**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**WIOA Youth Listening Session, Youth Voice: How Workforce Development Programming Best Supports Me**

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JON VEHLOW: Welcome to "WIOA Youth Listening Session, Youth Voice: How Workforce Development Programming Best Supports Me." So without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to our moderator today, Maisha Meminger, Manpower Analyst Division of Youth Services, Employment and Training Administration with the U.S. Department of Labor. Maisha?

MAISHA MEMINGER: Thank you so much Jon and thank you to the entire – (inaudible) – team for helping us put this panel together. Welcome to our guests from around the country. We are so excited to have you with us. Jon, do you hear an echo from me?

MR. VEHLOW: You sound clear to me right now, Maisha.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. Thank you so much. So I want to take this time first and foremost to just thank the team, the Youth Policy and Performance team here at the Division of Youth Services under the Employment and Training Administration for their hard work, especially our lead, Adrienne Eldridge Bailey, and her tireless efforts to put together this panel. I get the privilege of moderating this panel, but Adrienne did all the hard work and I think her in advance of this amazing event.

We just want to give you guys a little background. We do have an open chat; we will not be taking any questions for the young people through that chat. That's chat is a place for you all to communicate with each other, give some sound advice or some shout outs to our young people as they share their stories. We will not be taking any questions through the chat today. We have pre-designated questions for our young people. Remember this event is recorded and will be provided to you all within a week on WorkforceGPS.

So without further ado, we have two amazing panels. The first panel we have young people from around the country who will be representing various views of young people. We are fortunate to have two panels today. Each panel will be around 40 minutes a piece, while we explore with our young people the best ways to serve them in the workforce system. We have with us Laycie, AJ, Tyreke, Analis and Hector, will be a part of panel one. And for panel two, we have Abby, Ryan, Tyson and Gloria who will be sharing their thoughts as well.

The objectives for today are again to learn from our young people. A lot of times when we serve federally or at state, we are removed from our young people that we're serving. They're our primary clients for the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act and we are excited to serve them and to see them grow and to see them strive in our American economy and to help the base of our country. And a lot of times we don't get to hear from them. This is our opportunity to do this and we may want to do it again more often as we look at their successes and their challenges and actually their suggestions to us on how to improve our service delivery.

We also want to make sure that we identify any technical assistance needs for staff and case managers and directors as we move forward and actually the federal government as we transition to a new administration, we look at opportunities for different types of development, of Workforce, apprenticeships and jobs in the 21st century.

We always want to make sure that we're ahead of technical assistance game. So this is an opportunity to learn from our young people how we can possibly do that, especially around COVID. A key caveat to this entire conversation is these young people have been served during COVID, which was a shock to all of us in March.

Many of you guys sat on webinars that we had early on in May and July as we explored virtual environments and serving young people in a very rushed and emergency situation where a lot of us around the country came up with some amazing innovative and talented ways to still stay connected to young people who were at home with their families, who were working in hybrid situations with virtual internships.

And so we want to make sure that not only we have young people that are sharing their experience but also how COVID affected them as well so we are wanting to get started with our first panel and we're going to have some fun. So I think, Jon, we're ready for the cameras.

MR. VEHLOW: All right. Moving it over now so you can start those cameras.

MS. MEMINGER: Hi everybody. So Laycie, AJ, Tyreke, I know Tyreke, you're having some technical difficulties, if you can join me on the panel. And Laycie has the cutest dog that may hop in her lap at any time. So we're going to let her have the grace of letting her puppy getting in her lab at any time she wants to. We love dogs around here.

And we have Hector. So thank you guys for joining us. Tyreke, you got on camera. It's working. Yay. It's so fabulous to see you guys and it's good to have you with us. And I want to – I'm probably going to say this multiple times but thank you, thank you, thank you for your time, for your energy. A lot of you guys made changes to your schedule to share with us what you're doing.

So first question I have for all of you, all five of you is you're going to tell me a little bit about yourself in five words because I know you guys are amazing. I know – I'm going to call you guys individually, but I really want to know what makes you amazing and so first I'm going to call on AJ. AJ is from Minnesota and he loves the outdoors which I am from Wisconsin, AJ so I love the outdoors too. And it's a beautiful space and I know we're up there in God's country of the Minnesota and those Great Lakes area so AJ tell me five words that describe you.

ALLEN HOLMES: I'm curious, introverted, outdoors, friendly and a history buff.

MS. MEMINGER: A history buff? What's your favorite point of history? What's your favorite historical event?

MR. HOLMES: I'd have to say I guess D-Day.

MS. MEMINGER: D-Day. Oh, that's intense. OK, my grandfather served in World War II, two tours, so OK, good. So D-Day is your favorite historical event. Good to talk to you AJ. I'm going to now ask Analis to tell us five of words about yourself. Analis is from the beautiful, beautiful state of Hawaii. Analis, tell me five words that describe you?

ANALIS NITTA: I would say adaptable, reliable, diligent spontaneous and independent.

MS. MEMINGER: Yes, Analis, I love it. Now give me the name of your workforce center that you're working with because I cannot pronounce it. I want to know how to say it correctly.

MS. NITTA: It's the Coina program.

MS. MEMINGER: Coina program. Awesome. And I'm jealous you're in Hawaii. I'm so sad. It's cold over here on the East Coast.

MS. NITTA: It's so hot right now.

MS. MEMINGER: Oh please don't brag. Stop bragging. You're making me sad. You're making me sad. OK. Good talking to you, Analis. Hector, let me know a little bit about yourself. So Hector's from Texas and so Hector give me five words to describe yourself.

HECTOR RUIZ: Hello everyone. My name is Hector. I would say in five words or less, I am humble, loving, caring, responsible and respectful person.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome, Hector. Good to have you with us and then we have Tyreke, did I ask you yet? OK, Tyreke, you're next. Give me five words. Tyreke is from the great state of Rhode Island. Give me five words to describe you.

TYREKE MITCHELL: I would say I'm self-motivated, I'm an introvert, generous, influential and humble.

MS. MEMINGER: Influential. I like that word. That means you can get things done, right? You got the gift of gab?

MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

MS. MEMINGER: So do I. We have something in common, great. And Laycie and her puppy. Laycie's from the great state of South Carolina. Give me five words that describe you.

LAYCIE GWYNN: So I would say I am pretty eager, extroverted, adaptable, kind and fun-loving.

MS. MEMINGER: Fun-loving, good, good. So now we got to meet these five amazing superstars and we're going to start asking them questions about their experience in the WIOA Youth Program. Everybody comes from different names of program. So when I ask you about your program experience, can you please tell us what city you're in and what's the name of your program and also tell us how long you been with the program and if you've graduated from the program yet. So I'm going to start again with my list and I'm going to start with you Tyreke. Tell me the city you're in in Rhode Island, the name of your program and how long you've been with the program and if you're still with the program or if you graduated with the WILOA program.

MR. MITCHELL: My program is in Providence, Rhode Island. The name of it is Comprehensive Community Action Program. I've been in it since February 2020, the beginning of this year and I'm still currently working on my GED, studying for my GED. And it's been pretty good being there.

MS. MEMINGER: I'm going to probably ask this question again, but you said you started in February 2020, did you think COVID was coming?

MR. MITCHELL: No. I didn't – (inaudible).

MS. MEMINGER: So it went from face to face real quick to virtual, right?

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah.

MS. MEMINGER: Well, we'll come back to that part, OK. Great to have you Tyreke in from Providence, Rhode Island and your program. Analis, so same question – what city you're in, what's the name of your program and how long have you been with that Workforce investment, that Workforce Innovation program?

