**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) New Grantee Orientation**

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*Transcript by*

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JONATHAN VEHLOW: Welcome to the "Senior Community Service Employment Program, New Grantee Orientation." So, without further ado, I'd like to take these up to our moderator, Michi McNeace. Michi, take it away.

MICHI MCNEACE: Thank you, Jon. Good afternoon – good afternoon, everyone, and welcome again to today's SCSEP new grantee orientation. Today, our presenters are going to be Steve Rietzke, who was the division chief for the national – for the Division of National Programs, Tools and Technical Assistance, and Charles Cox, who is the grant officer with the Office of Grant Management. So, we're going to go ahead and get this webinar going, so I will now pass this virtual mike over to Steve.

STEVEN RIETZKE: Great. Thank you, Michi, and welcome and good afternoon or good late morning to all of you. Thanks for joining us today. I hope you're doing well about a week into spring. We're glad to have you with us today. And I'm going to talk a little bit about today's agenda.

I did want to say up front, you know, we're calling this a new grantee orientation, but I did just want to acknowledge, I think a lot of you probably aren't new and have already been orientated in the past, but I think this is really going to be a good refresher on some things that you may know already, some things you might have known but have forgotten about, and just some good, good reminders about some of the basics of SCSEP and how we operate here at ETA.

And for those of you who are new, welcome to all of you. We're helping to cover some good foundational concepts today. And we've got – you know, we've got kind of a full agenda today. Charles and I have a lot of material to go through with you.

If you've got questions along the way, you can go and put those in the chat and definitely feel free to share your comments that way.

We're going to try to answer as many questions as we can during the session. There may be things that you ask about that we won't have at our fingertips or that we don't quite have time to get to. And in those cases, we're going to capture your questions and try to respond to you in subsequent sessions.

Really this orientation we're going to deliver in two separate sessions. Today's day 1. Day 2 is tomorrow, same time, same channel, 1:30 in the afternoon Eastern Time.

And so, we're going to open up today with a welcome to the SCSEP family. We're going to do a little bit of introduction of our SCSEP DOL team in the national and regional offices. Gives you a bit of an overview of the program and talk about our vision for the program and how you fit in. This will, you know, this will somewhat be preaching to the choir, because you all know that stuff pretty well.

And then we're going to look at some of the details of the grant package and answer questions that you might have about what's in the package itself and what those components mean.

We'll talk about the statement of work and sort of the reviews that we've done on that component of your grant package and what that means for you and your project. We'll talk about the communication plan. So obviously, communication is a two-way street and we'll look at how you communicate with us, who you contact with particular kinds of questions, and as well as how we will communicate with you.

And then on day 2, we're going to talk briefly about the DOL performance reporting requirements, the performance measures themselves and the data and performance system that we use to keep track of it all.

We had initially included equitable distribution as part of our day 2 webinar, but just given the amount of content and detail involved there, we've actually scheduled a third day.

And I – you know what, DOL team, correct me if this is wrong. I think the day was originally going to be April 1st, which is this Thursday, but I think it's now scheduled for April 8th. And I think that'll pop up on the slide later in the presentation.

And so – sorry, go ahead. OK. I'll keep going.

So, you know, I also just want to say up front, I think our interest is really in helping to provide you with the support you need to be successful. And so we're going to talk about the types of technical assistance that are available, who you want to contact when you need help. And we'll wrap up with some discussion of next steps. What do you do after this?

If we go to the next slide, let's learn a little bit about who you are so we can connect a little bit virtually. If you could go in the chat feature of the virtual interface, we're looking for your name., where are you located, what's the name of your organization? How many states do you, or how many states does your organization operate in SCSEP in? And most importantly, are you a DC superhero fan or a Marvel superhero fan?

So, throughout the session you'll have a number of opportunities to give feedback either over the phone or in the chat. And when you ask or answer questions, if you could copy that information into the chat with window or introduce yourself so that we can follow up with you later. We'll be keeping a record of the chat so that we know sort of who said what here and we can follow up with you if we need to.

So, go ahead and enter that information in in the chat now. And I thought about this a little bit before the session, DC versus Marvel. And I mean, I guess I have – I maybe have to go with DC. Like, as a kid I was definitely like a bigger fan of superhero – or Superman and Batman. So, I guess if I have to pick, I'll go with DC. That might be a controversial choice, I don't know.

MS. MCNEACE: It is controversial, Steve. This is Michi, I go with Marvel all day. The Avengers.

MR. RIETZKE: Fair enough. I see people typing, and thank you for putting those introductions in. For the sake of time, I think I'll keep moving, but please keep typing your information in. And again, welcome to all of you.

Let's look at the map of where SCSEP operates. SCSEP, essentially is in every state and U.S. territory. As you all know, national grantees may operate in multiple states, and, you know, as well as in states where state grantees are operating within their state, and in most in most cases, they've got a national grantee counterpart or in some cases more than one, depending on the size of the state.

It happens that Puerto Rico is the only territory with national grantees operating, with national positions authorized. And we've got two national organizations operating there. And as well as operations in American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands. There are three states that don't have national grantee positions, in Alaska, Delaware and Hawaii. And really all these positions are dictated by the administrative formula that we use to allocate SCSEP slots across the country.

If we go to next slide – I can hit the button. I think someone else hit the button too. There.

Let's talk a little bit about the DOL team that we've got on our side.

