, you have been committed to advancing workforce opportunities for individuals and youth gives you an opportunity to make greater connections with some of the population and build trust. So definitely utilize success stories, and have past apprentices be a part of the conversation.

Lastly, you always want to try to make sure that you're demonstrating short- and long-term goals with apprenticeship, and you want to make sure that you're giving them insight on what an apprenticeship program will mean to them, what this could – how this could change their lives, the opportunities that they can see for their future by participating in a program like this.

And Mike, I want to turn it over to you to go over some of the pieces around participant journeys and how that improves recruitment.

MR. LAIDLAW: Thanks, Kelly. I'm going to rush through this because we're a little behind on time, but it's important for us to realize that – and be conscience of the fact that there are a lot of entry points into your program. You have participants who are coming to your apprenticeship program from different backgrounds, communities, and also frames of reference. So that level of consciousness will help not just the recruiters but also the case managers and trying to have a better understanding of that individual's journey.

One of the things that's very popular in the – not just in workforce development but in other areas is actually mapping the customer's journey. So your customer, your participant is interacting with your organization at different points along the way. These are called touch points.

From the minute they read your ad or saw it on social media, that is a touch point. Then that's the first touch point, and from that particular point on to the time when they're enrolled in the apprenticeship program, there are several touch points along that path, the pathway.

And so what you want to do is you want to identify each touch point and then find out what their experience has been with each touch point. If they're using your website, was it complicated? How many times did they have to click? If they're using their phones to download your application, was the format still intact when they tried to download it?

And so, again, the touch points are so critical and you improving their experience with your organization because that is going to, again, increase the retention rate and also will help you better connect with those individuals. And those individuals are the ones who are going to provide that word of mouth because they'll go and talk to their friends, coworkers, or family members and say, yes. It was seamless. It was easy to do, and I really recommend that you connect with this organization.

And so one of the best ways to actually do this is to use focus groups. I had a former grantee that was focusing on the areas of healthcare, and she realized that – the grant director realized that most of her ESL participants were stopping at the CNA level. They weren't going on to be LPNs or RNs.

And so I recommended that she actually conduct a focus group with those individuals, and what the results of the focus group told us was that those individuals who moved on to RNs, all of those individuals had some sort of mentor or someone who was encouraging them or they met a nurse who encouraged them along the way.

And just about everyone else in that focus group did not have a mentor or someone who was encouraging them or they actually thought the classes were too complicated and they were – they would rather have a translator or someone who could actually help them in the process or maybe a Facebook group that could actually help encouraging them.

So that's one of the things they did. They put together a Facebook actually page for those individuals, and once we're through with the situation we're in right now with COVID-19, they will have – and encourage those individuals to meet one-on-one.

So that focus group is really helpful, and one of the things they did, they went through the entire process, all the touch points that each of those individuals had with the organization along the way. And then they went back and determined how can we help improve each of those touch points? If it were an interview, how can we make the interview better? If it were something on the website, how could we make that presentable? And also, how could we change some of the material that were actually only in English and make it bilingual?

So, again, participant journey mapping is a practical and just a wonderful way of connecting with those individuals that will increase case management and also increase retention.

Sorry for going over time, but I'd like to turn it over to Sara Lewis who is the director of ApprenticeshipWorks at The WorkPlace.

SARA LEWIS: Thank you so much, and welcome to my fellow YARG grantees. I'm Sara Lewis, director of ApprenticeshipWorks at The WorkPlace.

The WorkPlace has been serving as the workforce investment board in Southwest Connecticut since 1983. Currently, we administer more than 20 job-training programs across Connecticut that are designed to meet the training and employment needs of distinct populations, including several youth programs.

We also operate four American Job Centers and have a mobile career coach that travels to our partner agencies within the region.

So today Adriene and I are going to focus mostly on outreach and recruitment, but we did want to give you a little context about our youth apprenticeship program. Labor market information shows us that Connecticut manufacturers are facing a major skill gap. This is due, in part, to Connecticut's aging population, the high cost of living, and retirements of highly skilled workers in the field.