MS. NITTA: I'm from Wailuku, Hawaii, on the island of Maui. I am in the Coina program and I've been in the program since September 2019.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. And you're still in the program or you graduated?

MS. NITTA: I'm still in the program.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Awesome. OK. We look forward to hearing about how that's going for you. Good to have you. Hector, Texas, that's a big state. You got to tell me the city, your name of your program and if you're still with the program.

MR. RUIZ: Hello everyone. Yes, I'm still in the program. I'm from El Paso City, El Paso Texas, city of 9115 – (inaudible) – you know the lyrics and I've been in this program for a little bit more than a year. I started in August and currently I'm in college. It has been a great experience to learn and have some learning experiences with the program. My program's name is called It's Good Youth Program. I mean I believe that's what it's called but yeah, it's called that program.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Awesome. Good to have you. Laycie, same question. City, name of program and if you're still with the program?

MS. GWYNN: So I am from Charleston but well technically North Charleston. I was in my program supposed to be here six months, but it wound up being like nine or 10 because of COVID. And it's SC Works Youth program.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Awesome. AJ, you're my last one. So you're in the great state of Minnesota. City, name of program and if you're still with the program. AJ, are you able to unmute your phone?

MR. HOLMES: Sorry, I'm from Cloquet, Minnesota, which is about 20 minutes from Lake Superior. I'm currently working with the Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training. I've worked with them for over a year now, and I'm currently working at the Cloquet Public Library. But normally, I haven't worked an entire year due to COVID though. We had to take a break because of that.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. All right, so I'm actually going to start off the programming without a question that's on our sheet because I think one thing that we learned from all you guys, you're still in the program. You have not graduated from the program. You've been there for – some of you for a little under a year, some of you for over a year.

And I wanted to start off by asking a couple of you guys when you walk into a workforce investment, walk into this workforce program, what was the most welcoming thing for you when you walked in those doors to get those services? Because my next question really asks you about your overall experience, but I am more curious of knowing what was your – when you walked in those doors, how did you feel and what made you feel welcome? What was the welcoming experience?

So Analis, I'll start with you with that question. When you walked in, what was the most welcoming thing or challenging thing when you walked in those doors?

MS. NITTA: I think the most welcoming thing, well, when I asked my friends about the program, they loved the coordinator. So I already felt safe, I guess.

MS. MEMINGER: Amazing. So a caring adult, right? When you already knew by word of mouth. So the words that we use in federal level or state level is called word of mouth, right. The best way to tell about a program is your friends, right? Your friend told you about this program, told you how amazing this program coordinator was, and a caring adult was there to greet you and you already felt safe coming into those doors, as nervous as you probably were, and a little shaky, a little skittish, a caring adult.

Anybody else want to share? I know it wasn't on the question list, but I just felt the spirit of asking this question. How about you, Laycie? What was like the welcoming thing that got you in those doors that made you feel a part of the program?

MS. GWYNN: So I actually didn't know anything about the program and then someone told me hey, you should go look at this because it's really helpful; it's a great resource. So I went in not knowing anybody and everyone was so down to help me and just like make my life better and it was awesome. Everyone was so welcoming and so helpful and so motivating, just like they had a good crew for sure.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. I love to hear it. Heck I'm asking the question. – (inaudible) – so Hector the same question. When you walked in those doors to get services, what made you feel welcome?

MR. RUIZ: Well, for me honestly when I walked into that door, I didn't know like what exactly the program was. I was kind of still – (inaudible) – but I mean like Laycie, they referred me to that program. They're like it's a good program. You should do it. You're going to get experience and all that good stuff. And when I walked in there, I just felt very well treated; the crew there is awesome. I love working with them. They're very great. So shout out to Jessica. She's out here listening to – (inaudible). But yeah, I'm very thankful for doing the program and I mean thank God for the program and thank God for you guys.

MS. MEMINGER: Oh, thank you so much, Hector. I appreciate it. So Tyreke, I'm going to start with you for this first question. Tell us about your overall experience there in Providence, Rhode Island with the program? If you want to share your welcome or your challenge when you walked in the door, that'd be great as well. I just kind of threw that question in there because I felt that you guys were really welcomed and you had caring adults but Tyreke, tell me about your overall experience in the program.

MR. MITCHELL: When I first walked in the doors, it was pretty amazing. They helped me a lot getting used to the area and my overall experience, my overall experience with the program, I was instructed to a youth center environment; that was comfortable. It felt like family. The GED instructor assisted me with my growth in academic areas I usually struggled in. I feel like going to the youth center helped me grow personally and professionally with all the support I received from that case manager and other staff. What I liked most about this program is learning experiences. I've had that turned into working opportunities given to me afterwards.

MS. MEMINGER: Can you tell me a little more about that? You said learning experiences that turned into work opportunities. I would love to hear a little bit more about that.

MR. MITCHELL: Recently, I've been given an internship that actually ended up turning into a long-term job at the CCAP Youth Center Head Start. So now I actually help the teacher centers assist, you know, watch the toddlers. I am a screener. So I take their temperatures; I usually go outside. I spray down the playground with disinfectant, you know, make sure everyone's clean due to COVID. And that's pretty much it.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. So how do you feel as a young man going into a space that's traditionally not a male job? You're at Head Start with little people. How does that make you feel?

MR. MITCHELL: It feels pretty good. It's pretty different. You know, I'm not really used to that but it's slowly but surely getting used to – it's honestly just one in a lifetime experience. So I'm more grateful to cherish that.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. That's a wonderful experience for you. I'm so happy to hear that you got learning experience that turned into work experiences and that you're learning how to work with little people because I think that's amazing. If you can work with little people, you can work with any adult in the world. Great.

OK. AJ, tell us about your overall experience in the program and again what are you up to? I mean what happened and your experience with your workforce program?

MR. HOLMES: Well before, I had pretty bad social anxiety, but the agency help me place me at two work sites where I could figure out how to manage this at a job. The main focus of what I've done is I've learned to be flexible and open to new things. I've had a variety of job duties including computer data entry, coordinating youth activities and yard work. At the library, I've been helping a lot with some community stuff that they do like for November, they were – it was called DiNovember so it was dinosaur themed the whole month of November.

MS. MEMINGER: My son would have loved that.

MR. HOLMES: Yeah. We were playing the movie Jurassic Park there too.

MS. MEMINGER: Cool. AJ, I want to commend you for sharing with us that you had social anxiety and you actually are on this call with all these amazing people to learn from you and I want to thank you for using your flexibility and the skills that you received in your program in a really weird situation to share with us and talk to us publicly. So you – all the skills that you learned are actually being put to use right now. So you're amazing. So thank you so much AJ for sharing that with us, and I'm so happy you enjoy your – I think you enjoy your library job is what I'm hearing. I love the library too. It's amazing you get those experience of setting up events and stuff. So everybody had a pretty decent overall experience I'm hearing from you all.

So we're going to talk about COVID because COVID of course is a big elephant in the room. It's shaped and really shook us all up even here at the federal level when we were all sent home various quarantine states regarding – (inaudible). The first question we had was how do we continue to provide services to our young people when they are detached from school, detached possibly from work. There may be some food insecurities. We know across our country internet issues was always an issue, but now with COVID, it really showed us that internet, excuse me, internet issues and what we call the digital divide was larger.

So I want to ask you guys about your COVID experience. I'm going to start with Laycie. Laycie, tell me about – you started the program a little bit earlier before COVID. So you started face-to-face. I think Tyreke was the newest one where he kind of got a month of face-to-face and then COVID. So Laycie, can you share with us your COVID experience in this program and just maybe any personal anecdotes that happened during COVID that kind of worked – you had to work through?

