**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Who Should Be At the Table: Considering New Partners and Resources**

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JON VEHLOW: And welcome to "Who's at Your Table? Considering New Partners and Resources." Without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to our moderator, Zodie Makonnen, grant lead, Scaling Apprenticeship through sector-based strategy, Division of Strategic Investment, Employment and Training Administration. Zodie?

ZODIE MAKONNEN: Thank you so much, Jon, and good afternoon, everyone. My name again is Zodie Makonnen. I worked in the Division of Strategic Investments, and as Jon mentioned, I'm the grant lead for the Scaling Apprenticeship grants. I'm very excited to welcome you to our webinar today, "Who Should Be At The Table: Considering New Partners And Resources."

We have a great panel set up for you today. So I'm going to just briefly go over the objectives of our session today. During the session, we'll provide information on Department of Labor and Department of Education programs and resources that support Scaling Apprenticeship grants. We will discover how collaboration between the Department of Labor and Department of Education can create better partnerships for you. We will discuss partnerships that programs can consider to increase their reach to potential apprentices. And finally, we'll learn how Trident Technical College, based in Charlotte and Charleston, South Carolina, built effective partnerships. We're very excited to have you.

With us today, we also have Wanda Monthey, who is Scaling Apprenticeship technical assistance coach and subject matter expert from Manhattan Strategy Group. She will be facilitating our discussion session today. I will now turn it over to Wanda to facilitate our conversation. Wanda?

Wanda Monthey: Thank you, Zodie. Good afternoon, everyone. I want to say exactly what Zodie said. I think we have a fantastic panel today and we're going to introduce them right now because they're the ones you want to hear from.

So our first speaker today will be Megan Baird, who is the deputy director of the division director for the Division of Workforce Operations and Investment in the Office of Apprenticeship. And in this capacity, she leads the Office of Apprenticeship's grants, contract investment efforts, as well as activities to establish partnerships with education and workforce development stakeholders; and partnership efforts that expand youth apprenticeship and diversity, equity and inclusion in apprenticeship.

Prior to this -- and this is a big help for all of us -- is that she was the program manager for the H-1B grant program in the Office of Workforce Investments and supported the agency efforts to provide national leadership oversight, policy guidance, and technical assistance to the public workforce system through several discretionary grants.

Our second speaker today is Robin Utz, from the Department of Education, where she leads a team that promotes programs to transition students into post-secondary education and career success. She oversees the work of the CTE -- the career and technical education -- national objectives at the U.S. Department of Education here in DC.

Robin's professional portfolio includes serving as a CTE state director and education consultant, a teacher, and a student advisor. And she maintains -- she has continued to maintain her teaching license in Kansas and also holds a certificate as a global development facilitator.

Our third presenter today is Mitch Harp, who is the dean of apprenticeship programs at Trident Technical College, as you heard in Charleston, South Carolina. He is responsible for leading a team charged with assisting companies in the development of the U.S. Department of Labor apprenticeship programs in partnership with Trident Technical College, which is a two-year college based in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties in South Carolina.

More than 12,000 students attend TTC, where the college offers more than 150 programs of study. Mitch joined TTC in 1999, where he served in both faculty and leadership positions. The first half of his career was focused on developing training for healthcare organizations within the divisions of continuing education and economic development for the last 12 years. He has created apprenticeships in partnership with more than 200 companies, which includes the region's first high school youth apprenticeship programs in automotive, criminal justice, contract services, engineering services, health care, hospitality, tourism, information technology, and manufacturing; and is considered the model leader for the entire southeastern region of the United States.

So he has extensive experience I think will be very helpful to all of our grantees today in talking about giving -- taking his unique perspective on the challenges and the opportunities that face employers who are seeking alternatives to developing their future workforce. And he's presented -- some of you may have heard him before. I heard him in a presentation; that's why I was I gravitated to him for this session. He's presented locally, statewide, and nationally.

So at this point, I'm going to ask Megan to take the lead in this and talk about what the Department of Labor has to offer in some of the programs that they -- we all feel could be really helpful to you as grantees. So Megan?

MEGAN BAIRD: Thanks and hi, everyone. I'm excited to have the opportunity to talk about apprenticeship efforts and resources coming out of the Department of Labor to help you identify opportunities and partnerships that you should be thinking about leveraging as you continue to implement your Scaling Apprenticeship grants.

And I'm sure everyone is aware that expanding apprenticeships has been and continues to be a key goal for the department, and this slide doesn't touch on every single effort that we are working on but it does give you a high-level overview of where our efforts are around supporting apprenticeship and expansion; and certainly more more to come on this over the next couple of years. But the Office of Apprenticeship, in the office we're based on the national office in DC; we also have regional offices as well, we work in conjunction with state, so both state apprenticeship agency, states and federal state -- and I'm going to touch a little bit more on that later on -- to administer apprenticeship programs.

And in support of for our efforts are focused on a few key function areas. The first, policy and technical assistance to all apprenticeship stakeholders. So this includes working closely with the program office for your grant, the Office of Workforce Investment, Division of Strategic Investments, to support apprenticeship program expansion. We also work with program sponsors, industry employers, intermediaries, community colleges -- anybody that falls in that realm of apprenticeship stakeholder.