One statistic showed that 11 percent of the current manufacturing workforce is set to retire within the next three years. The number of young students who are coming out of traditional tech schools just isn't enough to meet the current hiring needs of employers. So youth apprenticeship is a great solution for bolstering the manufacturing workforce.

As a workforce board, we're well positioned to bring together young adults, businesses, and training providers to create an influx of new young workers into the sector. In conversations with our employers and designing the partnership and different apprenticeship tracks, we've heard over and over again about soft skills. So our participant service strategy starts out with a workforce readiness training to help youth develop these soft skills and communication skills.

Program also includes pre-apprenticeship training to give in-school and out-of-school youth who haven't gone through a tech school environment the basic competency skills they need to start an apprenticeship. And then following that up with tailored on-the-job training and classroom training through the apprenticeship that meets the specific needs of the employer.

A very important aspect of our design is ensuring that we can accommodate a wide population who may have varying responsibilities. So just because we're in the office from 9:00 to 5:00 doesn't necessarily mean that our participants are also available at that time. Soft skills training, pre-apprenticeship training, and on-the-job training are all flexible so that people can complete these trainings during the schedule that works best for them.

Our current employer partners have identified several occupations for entry-level apprentices, and as we continue to move along in building the partnership, we're adding new employers and expect the number of different apprenticeship tracks to grow.

I will now pass the virtual mic to Adriene Parkmond, the chief operating officer at The WorkPlace.

ADRIENE PARKMOND: Thank you so much, Sara, and thank you to U.S. DOL, our TA coaches, and the entire YARG team.

As Sara said, my name is Adriene Parkmond. I am chief operating officer of The WorkPlace, and I've been here for just about 20 years. As Sara indicated, The WorkPlace serves as a workforce development board for Southwest Connecticut, and in that role we oversee WIOA adult dislocated worker and youth funding, as well as a variety of other federal and state grants.

We have learned over the years to embrace the philosophy and practice of working with the whole person. And what does that mean? That means meeting customers where they are. Our workforce development system, for those of you that have been around for a long time like myself, has began to understand that we have evolved over the years.

As a workforce system, we are now required, in most instances, to be aware of and be present to the fact that many that we serve come to us with a variety of barriers. It is now necessary for us to begin to mitigate those barriers and, more importantly, not creating additional barriers to getting into a career pathway. As Mike spoke about, asking for a variety of documents up front is just one indication of that.

So when we're talking about looking at the whole person and their family, during intake we want to get to know our customers and their families as well because that can give you an idea of what's going on in someone's life that can support or hinder one's participation.

One example I always like to give is, even on the recruitment side in other programs that we have, we operate an older worker program, and we're dealing with individuals who are 55, 60, and above. One of our standard questions is, who's in the family? So if we know that they have a grandchild, a nephew, a niece, or something of that nature that might be in their household that is out of work or out of school, we tell them, hey, what about this program? Make sure they understand that we can serve them in a variety of programs.

And if we know that they know what other programs that might be helpful to individuals in their household, we can be guaranteed, in many instances, that they will follow up to make sure that their grandchild, niece, or nephew actually checks out the program and gets enrolled.

Another part of it is being responsive to our employers. So we are really, really mindful of the fact that we have employers as customers. We are at – at our core and our mission of our agency is that we are a workforce development agency, but we also provide social and human services.

So with the employer, we like to make sure that the employer understands that individuals that we work with, in many instances not all, come with a lot of barriers and that we're working with them. But our primary purpose is to provide a skilled pipeline of talent for employers in our region so that we can make sure they are active partners in our grant journey and that they understand the needs of our participants.

Once we have that synergy with that employer, they understand what we're trying to do and they understand that it's not that we're asking them to just hire an individual because they have a barrier or to work with an individual because they have a barrier but because the individual has a skill and a talent, and that's why they want to hire them. That's why they want to make sure that that person is a part of their talent pipeline. Not because of who they are or what they are. It's what they can bring to the table. So we make sure that we do that.