MS. GWYNN: Yeah, so I was actually – COVID hit around I guess February for us, and I had finished my in-school part of my program. I was in the medical assisting program for SC Works. So it was six months of that and then I had like a 160 hours of an externship that I had to do at a clinic so I actually got pulled out of my externship because of COVID. Roper where I'm from – where I am, they pulled all externs out.

So after that I was really frustrated because I couldn't get my certification without the hours but Ms. McPherson, shout out to her because she's probably the best person in the world, I owe my life to her – (inaudible) – she stayed on me and she was like, why don't you take your test? You know, just get everything done that you can get done. So I took my test; I passed my test. And then basically when we were allowed back into our externship, I was ready.

All I had to do was I had like three more days left to get hours and then I was done. And if it hadn't been for her, I would have had to wait to take a test still and I really do owe my life to this program, because without it, I would probably be still working a part-time job somewhere. And now I have like a real career. Now, I work for a pediatric clinic and yeah, it was just really awesome where I am now versus where I was working.

MS. MEMINGER: How is it working during COVID in a pediatric clinic? Can you share a little bit about that experience?

MS. GWYNN: Well, it's kind of crazy. I'm exposed to COVID daily. I do COVID tests all day. I wear a mask all day. It's definitely different. I didn't know what it was like to work in a clinic arena or area prior to COVID. So this is really my normal, so it's not so bad. But it's definitely interesting and I love working with kids. So it's fun and always something.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Awesome. Congratulations to you on passing your test. I think that's amazing, taking advantage of COVID and doing something, stepping out on faith and just taking care of the business and passing and getting a job during COVID, and shout-out to your coordinator, your program coordinator who stayed on top of you as a caring adult. That's what you do; you do it in love and you stay on top of your young person and you motivate them.

And Tyreke, let me get with you on COVID. So you have a job; you're working with the Head Start program. During COVID, I know you came kind of right before COVID hit and got in. I'm going to ask about your experience during COVID, but also want to ask you how did your case manager or your program manager communicate with you while COVID was happening because I know it was hard when you could not go into a physical space.

MR. MITCHELL: At the end of COVID, the youth center has been quieter. There's not much students. I receive more support with my GED because the teacher has a limited number of students at once. So there's certain times where she helping one other student and she has more time to help me when it's my turn. I'm in more contact with my case manager more often through text. My class schedule is more structured because it is consistent and times, so I have more time to work out of classroom and still get work, schoolwork done outside of my studies.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. And so you're still studying to take your GED, right?

MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

MS. MEMINGER: You know, you have to email me when you take the GED, right?

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, OK.

MS. MEMINGER: Because I want to hear your success story when you get that GED, OK, because I know it's going to happen for you. I'm excited for you in advance. Awesome.

Hector, what about you? How was your COVID experience?

MR. RUIZ: Well for me, it was really a great experience. I got to like work and give out to my community, meet some great people. When this whole COVID thing happened, I was working at a Walgreens and then they stopped me and they're like you can't come because of the COVID stuff and all that happening. So I was like, what am I going to do? And then well my career navigator, she was like don't worry. We'll try to figure something. Well, I got to give out to my community.

I worked at a food pantry at one of our biggest food pantries in El Paso I think it's the only one. They give out to the whole community so we do food drives. They have separate – different locations across the city so I was fortunate to work in downtown and it's a – it was really a really big part of the community like a lot of people went. We used to give out something like 2,000 boxes a day.

And it was just a food drive so it was a little hard with all that COVID thing happening because of me, you have to be careful; you had to have precautions, wear your gloves and all that, the masks. And then I stay away from people like social distance, but you also have to help the people as well. So I got to work in the food pantry, and it was really great. And then at the end of the overall experience, it was really great. I got to meet some great people.

I even got to talk – I even got to talk to the CEO of the main food pantry and it was just really great because I mean I was helping out at either both pantries. And right now to this day, I still go and volunteer in that pantry because I mean, they really still need help and with this whole COVID stuff is still happening, so we're still trying to help the community and give out the community what we can. And it's just a really great thing for me. I am happy when I help the community and that's something that I really enjoy doing.

MS. MEMINGER: So Hector, what I'm hearing is I hear leadership development. I hear community service. I hear a person who doesn't mind working unpaid to serve his community, which is a great attribute for a great leader, and I appreciate you coming and still doing the work when you were not getting paid because sometimes – every once in a while, we may do some volunteer work or some leadership work that we don't get paid just to get the experience.

And I think that's a wonderful lesson that every experience you have may not be paid. And a lot of us need our money, but this is temporary, right? We're hoping that this volunteer opportunity is temporary and so we can keep on and going and having a community engagement. So I'm so proud of you, Hector, for serving people in need, people who need food and especially around this time of the year. So thank you for that.

Analis, I'm going to end with you about your COVID experience. I'm getting to you AJ too. I want to hear your COVID experience, you're in a library. So how was your COVID experience?

MS. NITTA: The – (inaudible) – COVID experience beforehand, it was mainly we would have quarterly checkups and it would be face-to-face like we would go in the office and just update on anything from school related to our personal lives, just like so they know how we're doing. And now since it came, we still do the same thing, but it's through Zoom because that's probably the most effective way to communicate. And we also had – we email a lot as well. And whenever there's new resources, many of the participants are within the UH My College system. So we have an app and we put a lot of resources up on there and if they can't see on the app, then we still email it to all the participants.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Awesome. AJ, I'm going to start with you next. You can share your COVID experience as well. But I want to start with asking you if you were the director of your youth program or a youth program, a workforce program, an educational training program, what would be the most important thing that you should do to serve young people?

So I'm going to ask you that AJ first. If you want to share your COVID experience, I definitely want to hear that as well, but I'm going to start with you the next question on if you were the program director, what would you do to improve the program or serve young people and why?

MR. HOLMES: That's a hard question for me to answer because I'm not really in charge of engaging students. I'm still just learning how to engage with people myself.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. So with that, tell us about your COVID experience. Can you tell us about that?

MR. HOLMES: Well, actually the day I was supposed to start working at the library, it closed so but eventually when things got a little better, I was able to start working there. I hadn't really worked long before so it wasn't a huge change for me. The main adjustment was just wearing a mask and recently about towards the beginning of the month, my mom was actually diagnosed with COVID so I had to stop working at the library. I have been tested. I am fine; I don't have it. But I plan to start working at the library again hopefully this week.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. Well, we're thinking about your mom and I hope she feels better and that is something – you taking care of your mom and making sure that you stay safe at the same time. It's what a lot of Americans are going through and people around the world. So we are course we're thinking about her positively and sent her good vibes. OK?

So Analis, I'm going to go to you. If you were a program director or manager, what would you do to engage young people? What would you do? What components would you have in your program?

MS. NITTA: I think the main thing is to make sure that the participants are supported and have the support and I instill all the resources that they can have, whether that be scholarships or any sort of like resources that they need for home or school. Just as long as they feel supported.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. So support number one check check. Hector, what about you if you were a program director or manager, what would you have in your program to make sure you can engage young people?

MR. RUIZ: For me the most important things is being able to provide the best job experience for the youth and help them get the best experience that we can give them. Make sure to give them something that they want to do, something like, let's say for example, like Laycie, she wants to work in medical. Give her something that is related to her work field. Also encourage them to continue their education like Tyreke. He's a good example. I think we're all proud of him about his GED and help them achieve their goals in life and have that support for them across the – throughout the whole program.

MS. MEMINGER: I love it. I love it. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Laycie, what about you? What about your – if you were the program director. That was powerful words, Hector. Thank you for that. Go ahead you had your finger up.