We also oversee the registration of federally registered apprenticeship programs. And we lead apprenticeship partners- -- we lead a partnership effort with other federal agencies. You'll hear a little bit about our work with the Department of Education on today's presentation.

And we partner with state apprenticeship agencies, or SAAs, and other key stakeholders. And I know that many of you may already be working with somebody in the national office or maybe you're already in contact with an SAA point of contact or somebody from the federal state to help you register some of your programs or technical assistance.

Investment is another key strategy we use to support a potential expansion, and these investments include both grants and contracts. And I hope that you are looking at this list and if you have not already identified possible investments other than your own to leverage, whether it's accessing resources or partnership opportunities or even best practices, you should certainly think about that after today's discussion. And I'm going to show you how you can actually find out about some of those investments.

Just to make sure I'm going to make this plug once, but I think it applies to everything that we're covering in today's presentation. Pay attention to the unique requirements with each funding opportunity to determine if it is appropriate for your project. And some of the key apprenticeship investments are on the slide; we fund states to their state apprenticeship grants. We have apprenticeship industry intermediaries. Those are contracts that provide technical assistance to the apprenticeship system around registered apprenticeships and they are industry-specific.

We have youth apprenticeship grants. I know that you guys have an interest in connecting to that youth pipeline, whether it's just the youth population or people coming out of the apprenticeship programs. We also have a positive agreement with the American Association of Community College, who is working on expanding community college apprenticeships and other apprenticeship programs as well.

Of course, you all know that each of you are funded investment of which you are one of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, but also supports apprenticeships. And then the Woman in Nontraditional Occupations grants, also known as WANTO, support apprenticeship. We also have some free apprenticeship programs that really support leading to a talent pipeline interested in apprenticeship, and those are YouthBuild programs or Job Corps programs; and again, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Again, this is not an exhaustive list, but it certainly gives you an idea of the high-level lens of investments that are currently out there from the Department of Labor. So I touched a little bit on the Department of Labor's efforts, but I did want to make sure that we are all thinking about the broader realm of apprenticeship stakeholders when thinking about other entities to engage with and possibly bring into your program.

So this slide here, obviously, employers are at the center. It is the center of the registered apprenticeship program. If you don't have an employer to do the registered apprenticeship, you don't have a registered apprenticeship. This includes labor organizations, local education; the K-12 system. I know for you all they may just be a partner for you or something to definitely look at, but make sure you pay attention to who you can and can't support your grant.

Community organizations, foundations, community colleges, state apprenticeship agencies, the workforce system; economic development -- and definitely encourage you, if there are any other partners you're working with that are not included on the slide to please enter those in the chat. This is a general realm of key partners, but certainly it is not an explicit list.

And then continuing to touch on partners, perhaps one of the most important partners other than the employer program sponsor is the national apprenticeship system, who is responsible for registering apprenticeship programs and is a critical point of contact. And as you are working to implement your project, you should definitely be working with the points of contact on this map here.

There's a link on the page as well, shows the breakdown of federal state that the department oversees registration of registered apprenticeship programs and then state apprenticeship agencies. And ultimately, as you work to expand your program, you should be making sure that you're working with these contacts. They help not only register programs; they can give you technical assistance. They can connect you to other efforts going on into the state. So really a critical partner that you should be thinking about if you are not already working with them.

There also will be later on, if you are still a little bit confused about the breakdown of a federal state versus an SAA state, I know we we get that question a lot. It's a hard concept to grasp for those that are a bit newer. One of the slides later in today's presentation for resources does link to a mini-podcast as part of an apprenticeship boot camp series we've done that kind of walks through the apprenticeship system structure.

So now that we know who the partners are, you might be asking yourself, how do I find those partners? And that is a great question. So I've got a couple of resources here for you. The number one resource that I hope you leave here today and immediately go to and play around with is Apprenticeship.gov.

Apprenticeship.gov is the department's one-stop shop for everything apprenticeships. There are lots of resources there. There are fact sheets that helps you sell apprenticeship in a specific industry; talking to employers; to the education system. There's a link to our investment page, not only upcoming opportunities that are posted on Grants.gov, but also abstracts for everything that's been funded from the Department of Labor that support the apprenticeship that you can look at and identify peer opportunities for other partners. There's also a partner finder, and the partner finder is perhaps something that you may be most interested in today, and this partner finder lets you search the realm of apprenticeship partners by industry, by occupation, or by your apprenticeship program.

And it identifies how these partners can help you, and it also lets you find the industry intermediaries -- again, those intermediaries are providing technical assistance to any stakeholder for apprenticeship in a specific industry around registered.

It also includes apprenticeship points of contact, both at the federal state level and at the SAA level. It also links to other federal agency points of contact, employers, workforce system contacts, training providers, and foundations. We're actually going to walk through that in a minute.

And then again, I mentioned this, that the DOL apprenticeship investments, you can access that information from the link on the page from Apprenticeships.gov. It will link you to abstracts for anything that has been funded.