It does seem like Marvel is outnumbering DC, by the way, but I see a few DC fans.

And so, in the national office, your – basically your support team includes staff of the Office of Grants Management, or OGM, the Office of Workforce Investment, or OWI. And Charles sits in the Office of Grants Management. He's the grant officer.

I sit in the office of workforce investment. I'm the division chief for what we tend to refer to as the program office. And then the – obviously your federal project officer in the regional office is kind of your key day-to-day point of contact. And we'll talk more about that a little bit later in the presentation.

The other entity listed on here is the Chief Evaluation Office, which depending on what's going on at any given time, they may get involved with a particular program in the research and evaluation and analysis kind of work that they do here at the department.

And then obviously, in the program office, we are lucky to have the additional support for the program and for the technical assistance that we deliver from the national office via our partners at ToTech and BCT. And a number of those folks are listening in on the line here today, and I think most of you are probably very familiar with the folks in those organizations already. But if you're not, I think you'll get to know them a bit better as time goes on in your project.

Going to the slide about your federal project officer, I mentioned a minute ago that you have a federal project officer who's based in your region and you can see how the regions are divied up on the slide here. I would just note that the configuration of the regions has been updated a bit since this slide was developed, just in the sense that regions 4 and 6 now essentially operate as like one big region. And regions 1 and 2 operate as one big region as well.

So, we tend to refer to those as the northeast region and then the west, the great western region. I'm not sure what the official name is, but those are kind of how the regions are configured now. And basically, what that means is that the regional administrator who sits in Dallas has responsibility for that entire orange and blue section. And the regional administrator who sits in Philadelphia has responsibility for the purple and the green. So that's just kind of an FYI.

Your federal project officer themselves should be identified in your grant package. And really, the role of your FPO is to assist you and serve as a resource on all grant-related matters. So, they're going to be your primary point of contact for technical matters related to the grant, they're the person that you're going to have the most frequent and the most direct contact with. And they're responsible for providing what we call compliance assistance, so helping you to stay within bounds in your grant and comply with the terms and conditions of your award.

They conduct oversight and review of grant performance. So, some of that comes in the form of periodic grant monitoring. And they help to deliver or arrange technical assistance to assist you in reaching your outcome goals and to assist you in, again, complying with the grant terms and conditions. We know that there's kind of a lot of strings attached when you take a federal award and there's a lot to keep track of.

And so, your federal project officer is a key person who's helping you keep track of that stuff and make sure that you stay in alignment with the rules and the terms and conditions of your award.

And so, if it's not obvious already that your FPO really is the single most important person that you're going to meet during your period performance, and they really play a critical role in the success of your program. So that's a little bit about your FPO.

Moving on to the Office of Grants Management. So, when we talk about OGM, generally, we're talking about the national Office of Grants Management, and so that's where Charles sits. They're responsible for running the grant competition. They're responsible for making selections for awards.

And so really, Charles, that responsibility falls on Charles specifically. You'll see his actual signature on your on your grant agreements.

And then after the grants are awarded, all the official grant documents are maintained in the grants office. There's also a regional grant officer who can approve certain budget modifications and equipment purchases for pieces of equipment that are over 5,000 dollars.

The national grant officer is the only one who can approve changes to the grant agreement itself, so things like more complicated modifications like statement of work changes, changes in signatory, changes to the indirect cost rate agreement. And other staff in OGM help to provide guidance on particular policy issues and training on the fiscal and administrative requirements of the grant. So, they own a lot of the training that we do on kind of the nitty-gritty of the uniform guidance and the kind of fiscal and administrative stuff that you have to do, you know, at the same time as you're executing the programmatic aspects of your project.

Let's talk a little bit about the national program office team. So, again, I mentioned we sat in the Office of Workforce Investment. In particular, I'm the division chief for a division called the Division of National Programs, Tools and Technical Assistance. And then we have four different units within our division. The older workers unit being one of those units and really they serve as the program office for SCSEP.

So, I keep using that term program office. What do I what I mean by that? Essentially, we support the FPOs, we support other ETA staff that are involved in your grant. We help to provide policy clarification and issue guidance on SCSEP. And we have to provide and oversee technical assistance for the program.

You know, part of that is kind of general like today, where we're giving everybody kind of a baseline level of knowledge about SCSEP, and part of it is really providing customized technical assistance to particular grantees that – where they may need help to address specific aspects of the grant, in addition to that technical assistance, or TA, as we often call it, for short.

We also provide grantee training to SCSEP directors when your FPO requests it. So, if your project has a new director coming in to provide leadership for the project, we do some training to help get folks up to speed quickly and to help – really to help disseminate promising practices that we've seen over the years. So definitely take advantage of that if you're in need of that kind of training. And if you are, you should go through your FPO and they'll submit that request to an email address that we maintain called SCSEP technical assistance at DOL.gov.

Another role for us in the program office is performance management. So, as I think most of you already know, we work with you to collect and assess performance data that you report through your quarterly reports. And, you know, we also work with our Office of Policy Development and Research closely on performance issues. They have a performance unit that kind of handles a lot of crosscutting performance issues and things like that.

And I want to just say that the data you report, which I know is a lot of work and is kind of an additional task on top of the difficult tasks you already have in serving folks and really paying attention to their needs, but the data that you report is particularly important because there's a lot of interested stakeholders, including the Whitehouse, the Office of Management and Budget, the government accountability office, and other agencies who are interested in how the program is performing, what kind of return on investment we're seeing from an appropriations standpoint when Congress gives money for the program, how is that translating into real world outcomes? And so, like I said, I know the sort of data collection and reporting is a lot of work, but ultimately that's translating into heightened knowledge about the program and about how it performs.