MS. GWYNN: I want to start with like honestly, I just want to sing the praises of my program. It's so crazy that those resources were always available to me and I never knew about them. So for me, I just think that getting the word out there to my community and the kids in my community and making sure they know like hey, this is there, and you should use it because it's awesome.

It's life-changing and I think that it's important to knock down the doors of all the local schools and be like, hey, we have this to offer. We'd love to offer to your kids. not just like the high schools but the community college as well that we work with, that they work with directly. I mean I know for myself I struggled for years like in and out of school, not going to class right, just not having the motivation and then I found this program and then suddenly I was motivated, and I was happy to go every day and Ms. McPherson was on me, keeping me motivated and it was just such a great experience for me and such a wonderful resource. I just want everyone to know it. I want it to be on billboards. I want it to be everywhere. I want everyone to know about SC Works because it's truly life-changing and it's just such a great resource.

MS. MEMINGER: Laycie, that's why we have you. You are our best – (inaudible) – did you know that? You do it for free. You brag on your program for free. Word of mouth is the key. When your program does a good job and you, like Laycie, you are an example of a success story, your job to help us is to spread the word and you do it so eloquently and you talk about your challenges and you talk about your successes and you talk about struggles and you're so open and you are the best salesperson. So I want – your program is going to use you a lot. You're going to be all over the place. You're the best salesperson.

MS. GWYNN: I owe my life to them. Like I had no like the course of my life had no direction and I didn't care about going to school and now here I am, I have a full-time job, and I know what I want to do with the rest of my life, and I owe that all to you guys.

MS. MEMINGER: Oh, thank you, but we're going to ask you about that in a second. Tyreke, do you want to wrap up this section? What about you, program manager or director? What would you do? Tell us what we can do better? What would you add? How would you engage?

MR. MITCHELL: If I was the director of the youth program, I would provide counseling to the youth and get to know them more on a personal level. I feel like it's important because when students walk into the building, they are giving a motivated and positive environment. When they are leaving the program, they might be struggling with keeping the motivation or applying the skills to their everyday life. So when they do come into the program, you know, they are able to develop all of those skills and apply them to their everyday life, so it won't be as difficult as it was before.

MS. MEMINGER: So motivation, positive conversations, mentors, stepping in, keeping you motivated. Did you ever feel like you wanted to quit, Tyreke?

MR. MITCHELL: No, not really. My experience with the – that was just one of those moments where it was like I had those moments where I did want to quit way before I even joined, but when I did, they helped me take that negative energy out and just push through it.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Awesome. So we are going to ask the final question of this panel. I think I don't know if we lost Hector or not, but first question is when you close your eyes and you think about your future, what do you want to be when you grow up? What is your career goals? What are your dreams for your future and I'm going to start with Analis. What is a dream for your future? What is your career goals? What do you want to be when you grow up?

MS. NITTA: I think – I don't know. I was going to say that I want to be like an owner or manager or general manager of a hotel because I'm in the hospitality and tourism program here at UH Maui, but I think whatever I do in life, I just want to be happy because if you're happy, then like the rest of your career and stuff, it will just like fall in line.

MS. MEMINGER: I love it. Entrepreneurship, I love it. Ownership, yes, but you want to be happy and you want – that's the most important thing. It really is. It's very important to be happy.

AJ, what about you? What do you think about when you possibly for your dream job or your career, your future, what do you want to be?

MR. HOLMES: I'd like to be a paleontologist or a zoologist. I have always been fascinated by prehistoric life and also animals. In Minnesota, there aren't too many fossils here because it was underwater for a long time and also glaciers, but I've always loved animals. I'd love to help them anyway I can, even being a veterinarian. I have been trying to look into some schools for that. So far in Minnesota, there aren't a lot of colleges that teach paleontology.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. So that dino event in November was right up your alley. I know you had a lot to say about that event and you're a historian too, so what a great opportunity, a paleontologist. That is amazing, zoologist. I love animals too. So I think that that is a wonderful opportunity to grow and to share.

We have people talking about the University of Michigan. I see the Minnesota Vet School. So we have people giving you suggestions in m the chat on where you can go and of course we have tools here; labor@getmyfuture.org, where you can explore your goals and where you can go to school for those dreams that you have. So congratulations to you. I think that's wonderful.

What about you, Tyreke? What do you want to do when you grow up?

MR. MITCHELL: I want to be my own entrepreneur. I'm currently studying to be a trader in a foreign exchange market, trade out coins and commodities, also help people in the trading market.

MS. MEMINGER: OK, Tyreke. I see you. I see you. You talk about dollar stuff. OK. Can I give you some money? You'll flip my money and make – (inaudible) – for me?

MR. MITCHELL: I'll help you.

MS. MEMINGER: That's amazing. I know nothing about that stuff and I'm so excited that you want to learn and learn how to trade at a young age. You can teach the community how to do that. That's amazing and you said my favorite word, entrepreneur. Here at the department, we are working on some tips and tools for young entrepreneurs.

We want to encourage young people to have ownership in their businesses, to think outside the box because you guys are our future and you guys are going to come with these awesome ideas of how to trade bitcoins and whatevers and whatevers and I know nothing about trading commodities so I'm excited to learn from you. And also when you come with your experience, you can explain things better to the common man, right? Sometimes when I listen to people talk about stocks and trading, I'm like this. What are you talking about? But with you, Tyreke, you can come with some really amazing ways of sharing that knowledge with us. So I'm so excited for you. And that sounds amazing.

Laycie, what about you? What do you want to do when you grow up?

MS. GWYNN: I actually just enrolled in school to be a surgical assistant. I'm currently a medical assistant. So what I really want to do is surgery. I thought I wanted to do nursing, but I think surgery is way cooler. And yeah.

MS. MEMINGER: You're not afraid of blood, are you? You're not afraid of blood, are you?

MS. GWYNN: No.

MS. MEMINGER: You're better than me, Laycie. Go ahead girl. If you would see me, it would not be healthy. You want to go from medical to surgical. Do you know how amazing that is?

MS. GWYNN: Actually before I – when I came into the program, I told Ms. McPherson I was like I want to go into phlebotomy because really the only thing I've ever wanted to do was just like help my community in whatever way I could and I thought healthcare wasn't for me, like it's so much and I have bad anxiety.

And I thought I'm not going to be able to like leave it at work. I'm going to take it home with me and she said no, don't do phlebotomy, do medical assisting because then you'll get your phlebotomy certification and you're MA certification. I was like you're so smart. I definitely want to have you here. So I did that and after being an MA for the last however three or four months that I've been working at my job, now, I'm like, oh, wow. I definitely love this. I want to do it at another level, and I want to do surgery because it's so interesting to me and I feel like I would be making a difference every day for sure.

MS. MEMINGER: Absolutely and you're not afraid of blood.

MS. GWYNN: No, it doesn't bother me at all.

MS. MEMINGER: Oh goodness. I'm so proud of you, Laycie. It's amazing that it took you only a short amount of time. Think about it Laycie. You started this journey just recently; you just passed that test. You just got that job and you're like, yo, I'm OK. Let me go to the next level. Keep persevering. Keep going, don't stop because whoever you're working – Ms. McPherson, put your comment in the comment chat. I want to see who this woman is because she's amazing – (inaudible)

MS. GWYNN: Give her a raise.

MS. MEMINGER: Give her a raise. Whoever is in charge, give her a raise. Ms. McPherson is amazing. – (inaudible) – you're amazing. Thank you for your work.

Hector, we got you back. What do you want to be when you grow up?