So the partnership finder, again, this is what I just mentioned. I realize the picture on your slide is very small, but I did want to show you that it's a pretty savvy tool. You can really refine your search as much as you are looking for. You can type in, again, a location; you can type in an industry or an occupation; and then you can really narrow down and refine the scope of your search.

Are you looking for a program that already exists that you want to join? Are you looking for help starting a new program or are you looking for funding opportunities? Are you looking for a training provider? There's a lot of ways that you can really narrow the search down to get you to a good list of partnerships to really contract and try to work with as appropriate for your program.

So just to give you a little sneak peek, I did a search in the partnership finder and I believe that I did this search -- I think I did "Virginia" and "IT," and this is just to give you an idea of what type of information comes up that you can leverage. So it brought up under IT and under Virginia -- a list will always start off very first with the federal or the SAA point of contact. So Virginia is an SAA state, so the first thing that comes up is the state apprenticeship agency, and then below that is everything else that falls in the criteria that I search for. It includes sponsors, education partners, industry intermediaries; and it also gives you a little snapshot around how this type of entity can be a resource for you.

The example that's highlighted here is Wireless Infrastructure Association, and the reason that I wanted to highlight that is because that is an industry intermediary. And if you look to the right, it gives you contact information. It gives you context about what they're doing and how they could partner could fit within your program.

And just to make sure that you folks pay attention, again, there's a mix of what these partners can do. So when you're looking at them, if you're looking at other grant investments, you just need to make sure that it aligns with your goals.

So some of these investments, like the industry intermediaries, can only support registered apprenticeship activities. Other efforts are broader. And again, things like the state or the federal contact can certainly help you with anything. So just make sure when you're going through these that you keep in mind that if you're accessing other grants or other contracts, you just need to make sure that they're compatible with what you are doing under your program.

So hopefully this gave you some ideas about resources or partnerships that you might want to think about in regards to helping support your efforts under Scaling Apprenticeship.

And with that, I think I'm going to turn it over to Robin, who is going to walk through the Department of Education resources.

ROBIN UTZ: Thanks, Megan. It is a pleasure to be here. So today marks day 23 for Career and Technical Education month 2021, so happy Career and Technical Education Month to everyone on the line. And also, congratulations to you, those that have grant awards with the Department of Labor and embracing this opportunity to scale apprenticeships in your area, both geographically but also by industry sector. You know, we learn so much from you. We learn about your challenges, your successes, and grant implementation.

And what this does for us, it helps us to write better future grant proposals. So I always appreciate this time together when we're able to talk about grants and implement- -- you know, just the implementation and what's going on across the country.

I work primarily, as Wanda has said, primarily is in career and technical education; specifically, I oversee the national investments and the discretionary grants that are authorized by the Perkins V legislation. And in promoting high quality career and technical education, we encourage paid work-based learning experiences and focus on how we might expand pre-apprenticeship programs in high schools and connect those programs and students to apprenticeship programs.

Something that Wanda didn't mention and I wouldn't expect her to, but on a personal level, apprenticeships hold a very dear heart to me. My son is an apprentice right now, and so I'm watching it from a parent perspective as well as an educator and it's good stuff. So thank you for your important work with apprenticeships and implementing them across the country.

For what I want to talk about today is I want to -- I'm going to add some links here to the chat. But again, I want to emphasize how we how we connect to the CTE programs and the adult program as a strategy to expand this pipeline. And Megan did such a great job about reminding you, those that you have a grant in place or the project directors on the line, of the allowable use of funds under your grant. So, again looking at that legislative authority and making sure that funds are going to the right places in regards to your specific goals for your grant.

But what I want to emphasize again, making those connections and really thinking about who you can partner with, who's at the table to really expand this talent pipeline. So I put some Web links into the chat that you can take a look at, either while I'm talking about this or later on so you have that.

But I want to talk about first -- let me do this. I'm looking at the slides. I'm going to dance all over the slide that's in front of you right now because my slides aren't necessarily in the order I'm going to talk about. But last month, I do want to mention last month we posted the findings from a request for information on expanding work-based learning opportunities for youth. And so later -- it's on slide 23.

It summarizes the barriers that will primarily were career and technical education programs face those barriers for implementing those pre-apprenticeship programs. And I share this with you because this may be a place where you and your local partners could find a common ground and work to overcome those barriers that you may have encountered. I think you're probably going to see some of the same issues maybe that you have experienced as you're working through the implementation of your grants that they -- that our CTE programs also are experiencing.

So just want to bring your attention to the summary. We have the summary for this request for information, talks about how we can, again, expand where the barriers are and kind of where that sweet spot is to improve our system. So I wanted you to know about that particular -- that particular endeavor.

The next one, we're going to go back now. Sorry about this into the slides, but we're OK as I'm watching the slide dance.

But I want to talk to you about the Rethink Adult Education challenge. So that challenge received more than 200 submissions from across the country and we are incredibly impressed about the quality and the diversity of the submissions. The purpose of this project is to help teams further develop and implement their pre-apprenticeship programs. So the Rethink Adult Ed Challenge is one element of our office's broader work equipping educators to ensure adult learner workforce readiness.