And again, that kind of return on investment in terms of the outcomes that we're getting for the dollars that the taxpayers are spending.

And then we will periodically request some additional information about your grant outcomes as needed if we are on the hook for a report to Congress. We appreciate your timely responses to requests like that.

And finally, the program staff – the program office staff for SCSEP are responsible for reviewing grant requests like optional special requests, whether those come in through our annual grant process or potentially in between annual cycles, as a grant modification.

OK. If we go to the next slide, this is a little bit about the Chief Evaluation Office. I mentioned, this is kind of a department-level office within the Department of Labor that performs a lot of crosscutting work in terms of managing and implementing DOL's evaluation programs. They're committed to conducting relevant evaluations in an independent and transparent manner to determine successful strategies and improve performance outcomes.

So, these are the evaluation experts, folks who are very steeped in statistics and particular kinds of evaluations to help us in the program office identify what are things that work and what should we – what should we promote more of in our workforce development programs and what might not work so well that we should promote less of, and things like that. So that's a little bit about the Chief Evaluators Office.

Let's pause for a minute for a polling question. And this is where we ask you guys to click in and answer some questions. The question is, besides your FPO, have you interacted with any members of the program office team? A few folks who have, and a few folks who haven't. Who is in the program office, again?

All right, so definitely a lot of folks who haven't had real substantial interaction with program office staff yet, but I know you will over time. And we do – you know, we'll talk a bit later about how we do monthly calls with all the grantees.

And so that's one area where you're going to hear from folks in the program office. All right, I think that's all the answers we're going to get for now. So, thank you for filling that out. And a lot of you have had some interaction, a number of you haven't yet. So, thank you.

So, let's change gears a little bit and talk about just an overview of the grant award and the funding. I know where we're coming off of – we're coming off of a competition year. And so the course of program year 2020 doesn't necessarily look like a "normal year" that that happens in between competitions.

And basically, DOL awarded 21 grants to 19 national nonprofit organizations to provide employment training services across the country. These grants ultimately will support more than about 32,000 participant positions. And these awards provide funding through the end of the program year, or PY2020.

And so generally, when we talk about program year or PY, that runs from July 1st of that year through June 30th of the next year. So, program year 2020 runs from July 1st, 2020, through June 30th of 2021.

In this case, because it was a competition year, we had what we call a transition period, which wound up running from July through December. You know, if you were along for that whole ride, you might remember we actually did that in a couple of different chunks of funding. We had funds for July through October, and then November and December. And then January 1st was the official transfer date. So that's – effectively that's when the new awards took effect. And that's the date that transfers of participants in an area where the grant was changing hands, that's the date that the transfers became effective.

And then essentially the remaining six months of funds through June 30th, 2021, were awarded with the continuation as awarded under the competition.

So I think that's what I wanted finally there.

And let's pause for a minute and just see if folks have any questions before I turn it over to Charles to talk about grants management and the grant agreement and all that good stuff. Any questions that folks want to chime in with at this point about some of the basics I covered up to now?

I see some folks typing. And Jon, Jon Vehlow, I wanted to ask if – are we – are we allowing for folks to chime in on the phone if they want to?

MR. VEHLOW: Hey Steve. As it stands right now, we were just taking questions over the chat, but if they are – (inaudible), then they do have the capacity, but just let me know and then we can put that language into the chat, for how they can stand in line if that's the case.

MR. RIETZKE: Got it. Well, okay, let's say – see, this is a thing I'm supposed to know ahead of time and not ask in the middle of the presentation, but don't hold it against me.

If you do have a question, you can feel free to type in the chat. If you really, really want to say something verbally, let us know. But we can default to the chat if that works for everybody.

I'll give you just a few more seconds to let us know if you have a question and if not, I'll turn it over to Charles. I see one person typing, so I'll give you a minute to finish.

Oh, so the question about the equitable distribution workshop date. That's April 8th and want to know if – there you go, she knew what I was looking for. April 8th, 1:00 - 2:00 Eastern.

OK. I'm not seeing any additional questions coming in right this minute, but certainly if you think of any, go ahead and type them in and we can circle back or whatever we need to do.

So, I will turn it over to Charles Cox now to talk about – to give you an overview of grants management and the grand agreement.

CHARLES COX: Thanks, Steve, I appreciate it.

Hi, everybody, congratulations again on receiving your award. One of the things I really want to say is that you've – all of you competed and you competed hard. You wrote proposals that were tied to the community that you really want to serve, and I just want to say congratulations, I know that it took a lot of effort and you worked hard on developing those proposals.

You certainly made it challenging for the team and the evaluators as they were going through and looking at it. So, know that you won the competition and that your being here is due to the fact, as representative of your hard work, both in developing the proposal and I know going forward, working with that our target population, our older workers.

So, let's get into the meat of what we're going to be talking about. First off, you should have received your grant award letter and you should have received the actual grant agreement with that letter. The award letter contains information about the payment management system, ETA's grantee fiscal reporting system, passwords, PINs for online security when you're accessing your accounts.