MR. RUIZ: Sorry, you lost me there a little bit. I want to be a cardiothoracic surgeon specializing in pediatrics. I want to work with kids. Also I'm currently doing the National Guard so I want to be able to work with the National Guard, join the army with them and then work as a doctor for them in the future. I'm currently taking my bachelor's in biology with a concentration of biomedical sciences and was just the beginning of my journey, but I would love to work with kids in surgery. Just like Laycie, I think surgery is awesome; I think it's cool.

MS. MEMINGER: I am so impressed, Hector. You are a community leader; you are a servant, you volunteer, and you want to serve our country in the National Guard; you want to serve our country as a military service personnel and you want to be a doctor. Dude you're like amazing. All you guys – man, I'm so proud of you. I'm liking tearing up a little. I have a little bit of tears like right here you guys. My makeup is going to start running.

I've got one last question for all five of you as we wrap up this first panel. Is there anything you want to share with us? You guys have told us how to improve our programs; you guys have told us your COVID story; you told us what you want to be when you grow up; you told us what brought you in our doors; you told us what kept you in our doors. And we're all taking notes. I'm going to go around one last time and ask you all is there any last parting words you want to share with us on your journey for us to know about. So Analis, I'm going to start with you.

MS. NITTA: So when I transferred back from the mainland, oh we call the continental U.S. the mainland here, but when I transferred back, I was very emotional; I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. And then this program helped me – helped guide me to like a right path now. So I'm kind of on the right track. I'm happier now. Everything is good. And yeah.

MS. MEMINGER: Yay. We do like this, right? This is what I do, go like this, this is like the greeting. I'm learning. Yes, so you're on the right path. – (inaudible) – right path and your program helped you get there.

Hector, I'm going to come back to you real quickly. Is there any parting words you want to give us in this final seconds of this panel? I think you're on mute, Hector. I know you're saying something important, but I can't hear you.

MR. RUIZ: Sorry about that. What was the question again?

MS. MEMINGER: That's OK. Is there any parting words you want to give us, any last words you want to share with us as we wrap up this first panel?

MR. RUIZ: No. I think you guys are awesome. You guys are great; everything you guys have done for us; you guys have pushed this to another level that we never thought we could have gotten there. I mean you guys encourage us to keep aiming higher and I think that's really great and I just want to thank you guys for everything.

MS. MEMINGER: Thank you Hector. AJ, what about you? Any parting words you want to share with us in this last couple seconds of this panel?

MR. HOLMES: I guess since I started, I've become more comfortable at work. I've learned that I like structure and routine and more frequent contact with the supervisor. I usually prefer jobs where I have to talk to people but I'm also learning how to engage more. I also like filling orders and organizing and working with computers as well. I've learned a lot more about myself.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. That is amazing. Thank you, AJ for sharing and learning more about yourself because that's what we're supposed to do is show us our passions, our goals, what we like and we don't like, and how we can work in uncomfortable spaces and how we can find our comfort in certain spaces. So thank you for sharing your story with us.

Laycie, what about you? Last words, any words you want to share? You've told us how amazing – we already know she's amazing, but you can tell us some more. Go ahead and tell us some more. How amazing is she?

MS. GWYNN: I mean I'll say it 100 times for the rest of my life, before I found this program, I worked a lot of dead-end jobs. I was not a great employee and I was working in the food and beverage industry. I did that since I was 16 years old. I had no idea what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

I had no motivation. I didn't think I would ever be able to go to school because I couldn't afford it. And so when I came into this program and I met Ms. McPherson, she kept me so motivated and she stayed on me because at that time, I had been kicked out of my house. I was sleeping on couches at the beginning of my program. I was just in a really bad place and just her and the program itself gave me something to look forward to. It made me want a future and it made me want to do well for myself so that I could give myself something better.

And without the SC Youth Works program, without Ms. McPherson, I would not be here today talking to you guys and happy. I would still be working a dead-end job somewhere, no idea what I want to do with my life. I'm 24 now. I have a full-time job. I know what I want to do. I'm ready for my career and I will sing the praises of this program forever. Every single person I talk to looking for a job, I'm like, hey go to SC Works, seriously. It's worth it.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Thank you, Laycie. You're the best spokesperson in the world, all you guys are. Tyreke, you got the last word. My entrepreneur, my stockbroker. Come on with it. What are the last words you want to share?

MR. MITCHELL: For everyone even though when things seem hard, you must find the light in the dark times of your life and try not to let the negative things and the struggle affect you too much, even though it is hard. The negative things in your heart will not help you. The more positive thoughts and energy you give out will come back to you with karma. Never let your obstacles defeat.

MS. MEMINGER: I'm going to end it right you. You got it, Tyreke. I just want to have everybody give a shout out to our amazing first panel. We have AJ, Analis, Hector, Laycie, Tyreke. I don't have to say anything else. You just said it for me. Thank you, guys, so much. You're so amazing.

So we have another panel coming, but I want everybody to give you shout outs in the chat. You guys I am so impressed and so proud to work for the US Department of Labor, Division of Youth Services and to serve you all in my role. You guys are amazing. Keep it up. Keep me posted. You guys have my email. You have our emails; we expect to hear from you guys; expect to hear from your programs and if you ever need any resources, please keep us posted. We are so excited for your future. So excited for you guys to be American citizens and here serving the American public. So thank you guys for all your hard work.

Great. So I think we're getting ready for panel two. I'm so excited. Let's go forward for panel two. And my alarm just went off so I'm right on time. All right. Thank you, Jon, for your support and let me stop – OK, you stop. OK, that was my alarm to stop the thing. So everybody let us get ready for panel two.

So panel two I'm getting my notes out now for the second panel. Don't leave us colleagues. We've got another panel of amazing young people. We have four more amazing young people from around the country. Let's get started. We have Abby out of Colorado, Ryan out of Delaware. We have Tyson out of Washington state and Gloria out of Ohio. Hi, Tyson; hi, Gloria; hi Abby, and I think Ryan we're having computer issues.

RYAN MCCRARY: Yeah, my internet isn't working.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. So we can still hear you. So thank you for that, for giving us that – (inaudible). So how you guys doing today?

TYSON RISTAU: Good.

GLORIA STANFORD: I'm doing good.

ABIGAIL GAUNA: Good.

MS. MEMINGER: Good. You know some of you get the same questions and I'm excited that you guys are with us and giving time from your jobs and your school and your families and you guys have responsibilities to be with us. And I thank you for your time in advance and I'm so excited to again continue to learn from you. So I'm going to start with some of the same initial questions because I want everybody to know how amazing you guys are. I may flip the questions around a little bit. Let me have a little fun today. You know, I got to drink a little water. Hold on a second you guys. Let me get my little throat together.

So Gloria, I'm going to start with you out of Ohio. Give me five words that describe you.

MS. STANFORD: I would say five words that describe myself would be intelligent, determined, enthusiastic; I'm a leader and I'm a hard worker.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Awesome. Good to have you here. Abby, good to have you in your mobile office. Give me five words.

MS. GAUNA: I'm independent; I'm hardworking; I'm a go-getter. I'm a mom. So I have to be all that for him.

MS. MEMINGER: And a bag of potato chips. I'm here for you, Abby. I'm here for you. – (inaudible) – good to have you. Tyson, what about you? Give me five words to describe yourself?

MR. RISTAU: Yes, I am goal-oriented; I'm an entrepreneur, business minded, both photographer and videographer.

MS. MEMINGER: Oh, we got some talent and skills over there. I love it. I love it. Good to have you, Tyson. Good to have you out of Ohio, and of course, Ryan. We're about to hear you again. Give me five words to describe yourself.