Also, making sure that we're working with our community partners and being flexible, as Sara talked about. So when you talk about building trust, this is a very, very important piece of it because, when we look at the participant's journey, young people can be very, very skeptical for a variety of reasons.

We don't know where people came from, and we don't know what their backgrounds are. But we know that we have to – we're working with individuals that may have had trauma or other challenges and have had a hard time trusting people, especially those that say, I'm from the government or the semi-government and I'm here to help you.

They may not necessarily believe that. So we have to listen and build that trust, and part of that is also building a staff that's culturally competent and sometimes staff that have lived experience. Not read about it, not heard about it, but actually lived it. And when you have that type of experience and when you have that type of mindset, then you can start to build trust.

And sometimes it doesn't come automatically, as we all know, but as [inaudible], we can't discouraged from that. It takes time. It takes patience, and a part of that is celebrating those small wins because that can build trust.

So as grantees, we always look at success as meeting our outcome measures, which it is, but for a participant success may look very different. Success may look like I got to class today, this week on time. Because of everything I've gone through this week or what happened last night that we may not know about, that person showed up. You acknowledge them. That could be a win for that person.

So you always have to be cognizant of that. Everyone likes to be acknowledged, and our participants are no different.

Sustainability. I tell staff all the time, begins at day one. When we get notice of the award, we immediately start preparing staff on how to build in sustainability. We cannot wait until we're six months out and we're preparing that no-cost extension for DOL to begin to think about a plan.

So what we need to do is start by getting your employer partners on board quickly, making them champions for your grant. Highlight them. As we like to be acknowledged as human beings, employers like to be acknowledged for what they do as well.

Publicize. Publicize. Publicize. And Sara's going to talk about that in her slides in a minute.

Get those community stakeholders involved early as well. I believe, as Kelly indicated, most of our partners have similar goals as we do ensuring individuals succeed and have a viable livelihood that's going to support themselves and their families. So to that end, showing them how, by working with you in partnership, we can get participants to that goal together. And so it's not a them versus us. It's let's work together on behalf of those that we're here to serve.

Also, looking internally often, our program structure and delivery model. Sometimes we think we know it all. I – staff tell me they think – I think I know it all. I probably do. Maybe not, but we always have to be willing to sit back and say, if something isn't working, let's not continue to do it. Is it effective? How can it be adjusted?

In a pandemic we've all had to address disruption. So we all have done this. We've pivoted. So sometimes we have to do that in our program delivery as well. The more we can think sustainability from the day one, the more we can ensure success on behalf of our participants as well as our grant.

Supportive services are key. The model that we've adopted is a resource concierge. Some people will call it a navigator, but I like the term concierge. And so I decided to use it. So our resource concierge works hand in hand with our case manager to understand each participant's unique needs to enable participation. The resource concierge is focused on working to put a supportive services plan in place for that participant.

Just imagine having a 23-year-old sitting in front of you, has every intention on participating. They really, really want to be a part of the program. But guess what. They're homeless. They don't have access to transportation. They don't have technology, and they don't have the clothing, and thus they feel embarrassed to be a part of the program.

It's easy for us to just give them a referral, send them off. But, again, that's not building trust and confidence that we are actually committed to the work of helping them succeed. So what do we do?

As a resource concierge, we do all that work for you. We are the ones that work to get the partnerships in place and bring the partners to the table so that the partners can see us. We can see them. We can put names to faces, and that increases our ability to mitigate those challenges and increases access to their funding that they may have to serve that participant as well.

They may have a line item that has technology in it. You may not have to pay for that. Let them pay for that. So, again, if they see it's a win for them, the more likely they are to participate with you.

Now, understand we can't solve every challenge, but we can address some significant issues. When individuals are in the midst of crisis, what you'll find, they often cannot see past today's life crisis. So it's up to us to be the light and to guide them step by step on their way to success by making sure we have the supports around them and we are helping them to do the leg work and teaching them the way.