You should have also received a copy of the grant handbook. I am going to give you – put in a plug for the handbook right now. That handbook is your best bet for understanding how your grant is going to work, talking about the modification process, talking about the reporting process. It will really help you if you know that document very well in conjunction with your statement of work and your budget. Those three items working together, if you know all of them, you're going to have a successful program.

So, my plug to you is read the grantee handbook, know your statement of work, make sure your staff knows their statement of work, and know your budget. And I would – I want to just say those are key elements that you really need to be focused on.

Now, in terms of the grant award package or the grant agreement, the grant agreement includes the notice of award or what we call the NOA, followed by the conditions of award page. And basically, those conditions of award may include, we need an updated, negotiated cost, a NICRA. You need to address an item on your 424 or your 424(A), those types of things.

So, the grant terms and conditions. The attachments which include the application for federal assistance, which you know as the FS424, your budget, along with the 424(A), the budget narrative, your statement of work, and again, referencing the indirect cost rate agreement.

Question for everybody. Have you reviewed all of the information contained in your grant package? Do you have any questions that we can – you know, regarding the grant package? And I see two people are typing.

No questions and yes, reviewed. That makes me really happy. But I'm happy to answer your questions. And hats off to region 1, you did a training yesterday with all of your grantees. That's terrific.

Now, in terms of the grantee handbook, again, as I gave my little plug earlier, go through that handbook. It will make your life so much easier and it will also help you in your work with your FPO. As someone who's been an FPO, I understand how important it is for the grantees to know about everything in that book, because that will make your life easier as you're going forward in your – in the administration and implementation of your grant.

What I would also do is, don't be afraid to highlight it. Put tabs on it so you can look something up very quickly, and make that probably – along with your statement of work, make that your desk reference in terms of how you operate your grant.

Now, one of the things that we're going to talk about is terms and conditions. Those terms and conditions are really important. And again, you need to get to know them and to review them. The requirements included in your award are the conditions of reward. Like I said earlier, you may need to send – submit a revised 424(A) and a budget narrative.

You may also have additional conditions that address compliance review and will need to provide clarification or submit a modification to your FBO, such as making sure that you have, if it's applicable, a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, making sure that it's up to date, so that during the life of the grant, if you are going to be claiming indirect cost rates, that you've got a current one so that it doesn't – at the end of your grants period of performance, oh, wait a minute, we didn't have a, you know, a current indirect cost rate agreement. That means you may lose out on being able to claim those indirect cost rates.

So, it's important that you stay on top of those things and submit timely updates to your FPO so that they can be modified to your grant agreement.

Now, then, one of the things that we also want to talk about are the key systems, so I want to make sure everybody has access to the payment management system, the grantee reporting system and the workforce integrated performance system, otherwise known as WIPS.

Has everyone received your PINs, have you been able to access those reporting systems? OK. Thank you, but that's going to, you know, that's going to be one of those things where you do – you will ultimately get to use it, but thank you for that quick reminder. Appreciate it.

And, as an FPO, I remember having to review the quarterly financial reports, or the QFR. You will be using the 9130 and each of you will be submitting a quarterly financial report due – and this is important – due no later than 45 days after the end of the quarter. So, if the quarter ends on December 31st, that means that on January – excuse me, February 14th, you need to submit your report for the quarter ending 12/31. And it's important that you do submit those in a timely manner.

And if you have questions, please talk to your FPO. They will be able to answer your question about – or questions about the financial reports. Now, please remember that the 9130, again, is separate from performance reporting.

Now, I know this is going to seem strange that we're talking about this already, but since SCSEP grants are done on an annual basis, you're going to be submitting a final financial report after the quarter ending June 30th, 2021.

So, your financial report, your final financial report is due within 45 days of the expiration of your grant or the end of the quarter in which you expended all remaining funds. Following the same submission schedule as all other previously quarterly financial reports for your grant, a close out financial report or a close out 9130 is also required. This is a separate document from the final financial report 9130 and is due within 90 calendar days of the expiration of your grant.

So, for additional information, you need to visit the grant closeout web page. And you will see that information on this slide, on the final report slide.

And we'll get – let me just go through those key dates for you. So, the first quarterly narrative report, which was due November 14th, we don't have to worry about that since you've already done that. But the June 30th is the grant and date.

So, for your upcoming reporting period, tomorrow is March 31st, so the quarter will be ending March 31st. Your report, your quarterly report is going to be due May 15th. Your April to June report for the quarter ending June 30th will be due August 14th.

And now we get to the really fun part, modifications. Just so that we know, so that we can be up front with everybody, modifying a grant can take between 30 and 60 days to complete and requested changes cannot be implemented until the final approval from myself or a regional grant officer, as appropriate.

And what this – this section will do, is help you to understand the basic steps behind a grant modification. When you submit a modification, you should draft a letter of request addressed to the grant officer. Your letter should be written on your organization's letterhead and included – sorry, I meant to advance the slide. Apologize.

The letter should be written on your organization's letterhead and include the modification type, whether it be a statement of work, a change in signatory, negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, etc. The grant name, the grant number and a justification for the – for the requested modification. This is especially true if you're going to be making a change to your statement of work.

Your FPO will review the letter and provide feedback, if needed. A final letter signed by your signatory should be submitted to your FPO, who will then forward it to me, the grant officer. There is more detailed information about submitting a modification in your grantee handbook, so please use that as a guide when submitting your modifications. That – you know, if you follow that, it will make the modification process both for yourself and your FPO very easy.