MR. MCCRARY: Five words that describe me are dedicated, outgoing, energetic, passionate and caring.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Awesome. So it's good to have you guys with us. It's so exciting to have you guys all over the country, rural areas, urban areas. There's urban areas, big cities and small cities alike. So I'm going to start off to ask you about your programs. And again like the previous panel, we would love to know the city you're from. It gives us more of a context of size, the name of your program and what brought you to that – the program when you were seeking employment or training?

So Abby, I'm going to start with you. Your city, the name of your program and what brought you to the program.

MS. GAUNA: My name is Abigail, but I go by Abby. I'm from Greeley, Colorado. My program is called the Workforce Innovative Opportunity – (inaudible) – program. What brought me to this program was I was a single mom at 18, with a one-and-a-half-year-old son, working two jobs. So I was working at Ross during the day and then I would go work at night cleaning schools as a custodian at night and one of my really close friends saw me struggling because I was trying to figure out my next step. It's hard.

So I knew like I wouldn't be able to afford going to college or anything like that and she told me about this program. So I took a chance, and I was so surprised like it sounded too good to be true. But like right as soon as I talked to Leslie, shout out to her, she's my youth program case manager, I felt like I could do anything, and I could succeed at anything. So now I'm a successful dental assistant and I'm very happy with my career.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome Abby and you're a mommy. You feel awesome, right? Tyson, what about you? Can you give us your city, the name of your program and what brought you to the doors?

MR. RISTAU: Yes, I'm in Spokane, Washington state and my program is Next Generation Zone in Spokane, and I was looking for a job and I just gave them a call and went from there.

MS. MEMINGER: And how did you feel when you walked in those doors?

MR. RISTAU: I – it was very welcoming; it was actually after – right when COVID hit so it was mostly online intake and all that. So it was really different how I did it because it was all online and I actually did an internship with my program with the WIOA as their marketing intern and so I did that for about six months.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. I've got to stop. Tell me about this marketing internship and what did you do?

MR. RISTAU: Yes, so I was a – it was right when COVID happened. They just were trying to find new ways to get the young people more active in their programs. So they started a marketing team, and they had all young adult doing the marketing with the help of the managers and stuff like that. And I got to work on videos for them and campaigns and all the other stuff for them.

MS. MEMINGER: During COVID, like how amazing is that? Is that amazing or what like using your talents, the things that you love to do, your videography, your photography to help your program market to young people to get them the resources. That is exciting. What an interesting way to use your time and talents and for your program to suck that in and use that. I'm going to get back to you on some more of that. I want to learn more about that job.

OK. So with that Ryan, I know I can't see you, but I can hear you. What brought you to the door of your program? What city are you in? What brought you to the door? Tell us a little bit about that?

MR. MCCRARY: Hello, I'm from Wilmington, Delaware. I started this program back in 2016, my freshman year of high school and my guidance counselor put me into the class, and I didn't have any clue of what it was or anything. So like throughout those four years in high school, it really changed like how I look on the world and it really brought me – matured me a lot and brought me closer with people inside a class because it's such a small class. I got to know them really well and it really helped me through high school.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. So you've been with us for a while, which is amazing. You've been with us almost four years. So you – this program has helped you and it involved you and got you more comfortable with working in space. That's what I'm hearing from you. So I look forward to learning a bit more about your experience at the program in a second.

So I'm going to go to Gloria next. Gloria, what about you? What brought you to the door of the program? What city are you in and what's the name of your program?

MS. STANFORD: I'm in Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio. And the program that I was I was – (inaudible) – and it's actually offered in high school so I took it as a senior in high school, which I just graduated this past May.

I actually didn't want to take the class at first because I'm like as a junior, I'm looking like I don't want to do all of that next year because I don't have anything to do my senior year. I just want it to go smooth. I don't want to have to worry about too many classes. But I'm glad I took the class and when I took the class, I fell in love with it. I actually ran for president and I became president of my chapter at my school.

And then I ran for citywide president and I was also president for Jonson, Ohio – (inaudible) – representing my whole state. I won an outstanding student award; I got an eight-piece gift. They granted me a check to my name. I did a lot of things with the program and I actually graduated in 2020, but we didn't get to finish the program all the way because of COVID, so I stopped going to school in March, but that was really the end of it, and I was hurt about that because I had so much – (inaudible) – but it's OK.

MS. MEMINGER: I mean you just gave me 55 things about the program, all leadership, statewide recognition, citywide recognition, program recognition. Tell me about that experience for you and how that makes you feel because that's amazing. You just did a lot in a little bit of time. So you even though you didn't finish the program, you rocked the program. So tell me a little more about that, Gloria.

MS. STANFORD: I was going to say it was overall a great experience because I got to learn how to run different groups of people because – (inaudible) – is student led so the teachers really do the leading, we did. So it was a great opportunity to step up and do something for the people in my school and my community. And also doing the citywide program, it was very helpful because I got to meet different people and make different connections and now, I have like a big source of support behind me. And yeah, it was a great experience.

MS. MEMINGER: Amazing. I love to hear. Thank you for your experience. So really quickly, Gloria, you graduated from the program. Tyson, you're still in the program, correct?

MR. RISTAU: Yes.

MS. MEMINGER: And Tyson, what's the name of your program again? We've got a question in the chat.

MR. RISTAU: Next Generation Zone.

MS. MEMINGER: OK, Next Generation Zone, and Abby, are you still in your program?

MS. GAUNA: I am.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. And Ryan you're still in your program?

MR. MCCRARY: I graduated.

MS. MEMINGER: OK, you graduated. We've got two graduates and to current experience so I'm going to actually move this question up. It's not on your question list. Tell me about what you want to be when you grow up? I'm going to move that up.

Abby, you're a mom. You've got some good experience. You have a good job. If you close your eyes and you had your little one, what do you want to be when you grow up?

MS. GAUNA: I eventually want to get into like assisting in oral surgery. So that's like the removal of wisdom teeth and stuff or eventually maybe ortho, putting on braces. I definitely want to stay in the dental field for sure.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Service, service, service. I love it. I love it. I love it.

Gloria, what about you? When you close your eyes, what do you want to be when you grow up?

MS. STANFORD: I'm not sure because I'm good at a lot of different things.

MS. MEMINGER: I heard that.

MS. STANFORD: – (inaudible) – and I'm currently a freshman in college at the University of Cincinnati, so I just finished my first semester yesterday. I'm still an undecided major, but I'm thinking about declaring my major in organizational leadership. So basically, I'll just be doing more leadership stuff, but I also want to do like a lot of stuff with beauty and then stuff with my community, so I really can't pinpoint what I want to do. I just know –

MS. MEMINGER: You can do it all. How about that? You can just mix that all together and you can do a little bit of this, a little bit of that, a little bit of this, a little bit of that. So Glory, of course you could do all the things and the fact that you're in college and you are going into organizational management and leadership that can show you how to map those things together in a way that you can serve your community. You can go into beauty and fashion. You can lead; you can speak; you can motivate people through these experiences. You're motivating me right now, so you've got a check for that. Check check. So you're good there.

OK Tyson, what do you want to be when you grow up?

MR. RISTAU: For me, I want to be a filmmaker or making-of documentary film – make documentaries and stuff like that and using my videography and creative skills to help different organizations.

MS. MEMINGER: OK. What is your favorite topic in documentary style? What would be some of the documentary titles that you would do?

MR. RISTAU: I am very big on what's going on right now and so doing documentaries about current events, and I am a very big history buff. So I do like all those old western documentaries that talk about the old west and stuff. So just telling about our history and showing us that maybe not be portrayed and doing the underdog, putting the underdog –

MS. MEMINGER: I love it. I love it. I love it. Ryan, did I get to you, what you want to be when you grow up?