So currently right now, this particular challenge is in the incubator stage. So they've narrowed the submissions to 95 submissions and that represents 34 states and two territories. As finalists, they are working, again, to implement pre-apprenticeship programs. I share that with you because I'm confident that some of those 95 submissions are located in your geographic area or working in the same industry sector that you are working on. So you might want to check out that Web link again that you are -- that adult education challenge has the list of the finalists and you can see how close they are to your work.

Another resource I want to share is -- a number of resources, actually, that could be helpful to you -- and that's the CTE.gov website and that's pulled up on the slide deck right now. I want to talk in that on the work-based learning website. We've got resources that range from planning guides for aligning career and technical education programs and apprenticeship programs. We have webinars. We have toolkits; mini-guides on opportunities to connect your secondary students to the apprenticeship programs and all written for educators and employers.

They are also resources that are at state level, regional level and local implementation. So a number of resources on that page. Also showcased are the six states that were grant recipients to the Pathways to STEM apprenticeship grants, and that grant program was an effort to expand and improve the transition from high school students to post-secondary education and employment through apprenticeships in the STEM fields. So those states, it's Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon, Rhode Island and Tennessee. And so again, both at the state level grants, but they're implementing at the local level and trying to expand their apprenticeship programs. So, again, some connections you might want to make.

As I mentioned earlier, part of my work portfolio is helping states implement the Perkins V statute. And so that I've got listed on a slide, the state Perkins V provision -- the new provisions, there we go, thanks -- so through each state, Perkins V state plans, we've been submitted state plans last summer -- they addressed these provisions, which encourages strong collaboration among employers and educators and ties career and technical education programs to that labor market demand. So we're in a place right now where we're excited about expanding pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs and align those to our programs.

You will note they finish up with the resources that I did share today. They include collaboration from our friends at the U.S. Department of Labor. We meet on a regular basis. We share resources with one another, and so that way we're able to share those resources with the state and local recipients and at the local level. We certainly complement one another's work and hopes to build a competitive workforce. So, again, I hope you enjoy those resources and I hope they find that you find them helpful.

MS. MONTHEY: Thank you, Robin and Megan. What we're going to do now is a little different than some of the webinars we've had. We're going to have Robin and Megan talk between themselves about the collaboration that they've done and are doing now. And then after about five minutes of that, we will open it up for questions for a few minutes. We have one question that's in. And so if you have an additional question, please put it in the chat.

But Robin and Megan, take it away. But if you could generally talk to us about the collaboration that you have done and the difference has been making and how it would affect these these grantees that are spread all over the country. Thanks.

MS. BAIRD: Sure, I think the first one that comes to mind to me, one of our key partnership efforts is really around system alignment and focusing on supporting, establishing and building and sustaining partnerships that support alignment of the national workforce system, as well as the education system with the goal of accelerating apprenticeship, adoption, and expansion.

And I think from the Department of Labor perspective, we've done this through some investment opportunities that kind of really drive that I think -- and Robin might have thought this, too -- I get a comment a lot from from the workforce system saying I just wish we worked better or closer together with the education system. And we certainly do some of that more behind the scenes working together on technical assistance to programs out there. But it is something that over the last year or two has been and will continue to really be a push from the federal government is to really support the alignment of the two systems to really better integrate and better serve customers.

MS. UTZ: Completely agree. Yes, Megan, you know, and again, we talk to employers, we talk to educators and people within the system, and some of the questions we get a lot is, well, who do I contact? And so that's what we were about, the connectors to really help people partner in their local -- in their local area.

MS. BAIRD: I think we're very aware of trying to model that behavior at the federal level, because how can we expect you all to do something where we're not doing it ourselves? I think that's something I always keep in mind, and I think, too, it crosses over.

I think that there -- you guys have a lot of questions or interest in connecting with the youth population as a talent pipeline for you and not something to that both Labor and Education work on is the youth population, whether it's just youth coming into apprenticeship or they're coming from a pre-apprenticeship program, enter into apprenticeship. That's certainly something that we hope to see that -- improve that bridge between pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeship programs.

I know that your grants, you've got certainly some age restrictions and some in-school restrictions that you need to be aware of. But it's a great partner to really think through, to have kind of on board and a future for you as individuals are coming out of high school or apprenticeship programs and they're kind of looking for their next move and really seeing if apprenticeship is that right fit for you.

We've also supported that with system investments and we've done a lot of work around the youth population, too. We've done some partnerships with Scholastics and those resources are actually focused on apprenticeships. I'd encourage you to look at that, gets to a bit of a younger audience, but help really identify -- if you are with the education system, how you might want to be talking about them so that they're starting to work on that pipeline to eventually and hopefully feed into your program.

MS. UTZ: And Megan, I think about, you know, the graphic that you shouldn't have employers being the center of that hub or the spokes around that wheel. And so, I mean, so right with that. Do you -- are there any unusual suspects that we can think about that can help with implementation of apprenticeships that maybe just isn't the first go-to? Out of the ordinary; can you think of any?