Now, when we get the modification request, or rather, when your FPO gets the modification request, they will be the first to review it. They will provide feedback on your request letter and then submit it to the regional grant officer for approval if it is a simple budget modification or equipment purchase, over $5,000.

If it is a more complicated modification, your FPO will send it to the national grant officer for final review and approval after the regional management team provides their review and their okay.

Statement of work changes may also or will also require review from the program office and it will require their concurrence. Your FPO will send these requests to the program office for review. When the entire package is put together and assembled, it will be submitted to the national office, and at that point we will review it. And if we have any questions, we'll get with the program office who will in turn contact the FPO. If there are no additional questions and everything looks good, I will go ahead and sign the modification. And at that point, it will be transmitted not just to you, but also to the FPO so that they have a record that the modification has been approved and the request is now closed.

And I know we went through that fairly quickly. So does anyone have any questions?

MR. RIETZKE: Charles, while people are pondering whether they have additional questions or not, I did see a couple questions about WIPS, specifically. And I – you know, I could be wrong, but I don't think – and I see our folks are confirming this in our behind-the-scenes chat.

I don't think that you are accessing WIPS as a system directly at this point. Obviously, you're still continuing to enter a lot of data and into SPARC. And I think the slide Charles went over that implied direct WIP access. I think really the point there was that there's some level of data connectivity that we're establishing on the back end between the SCSEP system where you're entering data and WIPS as our reporting system. But if you – I don't think that you're missing a specific WIP, that's like login ID or something.

MR. COX: Right. We should have corrected that.

MR. RIETZKE: Got it. Was somebody else about to jump in? OK.

I think we get – I think, Steve, you get to take it back now.

MR. RIETZKE: Yeah, I don't see any questions. So, thank you, Charles. Either you confused everybody or it was clear enough that they don't have any questions. Thank you.

And I would just comment too, that we work very closely here in the program office with the Office of Grants Management. They're kind of really integral partners with us, in SCSEP. And we you know, I talked to Charles, it seems like a zillion times a week. So, we really appreciate the partnership with the Office of Grants Management.

And Charles, you and I actually go kind of way back. I think we sat two or three cubicles away from each other way back in 2008 or so. So, it's great to have you in the SCSEP national office universe now.

Well, let's talk about the purpose of SCSEP a bit. And in this section, I'm going to give you a bit of an overview of the program. Now, if you don't know some of these basics, you're either super brand new or – maybe that's the only option, because otherwise I think you are going to know this. And like I said, I'm going to preach to the choir a little bit. But I think it's a good refresher to go back to some of those basics.

And so, let's start like way up at the top. What's the purpose of SCSEP anyway? And so we've got highlighted here a few different purposes, really. And SCSEP is interesting in the sense that the statute actually provides multiple purposes for the program. And that's kind of evident in the sense that you've got a lot of folks who are earning a wage as they're participating in community service and getting to contribute to their community and getting, really getting support in their own individual economic self-sufficiency.

And at the same time, you're really preparing those participants to move beyond the community service assignment and into more permanent employment, whether that's in the public or nonprofit sector or the private sector.

And so, this slide gives you that fostering individual economic self-sufficiency as one of our key purposes, but also promoting employment in the form of unsubsidized employment and placement of participants once they go – once they get this training and experience under their belt within SCSEP.

And obviously the folks that you're serving are low-income older individuals. They're seeking to enter or reenter the workforce. And in terms of these community service assignments, it's generally, part-time work experience in community service assignments in host agencies. And so, like I said, they're getting to contribute to the to the community and foster their own economic self-sufficiency at the same time.

Now, I know in the actual FLA, the competitive announcement for these grant awards, we emphasize a bit, the unsubsidized employment goal, and particularly in the introductory sessions of that funding opportunity announcement, I think we recognized that SCSEP participants have sort of a broad range of skill sets and interests and barriers to employment, and they have their own sort of individualized goals.

And what we try to encourage in this funding announcement was for grantees to think about what approach might we take in order to enable a higher portion of SCSEP participants to achieve that goal of unsubsidized employment. And we kind of expressed our interest in proposals for innovative, holistic solutions that address the needs of SCSEP participants who have significant barriers to employment.

So kind of what do you need to do to assess where people are at? What's their starting point? What kinds of goals should be baked into their individual employment plans? And what kinds of barriers do they have? Is it a disability or do they have limited English proficiency? Do they have low literacy? And what kinds of strategies can you take to assist those participants in order to address those barriers and make them more employment ready once they've gotten that training and that experience with SCSEP. So I said kind of more than what was on the slide, but hopefully that all that will make sense.

This kind of is a call back to when I was talking about the transition. Let's do a little poll quickly here. In terms of the transition process between July and December of last year, how do you all feel that went? You know, either you didn't have any transition activities to worry about, which made it easy. Maybe you had some minor hiccups, but it went well. You completed it like a champ didn't really have any problems. Maybe you did have some challenges, but you got through it. Maybe you're still in transition. Hopefully not. But if you are and if you if you need a little extra help, you can certainly let us know.

Is seems like we're kind of evenly matched between no transition, minor hiccups, and no problems at all. So that's great. I'm glad nobody had a particularly difficult transition. Couple more folks answering answers here, we'll give them another minute.