MR. MCCRARY: Well while I was in the program, I did internships – (inaudible) – internships of like officers and police officers and stuff but what's going on with all like the riots and everything, really made me change my view. So right now I'm currently in Delaware Keg, and I'm in there for architectural engineering and I plan on like changing communities and neighborhoods around my state and like restructuring them and making them better.

MS. MEMINGER: Give me some examples of how you would make your community better through architecture and engineering.

MR. MCCRARY: Like some houses and like communities are really like ran down and like really old and I just wanted like brighten it up and make it a lot nicer looking and stuff like that.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Vision, I love it, I love it. I'm for affordable housing too. Maybe you could do some affordable housing in your neighborhoods, right? So Habitat for Humanity is a great way to partner and help build houses and help learn about putting back in.

We have a program called YouthBuild where young people learn how to do construction and build homes in much-needed neighborhoods that need those places and they learn how to brighten up those areas so that you're – you're actually speaking our language. So we love to hear from someone who wants to serve and make the community better and that is amazing. And that is a wonderful push to do for you when you grow up.

So let's get to some of these more engaging questions. So the adults, give me some ideas of how we can engage young adults in your program. Now, we talked about in the other panel if you were the program manager, what would you do but also what would you – how would you engage young adults especially during a time during COVID? You know Ryan just brought up the civil unrest that's happening on the western coast. How would you engage young people in these programs? And I'm going to start off with you, Gloria. How would you – what tools would you use or what suggestions would you give to engage young people?

MS. STANFORD: Something I would do would just to get to know my audience and get to know what they're comfortable with, get to know what they're used to, try to get them out of their comfort zone but basically – (inaudible) – because everybody's not the same. You have to learn how to work with different groups of people and I should just say once you get to =learn who you're working with, it becomes easier because you know what to do and how to move.

MS. MEMINGER: What about this? Not just learning your audience you're working with, what about learning the community you work for? How do you feel about that?

MS. STANFORD: Learning your community is important as well because you need to learn the things that need to be fixed, certain things that are problems with people, so you just want to – I don't know, just be involved like don't be distant. So just show that you care and show that you're there for support, show that what your mission is is actually what you stand for and I feel like people will follow you if you have that.

MS. MEMINGER: I love it. I love it. Show them what the mission is and what you stand for and they will follow it. I love it.

Tyson, what about you? What tools or tips would you give to engage young people in the program? And you did it. You were part of the marketing team, so I know you did an amazing job. Share with us what happened there.

MR. RISTAU: Yeah, so how I engaged our young people was we did a lot of Snapchat ads, Facebook ads, Instagram ads and just kind of put yourself in their shoes or look at it through their eyes. What they're seeing, don't presume make presumptions is what I'm trying to say. Just do the communication – with young people, we are online all the time. And so do just the marketing with the online Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn stuff like that.

MS. MEMINGER: So you Tyson did a documentary. You did a documentary right there. You talked about meeting people where they are, showing them from their eyes. So you are definitely using the tools that you got in your internship, your desire, your passion and also just sharing that, you know, knowing your audience as Gloria just said, and meeting people where they are, as Gloria said but also again reaching out to people and not always presumption.

A lot of times with young people, what we do is we presume that we know a young person right? I was a young person a long time ago. So I got to come to you guys to find out how it is to be young person now, right? I was a young person – I'm not going to tell my age but you're absolutely correct. We have to come to you guys to find out what it is like to be a young person and how to help best serve you. So thank you Tyson for sharing that.

What about you, Abby? Tell me a little bit about your tips, tools, resources that you think we should be using to engage young people.

MS. GAUNA: Being pretty young myself, I know that I'm one of those like stubborn people who don't like to reach out for help or ask questions especially when it comes to something like that, I can figure out myself so I feel like I would want to be like how do you say it? Like communicate, like communicating, make that my number one priority and kind of ask them what do you think we could do different to make your experience better?

MS. MEMINGER: Instead of somebody telling you what to do because you said you're headstrong, you're independent, you are leading your household. Instead of somebody telling you what to do, asking you what do you think we can do it so engaging – (inaudible)

MS. GAUNA: Yeah.

MS. MEMINGER: Oh, I like that Abby. I like that. OK, Ryan, what about you? Amy tips, tools you can give us?

MR. MCCRARY: I would try talking to them on like a one-on-one level and contacting them through social media. How do I describe? Like putting ads on social media or talk to them, trying to convince them over social media or act like one-on-one, just conversations. I would also do like surveys and try to get to know them better over social media and like yeah.

MS. MEMINGER: So give me an example of that. So you know, I'm old so I don't know. What's the hot social media now because I – one of the things around here is when we talk about social media, I'm always learning; it's always changing. So right now, Ryan, what's the hot social media and what tools are they using to reach out to you that you think that we can use to reach out to young people?

MR. MCCRARY: Right now the most popular social media is probably TikTok. I would try –

MS. MEMINGER: Those little videos, that's TikTok right? The little videos?

MR. MCCRARY: Yeah. Some video – yeah, something like that.

MS. MEMINGER: (Inaudible) – and I can't remember the city. It was a couple of months ago with HUD, the Housing and Urban Development and they had their young people do TikToks on how to dress for professional wear and they all did TikToks and we got to watch during this presentation a couple of your people's TikToks.

I thought they were very engaging and very successful. I think that you're absolutely correct. Some programs and some public housing authorities, nonprofits are using TikToks. They're TikToks. They're quick. I think they're like 20 seconds or something like that. They have a time limit, right, so they're pretty quick. And they are using it and I think that's a wonderful tool for our audience to know about TikTok and to make those little fun videos on how to get dressed for work or what other topics would you give us to possibly do it took TikTok video on? Ryan?

MR. MCCRARY: You said what would I do it on?

MS. MEMINGER: What topics? What topics would you think would you do TikTok videos on?

MR. MCCRARY: Like how there is always someone to go to the talk or like how there's always like there's always jobs and opportunities for everyone and nobody is alone during this pandemic because everybody is really at home and by themselves. They think that there's more options out there than just sitting at home.

MS. MEMINGER: Thank you Ryan for those ideas. – (inaudible) – start making. So you all are in the program; two graduated; two have not. And I want to hear from you what have you learned from the program? What do you think is the most impactful thing that you have learned from your Workforce program? You guys kind of shared that but I just want more of an emphasis on what you've learned that will impact your future so.

So Gloria, I'm going to start with you. What do you believe you learned -- and you graduated from your program. Congratulations; you graduated; you're in college now. What did you learn from your program that you think is the most impactful for your future?

MS. STANFORD: Everything like building resumes, cover letters, learning how to interview, talking to different people, dressing for success, building a network. Just a lot of things. I feel like the program just helped me boost some of the things that I was already good at it and to help me get on a different path.

So now I'm interested in leadership. Like I always was but I have a lot of skills now since I held leadership positions and I've been talking to people in higher positions and I've been in internships and everything like that. So just getting exposed to the right people and the right information.

MS. MEMINGER: You said a key word there, networking, right? How to make contacts into connections, right? That's one of our favorite words that we say here. You know you meet people but then sometimes we don't know how to make that contact into your network to help you reach out.

So now you're looking for summer jobs I'm sure. You're using your connections to start building your resume up and talk about this leadership. So do you have plans for this summer for a summer job?

MS. STANFORD: Yes.

MS. MEMINGER: Oh, are you going to tell me or are you going to hide it from me?