So that's a part of our supportive services which is critical, critical, and I can't underscore that enough, to a successful grant, especially when you're working with young people who may be out of school and have significant barriers.

So with that I'll turn it back to Sara.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you so much, and I am going to try to go quickly through the rest of these slides. We just wanted to share some of our past successes with outreach and recruitment and some future plans.

We utilize the power of media whenever we can and in whatever way we can. So after the grant was awarded in July, we held a press conference at Bigelow Tea headquarters – they're one of our employer partners – to announce the launch of the partnership. We invited the governor and other elected officials to join us and share their remarks, and we talked about being awarded for the grant but also the opportunity that it brings to the region for young adults. It was a huge success and was covered by several media outlets.

The nice thing about this type of outreach effort is that it requires relatively little effort on our part and gets the word out to hundreds of people. The story ran online and on the local evening news, and we were contacted afterwards by new employers, potential referral organizations, and individuals who wanted to be part of the apprenticeship program.

We use a multi-pronged strategy for recruitment and outreach. Community partners we've certainly found to be a highly successful method of creating a pipeline. Recently, we started to map out potential referral agencies and identify the gatekeeper at each organization. So that's the person who's in the right position to make things happen.

These partnerships are formal and informal, and we make a point to cross-refer. Partnerships go both ways, and if we encounter a participant who can benefit from services at another organization, having that relationship already in place with a community provider makes it much easier for us to pick up the phone and make that referral.

We also use a lot of community organizing tactics. As Adriene mentioned, you have to meet people where they are. Especially for out-of-school youth, you have to identify who they trust. Who is the best person to tell them about the program and deliver that information? People like barbers, coaches, faith leaders, neighborhood group leaders who have broad touch points within the community.

OK. We also ask that our employer champions spread the word across their vast networks. So we ask them to share the application and other program information on their website, social media pages, bring it up to the folks at the chamber event you're attending next week so that we're making sure we're completely utilizing our employer partners and their vast networks.

Especially in the virtual world that we're living in now, social media is a very important strategy for reaching the youth population, and it's not just youth. Everyone's on their phones and devices all the time. And the content needs to be fun and engaging and cross-posted on platforms where youth spend time.

So although I'm a Facebook girl, young adults are more likely to be active on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. So we have to make sure that we're including our presence on those different platforms.

Obviously, we need to make sure that program literature is accessible in multiple locations. But going back to those community connectors, it's very helpful if we have the business owner have some knowledge about the program who can talk to someone who picks up our flier and encourage them to apply.

And utilizing word of mouth. If my friend tells me about their pre-apprenticeship training and that they're about to start an apprenticeship, I'm going to identify with that. It's more relevant when it comes from a peer. So we're asking our current participants to talk with their friends about what they're doing and see if any of their current network is interested as well.

And, again, highlighting success stories is a very helpful tactic when we're looking to get the word out.

Very briefly just wanted to go over our application and intake process, and some of this has been touched on previously. The first step in the enrollment for our program is to fill out a very simple application. It's available online and as a hard copy, and we don't want the application process to be a barrier to participating. So if we required a long application and asked every question we need to determine eligibility, that person may never even complete the application.

So we call our initial application an interest form, and it includes very basic demographic and contact information.

As you all know, anyone who's worked in youth services, the eligibility process can be daunting, especially when it comes to screening for WIOA eligibility. So having a relationship with a staff person can make the process much easier for participants. Relationship and trust building starts very early in our process and can help make the eligibility process clear and simple.

So our case managers reach out and start building the relationship from day one, and through those conversations they're learning about the participant and their family, collecting eligibility documents, screening for WIOA, and also taking that time to identify any potential barriers.

I just want to mention how important follow-up is in the eligibility process. We like to have things done on our time, and that doesn't always happen. So if you're waiting on a piece of documentation to complete eligibility, it's so important that we're continuously reaching out and following up to that person to remind them that we're here and that we're going to be here as a cheerleader for their success going forward.