So maybe the minor hiccups is the consensus here, but hopefully those all get – got smoothed out and hopefully the, you know, the activity that we carried out through that process from the national office helped you with some of those minor hiccups. That was, you know, I think a good example of the kinds of technical assistance that we try to provide along the way, both in terms of giving overall information and direction broadly to everybody, and then also doing some degree of one-on-one coaching or help or whatever you need to get through a particular issue. So, thank you all for the response there.

So, I mentioned up top, obviously, that the targeted population for SCSEP, or really the folks who are eligible to be served are older adults who are 55 years and older, have a family income of no more than 125 percent of poverty level, and are unemployed. And I – you know, I don't have to tell you that older adults really continue to face challenges due to their age, due to the marketability of their skills in order to compete in the job market.

And just to give you a handful of stats, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, BLS, about 40 percent of people age 55 and older were working or actively looking for work back in 2014. That number, which BLS refers to as labor force participation rate, is expected to increase fastest for the older segments of the population. So most notably, people aged 65 to 74 and 75 and older through 2024.

So, I think part of what we may be seeing there is folks delaying retirement when they feel like they're not quite ready to retire either, because, you know, it's most likely a financial decision, could be a decision that they're just not quite ready to leave the workforce for other reasons, whether that's social or they just don't want to be bored at home.

But that's interesting, an interesting data point and something that I think is relevant for SCSEP.

You know, I see a comment in the chat that the transition might have gone okay, but now, you know, continuing to deal with the new challenges brought on by COVID-19. And I think we haven't dwelled on that in this particular presentation, but that's a good reminder that obviously the impact of this pandemic is still ongoing. It's still challenging.

And we've just crossed over that year mark, in terms of how long we've been in this mode, how long it's been since this was declared a pandemic and a global health emergency.

And you all have really done – have really stepped up and done a ton of work to make sure that your very vulnerable participants didn't sort of fall off and just get cut off from the program, even in circumstances where they weren't able to show up in person because their lives were literally at risk.

And so, thank you for raising that point, because I – we definitely recognize that you're still continuing to grapple with that and that you've got a lot of your creative juices flowing. But it's an ongoing challenge and it's difficult.

I see – while I'm at it, I'll just talk about Pat Elmer's question. Do you think that those BLS stats will result in more focus and funding for SCSEP as it's truly needed? You know, I don't have a very good crystal ball and I won't speculate about Congress's appropriation intent, but that's a good question. I think it's something that folks in Congress are grappling with, among a million other things, like how does the population dynamics influence the need for a program like SCSEP?

I – you know, I can't say too much about appropriations or I get myself in trouble from a lobbying standpoint or appropriations standpoint. But it's a good question. I don't have a crystal ball, but hopefully that's one of the factors that would come into play in terms of looking at funding for the program.

If we look at this service delivery model, I think you all know this, but obviously you've got your participants, they're participating in community service assignments in host agencies as key partners in the program.

Hopefully, you're also partnering with the WIOA workforce system entity, so American Job Centers may be a spot where your participants are flowing in and walking in the door initially, and then the aging resources. So other partners, particularly those run out of HHS that are funded under the authority of the Older Americans Act.

And ideally, you know, you're leveraging resources from those entities where their focus may not be employment and training, but they may have other resources that you're able to tap, whether that's other kinds of assistance that you can't pay for with SCSEP, but you can leverage from their fund sources.

So, I've touched on this a little bit already, but in terms of the delivery model, you know SCSEP is a community service and work-based job training program for older Americans. The – again, the Older Americans Act is the authorizing legislation for SCSEP. And kind of the authorizing legislation gives us that authority to run the program. The appropriation each year provides the funding for the program. And again, participants need to be at least 55 years old, unemployed, family income no more than 125 percent.

And then the host agencies that I know you all are familiar with is where a lot of the rubber meets the road. Participants are providing a service to the community in the sense that they are doing community service work and community service activities at nonprofit and public entities.

You know, the program provides over 30 million community service hours. And I think that's probably in a relatively normal year. I know sometimes some of these numbers probably look different over the last year or so, just given how challenging it has been to carry out the normal SCSEP model.

But, you know, over 30 million community service hours to the public through these public and nonprofit agencies. And so, they're gaining skills and they're also giving back to the community. And I mean, that's such a big number, to think that participants under SCSEP are making that kind of a contribution across the whole country in the form of community service is, I think something to be proud of.

And for instance, work about an average of about 20 hours a week and they're paid the highest of federal, the state, or the local minimum wage while they're in that community service assignment training. I know that the minimum wage dynamics kind of complicate the mass of SCSEP and the slots, the number of positions that you're able to support with the program is dependent on kind of what minimum wage you have to pay. And I know that sometimes there can be a minimum wage even at like the city or the county level in addition to that federal and state level.

So, a lot of interesting dynamics there that we try to pay attention to.

And then again, you know, I mentioned this a couple of slides ago, but really what we hope is that the SCSEP training, whether that's formal training opportunities or it's training on the jobs through their community service assignments, is that that training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants.

But when they go through all of that and get those skills under their belt, they're better prepared and more competitive in the job market, more – their employability skills increase.

Looking at the time, I feel like I need to pick up the pace a little bit, so I'm going to do that.

You know, essential partners in the program. I've mentioned a bunch of times already, host agencies, they're serving as that agency who provide the SCSEP participants with the actual hands-on community service assignment training, sort of like an on-the-job training on the – you know, that community service assignment really starts the participants' enrollment and their training activities and provides that opportunity for you all as grantees to pay that participant wages and then do their work in the host agencies.