MS. BAIRS: Yeah. Any of those, I would say they're not out of the ordinary to me. I would say maybe for folks here, economic development agencies is a good partner. I think often they're not included because they're not an employer. They're not hiring anybody. But especially when you're thinking about forecasting longer-term in-demand occupations they're a great partner there.

They often have their hands in a pot or they're involved with a variety of other stakeholders that can help bring in; they have access to data you might be looking for. That's one that I see at least likely involved in a lot of partnerships, but really has a value out there. So definitely encourage folks to look at that.

And I want to say, unfortunately, by -- the workforce system. I think they're they're really underutilized in a lot of apprenticeship efforts and they have a lot to bring to that table and especially around that recruitment piece, helping talk to employers. It's a resource that I think lots of folks are working with them, but maybe not fully utilizing a lot of the skill sets that they have.

MS. UTZ: Agreed. Good point. Another group that I think of, especially in rural areas, when we think about how to connect to the schools and to younger students, is the school board members and the school board association. So I always think about -- while we think about the superintendents and the teachers, there's that school board association at the state level that can probably help make connections as well. The school board members are there for community expansion and community planning.

MS. BAIRD: Right, and I would say that, you know, we don't have a lot to share right now on upcoming teacher envisioning around a partnership as we move forward yet. But the writing around youth apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship, it's been something we've been promoting for the last year or two and it does not appear to be going away. If anything, it's continuing to grow. So really thinking through that pipeline and how you can connect to it directly through the grants or as another partner decided to grant. And as Robin mentioned, those are a really great partner to have.

And even thinking about -- guidance counselors, really, who you should be selling apprenticeship to. It's not just some of the school system; it also might be some of the parents; and really kind of thinking through how that aligns with your program down the road to make sure that what you're developing is really a viable pipeline to that population.

And generally, when we talk about youth apprenticeship possibilities in the department, it's not different than any other apprenticeship program. There are special or different things about it. It's just sometimes the programs are adapted to sometimes fit the unique criteria that a younger apprentice may need. Sometimes they do involve high school apprenticeship, but in general, we talk about youth apprenticeship as an apprenticeship program that's just specifically targeted to a younger population.

MS. MONTHEY: Thanks, guys, Megan and Robin. I'm going to kind of move us to the next stage. We have one question and before I ask Megan the question or ask for a comment back, it's more that I wanted to let everybody know that at the end of this slide deck, there is going there is a list of resources and ideas. We've decided to hold those to the end this time.

The other thing is, is that we will be able to stay online for 10 minutes or so in order for people's questions don't get answered or they have another they want to know something more about from Robin, Megan, or Mitch.

So I'm going to ask Megan this question that's come through because we've had one response to it. But one of the issues that has come up is the length of time that it takes to get a registered apprenticeship program approved by the U.S. DOL, and one person have been working on it for about nine months, it's been going through. I don't think this is unique. I know it's not unique to the U.S. DOL, but also can take place in some states. So, Megan, is there any effort because of this project, especially in the performance requirements of DOL, trying to speed some of that up so that they can get going on the implementation of their program?

MS. BAIRD: Yeah. And I can speak very, very kind of broadly to that question. Yeah, we are always trying to help speed up the process for registration. There is a few -- I don't have the specifics for your scenario, but there are a few things that go into that.

Is it a federal state; is it an SAA; is it a national program or is it a brand new apprenticeship or are you leveraging existing one? So there's a lot that can go into that.

I would say in general the Department is working on -- we call it the modernization effort. We certainly are working to kind of streamline and help improve the timeline on these efforts. And I'm not sure if you've been able to check in, if it's an SAA or federal on the status of that. But certainly if you've got concerns, shoot me an email and I can look a little bit more into it, but it varies greatly.

I've seen some some numbers from an evaluation that's going on for another apprenticeship program, and there's so many factors that go into that time period, but definitely something that we are always trying to improve upon and keep the quality standards of a registered program, but also remove as many barriers as possible to getting those into place, because that is the only way that we can expand apprenticeship.

MS. MONTHEY: I'd like to turn it over to Mitch now, who, as I said earlier, is responsible for managing a model apprenticeship program across three counties and is really been held up as a model, even internationally. So, Mitch, I will turn it over to you now.

MITCH HARP: Okay. Thank you so much. Yeah. You know, I work for Trident Technical College. We're a community college here in Charleston, South Carolina -- actually, we call it technical colleges in South Carolina. And we're part of a South Carolina system that actually employs 16 technical colleges in strategic areas across the state.

My my hope today really is to give you sort of an overview of the apprenticeship office -- or now we're called their apprenticeship division because we've grown so much. I'd also like to sort of give you a brief overview of how we're structured. I've heard many community colleges are on the call today, so I thought that would be helpful and also sort of how we operate as an intermediary. You know, it took us a while to figure that out, believe it or not, and you'll understand when we go to our presentation; but we are definitely the intermediary here in the Charleston area that helps employers put on our apprenticeship programs.