We utilize a variety of assessments to screen candidates, but it's very important to note that if someone isn't proficient in math and reading and say they don't pass the CASAS exam, that we have an option for them for remediation. So we don't want to just say, sorry. You didn't pass. You're not eligible. We need to be the people who are connecting them with the resources they need so that they can achieve that proficiency status and enter the program.

Lastly, intake includes the creation of an individual career plan and supportive service plan. And, again, trust is so important here. So it can be difficult for people to open up and share what their challenges are. There's often a feeling of shame and embarrassment when we're discussing different life challenges.

So if there's a strong sense of trust in the relationship with our staff, youth are more likely to share what they're facing. And when we know what the barriers are, then we can move forward and develop a plan to help with success.

MS. HILL: Awesome. That is awesome. Does anybody have any particular questions? There's a lot that just got covered. So go ahead and put questions into the chat box that's over there, and we can start answering them.

In the meantime, I would like to just say we've got five minutes. We've got five minutes until those come up, and so I wanted to know if anybody had any particular takeaways.

If you didn't have questions necessarily but just chat just a little bit, particularly earlier on, we were talking a little bit about social media. And as you're finding changes with the social media issues that you were having previously or after the pandemic. I know that these grants started just in July when we were all pretty much well into this situation. But if you found new ways to use social media services since we've all gone into this.

We'll go ahead and talk a little bit more because we got a couple winding up slides. But if you do think of anything, just go ahead and, again, put them in the chat there. We've got contact information for each one of the presenters that was here.

So if something comes up on your mind that you want to follow up with, again, Mike and Kelly are fantastic TA coaches that some of you are lucky enough to have, and then we've also got Adriene and Sara and then I guess one to me. I guess I'm the fifth one, aren't I? But I can't answer your questions about recruitment and outreach, about the presentations that they made.

But, Sara and Adriene, can't thank you enough for being with your – with us here today. All the material that everybody presented was just fantastic.

So this slide, again, is in the PowerPoint download file that's available for you for download, if you didn't get a copy there.

Just really quick to go over upcoming events. Remind you that we've got the WIPS training that starts on December 1st. It's every Tuesday and Thursday for the first couple weeks in December, and these are all the performance and reporting trainings to get you ready to report into WIPS.

We do have a little update for you there. Initially, we had anticipated that these grants would be reporting into WIPS in February. So that's going to be delayed by a quarter. However, this is still the training that you need to attend in order to be there.

So you'll have an extra quarter to develop your systems, and we haven't quite figured out what we're going to do for that – for the February quarter for reporting. You'll have the same QNR that you guys were able to download from the community and also your 9130. So keep in touch with your FPO and your TA coach, if you do actually start enrolling participants, and we will make sure to make accommodation for that.

But please be sure to go and check on the community and register for these WIPS trainings. Again, December 1, 3, 8, 10, and 15. You have to register for each one individually. We can't – we couldn't group them, but they're all different. So – and they build on each other. So please do make every attempt that you can to attend all five.

We've got some resources here for you too. Some of these you should be kind of getting used to a little bit, but we've got a recap sort of of some of the activities and the fun stuff that went on during National Apprenticeship Week that just ended and sort of a tally of everything. Different Apprenticeship Week certainly for everybody but it still went out and it was still a success. So you can go read stuff at apprenticeship.gov.

There's a special page for resources on partnership and strategies at the YouthBuild community. So that link is provided here. We've also got diversity inclusion in apprenticeship. We've got a whole new section that's there on apprenticeship.gov. So make sure to check that out, if you haven't done so already. And then, also, WIOA youth retention resources are available for you at this link.

And nary a question. So, again, if you've got something in your mind triggers later on, we've got the youthready.grants@dol.gov that you can send your question to as a follow up to this presentation, to your FPO, or your TA coach or, again, to the contacts of our presenters that were kind enough to share their days with us today.

So thank you all so very much for being with us. Thank you to our presenters, again, and have a wonderful afternoon. We'll see you in a couple weeks on the WIPS trainings. I'll pass it back to Jon.

(END)