WIOA partners, again, the workforce development system or the public workforce system, as we as we often refer to it broadly, you know, under WIOA, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, that law really envisioned the involvement of a whole bunch of different partners and included SCSEP as a required One Stop partner and having that American Jobs Center as the sort of focal point for all of the services within the public workforce system, when that's firing on all cylinders, when that's functioning well, it should really give kind of a seamless customer service experience for the person who walks into that AJC.

And ultimately a person might walk in with a couple different problems to solve and it might need a couple different funding streams and programs to coordinate together. And so ideally, that's what happens when somebody walks into an AJC, that they may need some kind of help from vocational rehabilitation.

They may be a good candidate for SCSEP. There may be other services that can be in the mix there and coordinated with the other services that they're getting. And so that's – those are the kinds of dynamics that we hope are unfolding in the public workforce system and the American Job Centers.

Again, I'll recognize that a lot of AJCs physically have been have been closed either intermittently or for long periods during this pandemic. So, I know that that – on a good day, this kind of partnership is hard and requires a lot of – requires a lot of negotiation, requires a lot of like, putting yourself in the other person's shoes, a lot of back and forth. I can imagine that it's certainly no easier in a pandemic when a lot of folks may not even be in the building or you may not even be able to serve participants in person and it's all happening virtually.

So, I just want to recognize that, that I think this is, among so many other challenges that we've encountered due to the pandemic, some of this partner coordination is – has got to be even more challenging in this context.

And then the aging partnerships, I mentioned them just a second ago, so I don't want that too much. But HHS is an administration for community living, oversees a lot of the activity in this realm. And I know, you know, there's a lot of state grantees who are actually entities that are – that fall under this umbrella. Some of the state grantees fall under the workforce system umbrella.

But again, ideally, this is another fund source, set of programs that hopefully you're leveraging in order to provide a more holistic set of services to your participants.

Here's another polling question. Now, this is kind of jumping right into the weeds of your – part of your grant agreement here. And so, the question is, how do you apply the programmatic assurances to your SCSEP operations? And so this – there's sort of a range of answers here. Is it just something that's signed and part of your award package that you might happen to notice if you flip all the way to the back? Or is it something that you're integrating into your standard operating procedures, your contracts with subrecipients, program monitoring, et cetera?

OK. A lot of support for all of the above. That's a good answer.

Sounds like you're all aware that not only do you have these assurances in your grand agreement, but that ideally you're integrating those activities and concepts throughout the work that you do, whether it's with SCSEP recipients or whether it's part of monitoring your subrecipients and in your day-to-day operational procedures.

So we've got we've got 19 to 1. There's actually one person that uses part of our contracts as subrecipients, so that's great too. Thank you for throwing that in.

I'll go to the next slide where we're talking about, you guessed it, the programmatic assurances. So, I'm not going to go through these one by one. We don't have the time to do that anyway. But like I said, it's – this is part of your grant package. You know, if you've been around a while, you know that we make you certify whenever you sign on the dotted line for your next year's funding we require you to certify that you're going to conform to these assurances throughout the period of performance of your grant. And again, we ask that you sign that along with your grant package year to year.

And then, you know, these assurances apply fully to all your subrecipients as well. And when you go through those, it's not like extra stuff that we made up. Really, it's derived from the SCSEP statute and the regulations and any guidance that we might have issued on these particular topics. So, you know, it gives you a number of parameters for a lot of the technical stuff that happens under SCSEP, your interaction with participants, your data collection and reporting, kinds of documentation that's been maintained, et cetera.

So, I'm sure we can do an entire long session on just the programmatic assurances. But for today's purposes, I'm going to move on and we're going to pause for a minute and see, are there any questions at this point? I don't see any questions or comments at this point, but I do see a comment from Chris Garland saying thanks for recognizing efforts of SCSEP grantees during COVID.

And I absolutely agree that you all have stepped up and are doing your best to try and meet the challenge that we're facing right now. Hopefully, we're starting to see some light at the end of this tunnel. But I know that it's not going to be an overnight process for the people to suddenly be vaccinated and run out into the – run out into the streets. But hopefully we're on an upswing and on a good trajectory.

I see one person typing, so I'll give you a second in case it's something we want to pause for.

A question: are the new WIOA requirements for grievance procedures SCSEP needs to incorporate? I have to admit, I think I need to look into that question. I don't know of new grievance procedures. But we can – we'll look into that and see what we can figure out. I don't know that there are any, but that's an interesting question.

So, here's a quick knowledge check. SCSEP does not have any specific cost limitations or requirements. True or false? False is absolutely the correct answer. I don't think we need to dwell on this one too much. If you're not aware that SCSEP has specific cost limitations or requirements, then we might need to talk.

SCSEP has definitely a lot of strings attached in terms of how exactly you can spend the money.

So, let's go to the next slide, and we've highlighted a few of these things. So, this slide is probably a handy reference for some of these cost requirements and limitations. And, really what we're referring to here is the SCSEP final rule at 20 CFR Part 641. And there's kind of a few different categories, right? There's administrative costs, there's programmatic costs.

And the, you know, the statute and the regulations dive into kind of exactly what falls into those categories. In general, the administrative costs have a limitation of no more than 13 and a half percent. This is an area where grantees can request to increase that to no more than 15 percent in accordance with section 870 in this part of the regulations. And then under the CARES Act, there was an opportunity to request to go up to 20 percent.