I'm also going to go over sort of a little history lesson of our first sector partnership, which got us involved and understanding the value of partnerships and growing apprenticeships; and also how it led to what I call "untraditional partners," some of the economic development folks you heard about a little earlier, which has helped this exploding growth. And finally, I'd like to go over some lessons for sustaining the apprenticeship programs and sort of things that we've learned over the years to sort of help us continue on helping our employers.

To give you a little history lesson in terms of how the apprenticeship office was developed in Charleston at Trident Technical College, our president, Dr. Mary Thornley, was approached by an employer about putting together electrical apprenticeship program that really included credit and noncredit training.

So she pulled together the vice president of continuing education and the dean of manufacturing and asked them to work together collectively to put together this program on. It was a very successful first attempt at doing an apprenticeship program. And from that, the dean of manufacturing saw an opportunity to actually engage more closely with employers and grow her program, so she asked to continue it and try to help expand it.

From that point what happened was she saw the growth was there and was really real. So she asked the president to to create the Office of Apprenticeship program, where we hired one individual to actually get the program office off the floor. And the purpose really of the office was very simple. It was to develop employer partnerships for the development of U.S. DOL apprenticeship programs. We were basically designed to serve as a liaison and support to local stakeholders. Again, we didn't call it an intermediary back then, but what we discovered down the road was that exactly what we were.

You know, our primary purpose really is to go out there, engage with employers, to try to convince them to see the value in our apprenticeship program, whether it be an adult or youth program, and also work with the college in helping grow their workforce.

To give you sort of an overview real quickly on how we're currently starts, again, I am the dean of apprenticeships. When I started back in 2007, I was just the director. It was actually only myself. I always tell people that I'm a salesman. In other words, I go out and sell -- try and set up a college and also sell apprenticeship programs.

But over the last 10 years, we have grown so much that we have a team of people who actually do this. Our purpose is still the same in terms of to provide that service for employers, actually partner with us and grow your program so they can grow their staff. But as you can see, I have two what we call consultants. We divided them up based on industries in terms of they go out and they focus on recruiting employers to partner with the college and also help managing those apprenticeship programs as they go.

We also have a coordinator because we as an intermediary, we want our employers -- we want to make it extremely easy for our employers. So when an employer decides to partner, we're trying to set up college and actually do an apprenticeship program. All they have to do is work with us. They don't have to go to any other department at the college. We take care of everything from them in terms of the admissions helping them get registered within the Department of Labor. Any sort of issues that arise throughout their apprenticeship program, we just take care of it all.

If you ever imagine that "easy" button that you see on that commercial, that's exactly what we are. And I think because we make it easy, because we are the intermediary, you'll see the growth that we've had over the years. And also, we also have to use apprenticeship coordinators to sort of put the dotted line out there. They actually don't work for me; they work for another division at the college. But we work hand in hand with them because we depend on them to recruit high school students for our youth programs.

How we operate or what the partnership consultant does, because it is a little unique. The first thing that we do when we go out engage with employers is we educate them on our program. You know, I put the little joke on the slide previously about an internship, but really not many people know what an apprenticeship is, especially employers often say they don't teach that when individuals go to college in our class.

So a lot of times what we do is we educate them on what the apprenticeship is and how we can benefit them, help them grow staff. We also design their apprenticeship program for them. Obviously, we hope that they're going to use the college courses and we actually suggest those courses depending on the occupation they want. We also help them get them registered with the United States Department of Labor.

We are a state that basically embraced it, to be honest here. We actually have a state agency called Apprenticeship Carolina, which is sort of our state intermediary that I work with very, very closely. And because of that, the employers typically have no kickback in terms of whether it should be us or registered. They actually they love it.

With that said, my team, we actually help recruit apprentices, whether it be adults or youth, and we also help implement. And it goes back to when we tell an employer that we're going to partner, once we get the program started, we don't leave them and we actually stay with them and help them conduct the apprenticeship throughout it as an intermediary. And we also show them how to get those natural credentials or degrees or however we have it set up.

So that's really how we operate the program or how we operate here at the community college. Some of our partners, as intermediaries what we found out real first is that although we are salespeople and we do go out and knock on doors to actually get the business, we found it a whole lot easier if you work in collaboration with other agencies in the area. One of them was the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce. When they found out what we were doing in the Charleston area, they embraced it. They asked how we could help. I said you could actually help us spread the word in terms of what we're doing in town and connect employers to us.

It made our job a whole lot easier because now we don't have to do the knocking on doors. Employers call us almost weekly to figure out how we can actually partner. As you can see, we have other partners on there. The number one partner, obviously, is our employers because we don't exist without them. But we also partner with the economic development folks here in town, the higher education folks in terms of adult education; workforce development agencies. But the other area that if you were a community college that you really have to think about is your internal partners.

A lot of people hear a lot of talk about external partners, especially for intermediaries. But as a community college, you got a lot of convincing to do also internally. Again, as I said earlier, not everyone knows what an apprenticeship is. So sometimes when you reach out to internally, you have to convince staff or you have to convince the academic divisions or the noncredit divisions or even the registrar that this is a unique program. So we need to do it just a little bit differently, but it also brings value to the college in terms of enrollment is increased.