MS. STANFORD: I'm not sure. I work at – (inaudible) – right now, just like a mediocre job but I just catching a job on campus because right now I'm just trying to focus on school because I am still a freshman. I don't want to overwork myself because I did work a lot in high school. I worked two jobs and it was just crazy.

And with my Gen 1 scholarship, because I'm – (inaudible) – as well, so with my Gen 1 scholarship, I'm only allowed to work a certain amount of hours a week. So for the summer, I think I'm going to work on boasting my own brand and my own business because I want to be my own boss. I don't work for anyone. So that's just what I'm working on for 2021. I'm just trying to fill myself up and get myself ready for the next chapter in my life.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome, Gloria. I'm going to go to Tyson. Tyson, what did you – you learned a lot, Tyson? What did you – what did you get out of the program? You're still in the program, unlike Gloria who is a graduate. You're still in the program. What have you gotten ad you came in right before COVID so last 10 months what have you learned and grabbed out that you think will be lasting and future long?

MR. RISTAU: Yes, so just how to connect with the right professionals around my community, how to present myself, talk professionally. It showed me all the job opportunity in the film industry and the marketing industry in general and so it just showed me all the opportunities that I have.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. Awesome. Awesome. Awesome. Ryan, what about you? What did you take out the program.

MR. MCCRARY: One really big thing that I took out of the program is budgeting. Before I joined the program, I always would spend my money out to eat with my friends, everything, and now I've realized how much money I have to save and like what goes where and where to spend it at. Also building a resume was really helpful. Before that, I did not know how to do a resume or networking and all that.

MS. MEMINGER: Ryan, you said one of my favorite words. One of our 14 program elements that we've added when we reauthorized this act was financial literacy for young people and we work closely with our colleagues throughout the federal government to promote moneysmart.gov and other tools for professionals because you're absolutely correct.

Young people would get a job and spend their entire check and not save, not know about taxes, not know about penalties and health insurance. And I love the fact that you brought that up first because even as adults we struggle with money management. So getting that young, kudos for you. I'm going to be keeping up and you can teach other people how to start young. And once you get that kind of lifestyle in place, it makes it a lot easier.

So I really appreciate you said – we call it financial education and financial literacy at the federal level. It's amazing you brought that up and we really do appreciate you saying that. Budgeting was something that you pulled out of this. When you get a paycheck, you know what to do with it. You know not to go and spend it on stuff, you know, save a little bit, spend a little bit, give a little bit. Amazing, Ryan. Thank you for that.

Abby, what about you? What did you get out of the program?

MS. GAUNA: What I took out the program was kind of how to learn to be professional because I used to go from a working by myself at night to actually learning how to work with other people so that I did get help building my own resume.

So that's a good skill. Also when I went into the program like I didn't think like I was going to be able to succeed because of my situation and something that my life coach like always made me feel was like, it doesn't matter your situation. You can do whatever. She really helped me feel supported and you know it doesn't matter where you come from. You can do anything that you put your mind to.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome. I mean with you having a young one, you know managing time, right? Being able to be home, be able to go to work, be able to get the support you need and to do that and transportation and stuff so I think that all those things seem to be working for you and your benefit and that's amazing, amazing, amazing job Abby.

So I'm going to wrap up this panel shortly. I'm going to ask you all the same question again. Is there any last words you want to share with us through Workforce professionals. We have colleagues around from the federal government on all over the country; they're listening to every word you guys have to say and I'm going to start with Miss Gloria again. Is there any final words you want to share with us before we end panel two?

MS. STANFORD: I just want to say I hope everyone 2021 is better than 2020 and hopefully COVID doesn't last long because I know a lot of us – (inaudible) – the circumstances we've been in because I know I have. I've been slacking but hopefully 2021, I've got a plan to get my stuff together. So best wishes to everyone out there and their families. Hope you all stay safe and have a great New Year.

MS. MEMINGER: Absolutely. What about you, Ryan? Any final words? Any suggestions, tips, tools? Anything you want to share with us?

MR. MCCRARY: I just want to thank you guys for helping me with preparing for the adult world and being ready to go out there after high school and with like what I said with budgeting and helping me network and everything like that. Also with the – (inaudible) – program – the internship that you guys helped me get through this program, and I'm just thankful for everything.

MS. MEMINGER: Awesome, Ryan. I'm looking forward to you doing some amazing things in your community with housing and development and community development.

Abby, what's going on with you? Any last final words for us?

MS. GAUNA: Yeah. I just want to say thank you to everyone who makes the program possible and especially to our youth program managers because just like – (inaudible) – I would not have had the motivation to be where I am today. So I just want to say thank you to everyone.

MS. MEMINGER: Thank you so much. Good luck to you and your little people, your little one.

MS. GAUNA: Thank you.

MS. MEMINGER: Tyson, what about you? You're going to end this out? Any last final words for us?

MR. RISTAU: Yes, I want to thank you and everybody for letting us be on this and just use young adults to market and promote WIOA and the youth programs around the state. Youth of today are the future of tomorrow. Thank you.

MS. MEMINGER: Tyson, I don't have to say nothing else. You just said my last words. Go ahead now. Clap it out for panel two. Yes. You guys are amazing. Thank you, guys, so much.

So we are going to, Jon, if you could bring the PowerPoint back up. We have two more slides. Again, I have tears in my eyes, colleagues. I have tears in my eyes I'm so excited. So before we close out, I'm going to let Evan Rosenberg say a couple of words. Evan is acting as our unit lead here at the Youth Policy Performance Unit. Evan, I turn it over to you at this time.

EVAN ROSENBERG: Thanks Maisha. I've got to say I was blown away by the young people we had. Both panels were amazing. I had really high expectations for today's session and you guys far exceeded my expectations. I mean honestly, I feel so optimistic about the future of our country knowing that we have young people like yourselves out there. You seem so mature and poised and wise and inspirational. So I want to thank you so much for being a part of it.

A couple of things that stood out for me that different people talked about, one is the importance of staff and how much the staff in our programs played a part in your success and I want to recognize staff and particularly point out how important you are to the young people. We appreciate all the work you do, and you make a difference in people's lives so you should know that.

And then the other thing is I think what stood out for me is the young people in our program, you all are our best spokespeople so please get the word out about our programs and what they meant to you so that we can help other young people like yourselves.

I want to thank Maisha. Maisha, you did an amazing job and I think you have a future as a talk show host. Thank you for facilitating. I also want to thank Adrienne Eldridge Bailey behind the scenes. She was the one that put all these panels together and did a ton of outreach to make it happen, so thanks Adrienne.

And then just again thanks to the young people and the WIAO youth programs that serve them. Today is a great reminder of why we all do the work that we do, and I really appreciate it and it was great. So thanks to everybody and I'll turn it back to Jon to close this out.

MS. MEMINGER: Yes, thank you.

MR. VEHLOW: All right. Well, thank you everyone. Oh, sorry, Evan, did you want to say something again?

MR. ROSENBERG: Adrienne or Maisha before we turn to Jon to close out?

MS. MEMINGER: I was going to say thank you guys. I'm honored to serve in this role. Everybody who works with me knows I love my job. I love what I do. And I love serving young people. I see such great – I have such great joy to see our young people succeed and even had their struggles and make it through and I thank all the case managers, program managers, program directors, creators, innovators who are serving our young people on the front line through thick and thin.

Also bringing youth voice into focus. It's very important that we engage our young people. One thing that we did learn, Evan brought it up, is our young people have a voice. They want to help out and they want to be at the table. So make sure that we invite our young people to the table when we're making those decisions for their lives. So I'm just so pleased and so happy and thank you guys for joining us today.

MR. VEHLOW: Well, thank you Maisha for that closing.

(END)