How we got started, how we discovered, I guess, initially that partnerships were the way to go is I had -- when I got the job as the director of apprenticeships, I went out and I was talking to several employers and talking to them about the value of apprenticeships and what we needed to actually get going.

And I had an HR manager who said we would love to do this, but we can only send you one or two people, and that wasn't going to work for me. And I really I needed a quorum of something like 16 individuals actually get this program started. And he actually did something that was amazing. He actually reached out to his HR partners with other companies, in other words, his competitors, and said, hey, let's work together to put this program on. It was a great idea and I appreciate all the help that he gave me with it.

But we did put on that first what I call a sector partnership with 10 employers. It was totally industry-driven or as we designed a program the way that they wanted. And it was extremely successful. We actually had, I think, a 91 percent success rate over a three year program to two different groups. The only reason we didn't have a higher number of success is because one of the companies in the partnership, unfortunately went out of business.

So it was something, though, that taught me the value of partnerships, because a couple of years later, that's in 2013, I was approached by one of those similar -- one of those employers who were a part of that adult apprenticeship program that started a partnership and reached out and said they had a new CEO. He was German-born and he wanted to start what he called it, a German-style apprenticeship program, which really what he meant back then was he wanted to start a youth program.

And not knowing -- knowing everything I did about adult apprenticeships, I didn't know much about how to work or how to attract youth. So I reached out to a partner of mine, a colleague of mine. Her name's Melissa Stilwasser here at the college. She was actually back then the director of high school programs. But now -- and I asked her, I said I have this this employer who's wanting to start a youth apprenticeship program with high school students; could she help me? And she made it very easy because she actually went out and recruited all the students for me so I actually didn't have to do that. I could, again, just focus on recruiting employers.

But we also saw the value of getting other entities involved, like the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce I talked about earlier. We have the Rotary; we have the economic development folks. We have all the area high schools -- 26 high schools in the area that actually work hand in hand collectively to put this program on. Our youth program really is designed for 16-, 17-, and 18-year-olds. So we are not only helping young people while they're in high school, but when they graduate, we're helping them get into we call it a youth apprenticeship program. But technically, it's an adult apprenticeship program because they're 18 years old.

As you can see, we started back in 2007 with a simple model of just going out and educating employers on the value of partnering with Trident Technical College and starting U.S. DOL registered apprenticeship programs, and it has just taken off. In 2007, we had about six or seven employers. Right now we have over 200 partners that work with us collectively every year to actually put together apprenticeship programs on. We have large employers with as much as 10,000 employees, but we also have mom and pop companies, and that's also the value of the sector partnership strategies. Although we obviously want the business from the larger employers, we also want to help the mom and pop out who may have lost their experienced person to the larger companies; and through that sector partnership strategy, we're able to do that.

Over time, mainly when we first started out, it was mostly in manufacturing. But as you can see, we work with nine different industries now. One of the things that we focus on in the Charleston area are what we call in-demand occupations. We're not just going to do anything with an apprenticeship. It's got to be tied to an employer.

And as you can see, over time, we went from just working with manufacturing to working with everything from IT, engineering, healthcare, business, HVAC, automotive -- almost anything you can imagine. These are real apprentices that actually have went through the program, have been very successful.

Over time, again, we've expanded into various different occupations, ones that we never even thought we would be doing. Again, when I first started, it was mostly industrial mechanics, electrical; and again, it's expanded into almost anything that you can imagine that is possible here that's in demand in the Charleston area.

Lessons that I've learned for sustaining the apprenticeship program because it's not a -- I didn't want a one-and-done; I wanted a program that could be well known in the Charleston area specifically, even though we're known nationally now was really the key is if you're going to start something like this, and I know that means you've got grants, so you're already looking at it -- first of all, it didn't have to be industry-driven.

I go back to the story I told you about, that the president was approached by industry. I was approached by industry for our youth program. And as an intermediary, my role, again, is to listen to that employer and figure out how we can give them what they want in terms of the apprenticeship program in partnership with the college. The other thing that I learned in terms of sustaining the apprenticeship program for long-term is that intermediary role is vital.

You know, Dr. Thornley is the visionary person that she met with the college for 40 years. She saw the value. She had a division that faced employers. She had a division that actually faced high schools for our programs with the youth. But she knew she needed that that intermediary, that person that could bring all partners together -- sustain the program, considering, developing, whether it be an office or just an individual, it's vital to sustain it.

The other thing that we've learned through time is communication. We have so many partners now, you can imagine it's vital that we communicate. We actually have an impression counsel now with all different partners from the high schools, economic development folks who are employers. We all come together three times a year to discuss how we can improve the program. And we also develop what we call the My Apprentice app. It's an actual app that allows all partners to see and help apprentices be successful in the community and actually in the program itself.

And finally, your community has got to own it. You know, do you want to -- do you want to have a sustainable program? It can't strictly be your program at the college. An example that we do with our youth program is we don't call it the Trident Technical College apprenticeship program. We call it the Charleston Regional and Youth Apprenticeship program, because it is the community. Without the partners involved in our community, it doesn't exist and it won't last forever.

But again, I hope it was something that was useful to learning, how to sort of give you that history and background of how we got started and how we got developed. There is a lot of value in the partnerships if you want to sustain a program over time and not just make it a one-and-done sort of program, but I'd be happy to take any questions, if you have any for that. But other than that, thank you for your time.

MS. MONTHEY: Thank you, Mitch. I have a question to get us started. "Well, it's kind of hard to say how has COVID impacted both your existing programs and enrollment and getting new employers to join on? So how has COVID over the last year had an impact for you?"

MR. HARP: Well, we -- when COVID hit initially, our governor, as with most governors, shut down all of our hotels and restaurant and we are a tourism town and we have a lot of apprenticeships in those areas. So obviously, when the governor made that decision, unfortunately, we did lose a lot of hospitality apprenticeships.

And we did use a few of them, fewer apprenticeships in other industries. But believe it or not, as much of our automotive manufacturing, they slowed down a little bit, but they still continued. But since some of the restrictions have been lifted -- and I guess you could say we've learned how to to operate in this sort of environment -- we do have employers who are coming back now. You know, again, our restaurants are opening up.

So we have been approached. We haven't really recruited any as of yet. That program won't start until August. But a lot of our automotive and HVAC apprenticeships have continued; obviously, with precautions. And again, we did take a slight hit, but we're actually back this year.

Right now, we have about, I want to say, 40 companies who are offering 90 different opportunities this coming year. And we're in the middle of sort of recruiting students and putting them in connection with the employers where these opportunities.

MS. MONTHEY: That's great. I have one last question, and I know we're up on the time, but I have one question. "What do you hear from others who come visit to what are they looking for the most to learn from you? And what are the challenges that they're talking to you about in getting programs going?"

MR. HARP: You know, I think we do have a lot of people who come visit us or at least come talk to us about our programs and trying to figure out, again, that design of how how do we operate? You know, how do you convince employers to actually start a friendship program, especially if you're a community college and you're considering the sort of things.

And we always go back to what I said earlier in terms of intermediaries. It's vital, you know -- vital in terms of, you know -- when I walk into an employer -- you know, everyone's looking for talent. Everyone's looking for individuals. So if I walk in with a solution in terms of how -- you know, I can't give you an experienced individual, but I can show you a way to actually make this happen.

You know, the next thing that pops in their head, especially if it's an HR manager, because we deal with -- that's mostly who we deal with -- is like, I don't have time for this. So if I tell them, look, I'm going to take care of everything for you, I'm going to make this extremely easy and I'm even going to recruit people for you, it's not really a hard decision. Because really with an apprenticeship program, it doesn't -- we're a state college here in South Carolina, so our tuition is really not much. But with an apprenticeship program I tell employers it's OK to actually bring an apprentice on board, maybe at 75 percent of the wage that you might bring on experienced person over that first year.

But also in South Carolina, we have tax credits. So if you can show them how -- it's not really a risk on their part, they'll come on board. And once they come on board, they're sold. I get a lot of repeat business. Probably my biggest challenge is sometimes when I have change in leadership at the company and I get to go back in and convince them that. But really, once we explain the intermediary concept, we sort of show them the resources that we put together over time, sometimes -- we've been very fortunate to help a lot of communities get started.

MS. MONTHEY: "And are you open to some of our grantees contacting you after this and get this out?"

MR. HARP: Absolutely. Absolutely. We do have to help them. We love to help you.

And hopefully when COVID goes away, hopefully one day, come to Charleston. We love you to come to Charleston, too.

But yes, feel free to reach out to me either via email, voice or actually videoconference. I'll be more than happy to introduce you to our team, introduce you to how we do things here in Charleston.

But the one thing that I learned -- actually, I was very fortunate to go on a tour to Germany to learn about their national model; the thing that most impressed me about what they said to me was, look, it doesn't have to be exactly the way that we do it here in Germany, but just get it started.

And that's sort of what we tell communities is, obviously we think our model is good. But if you could just take bits and pieces of it and get a star in your community, that's good, too, because, again, we need more apprenticeships out there. It really does help individuals. It helps companies. I've definitely seen how it's changed the lives of many people.

MS. MONTHEY: Thank you very much. So there's the invitation, and I know that Megan gave you an invitation and I know Robin giving you an invitation to follow up with anybody, any one of the three of them. They both come with -- all three come with an amazing amount of background experience and information and please reach out. It's been a struggle, I know, for a lot of people to get the programs going and reaching out to employers, the next session is going to be on engaging employers, so this will be a good precursor to that.

So thank you, Megan, Robin, and Mitch. You've been wonderful and even more so that you're willing to keep this conversation going individually with our grantees.

So, Zodie?

MS. MAKONNEN: Thank you, Wanda, and I think you've expressed my thanks to the presenters for spending the time to share their expertise and resources.

Thank you, everyone, for taking the time. Like always, if you have any questions, please send them to the Scaling Apprenticeship mailbox. And we look forward to talking to you again very soon on our future webinars.

I hope everyone has a good afternoon. Thank you. Jon?

(END)