So, this is an area where we need to do – grantees need to submit a request and receive our approval before you implement increases like that. In terms of programmatic cost, this is the primary kind of function and activities that – the participant wages and fringe benefits are the primary function or activity in this category. And as you all know by now, I'm sure, the minimum expenditure level for participant wages and fringe, PWFB, as we refer to it, is 75 percent of SCSEP funds.

There is an opportunity under section 874 to reduce that to 65 percent in order to provide additional training and supportive services. And we tend to refer to that as an ETFS request.

And collectively, we call these kinds of requests optional special requests and, you know, the SCSEP regulations and the planning team of what we do every year give you more specifics about what those types of requests are and how you submit those for our approval.

Just noticing the time, I'm going to skip this this knowledge check, but I'll just tell you, this is sort of a trick question. All special requests don't require departmental approval. That's false. They do require departmental approval. And that's where – that's the nature of the special request.

So, expanding on these a little bit. I just mentioned some of these, so I won't go into detail. But in addition to the ones I just mentioned on training and administrative costs, there's the potential to request to change your individual durational limit policy or IDL. That gives you an opportunity to potentially extend the durational limit for certain categories of participants. Extension of the average project duration, if you want to utilize on the job experience.

And then there's the potential for cross-border agreements for state grantees who are trying to permit cross-border enrollment and rotation policies. So, again, a lot more detail on this in planning TEGL.

How to submit an OSR: like I said, if this is going to be part of the directions that you'll get soon in the annual grant planning TEGL that we'll publish in the spring. And you can submit these anytime during the program year. One thing to watch out for is that the ATSS, the additional training and supportive services requests needs to be submitted no later than 90 days before the proposed date of implementation. So that's one where we ask that you get it in early and it's not something you do at the end of the program year.

So, I think I've covered the rest of the slide, then I'll move on.

You know what? I'm going to come back to Q&A and just keep moving because we're kind of on the clock here and I don't want to completely run out of time.

Let's talk about communication for a minute. We – your – like I mentioned before, your FPO, your federal project officer, as well as the national program office staff are here to support you. And so, to do that, we've come up with a plan for communication. Identifying a point of contact for your grant is very important. We really recommend that you have at least one primary point of contact, or POC.

And if you need to update this information or should it change, please email your FPO and send a cc: to your national office liaison. That's the person in the national office assigned to your region. And to SCSEP technical assistance at DOL.gov by email. And so, this is the person who's going to get all future communications about training webinars, policy guidance, other kinds of important information as it pertains to the program aspects of your grant awards, and really like the person who we expect to disseminate the information on the back end.

And if you actually do change the signatory on your grant, the authorized representative, that requires a grant modification so that the grant documents can get updated as well.

So, here's the – in broad strokes our communication plan. I mentioned this upfront that your FPO is always your first point of contact. They're person to go to first if you have questions. So if you're the grant lead, the grant point of contact, email your FPO. If you have difficulty accessing the performance reporting system, SPARC, then you can contact the SCSEP help desk at the address there.

If you have questions or difficulty accessing the financial reporting system that's the EBSS help desk. And you know, in terms of why you might contact your FPO, you want clarification of your grant terms, you want to talk about how you might change or do a modification to your children agreement, you might have fiscal questions, performance questions, other kinds of policy questions or technical assistance issues that come up.

In terms of like, how we're going to communicate with you day-to-day, we do a monthly call with just the FPO, so it's like federal folks only. We also do a monthly call with all the grantees.

So, I mentioned those earlier. We'll be sharing updates and talking about opportunities and challenges and really trying to maintain and enhance our collaboration between the program office and the grantees, and kind of keep our finger on the pulse in terms of what's going on out in the field.

And then technical assistance, communication that we might do ongoing. So, on-demand when you need that kind of thing.

I'm really running out of time, aren't I?

I think we have kind of a hard topic, too. So, this is the lightning round.

Technical assistance resources. We've got – there's a DOL ETA page on seniors and that's listed here. And we've got a number of different resources on our DOL ETA website. And actually now it's DOL.gov/agency/ETA, so it's a little different than it used to be.

And then we also have the older workers community of practice on Workforcegps. So, this is kind of the repository for a lot of different kinds of information, a lot of technical assistance resources, like webinars that we've done get archived here, things like that. So definitely check this out if you haven't already. And certainly, if you have suggestions or ideas for kinds of resources that you might want to see, that's great.

And here's the points of contact for your reference. You'll be able to go back to these slides after this session for all this information in one slide.

And further next steps, we've got the session tomorrow talking about performance management, customer satisfaction surveys, technical assistance, et cetera.

And then on April 8th, we're doing an overview of equitable distribution and ED reporting and expectation, things like that.

So, I think that is a wrap. Any quick burning questions, while we have you for the next few seconds? I thank you for sticking with us all the way to the end. Hopefully we did okay taking your questions as we went and you haven't seen them all up to the end. But if you do have them, let us know and you can always email e-mail questions in if you didn't get to discuss it today.

I see maybe one or two people typing, so I'll give you just a second. I see some folks typing. Well, I see a couple thank-yous, so thank you to all of you for tuning in. And hopefully this was a good refresher and maybe you picked up a couple new tidbits, even if you've been around for a while.

But to any new folks, welcome to SCSEP and we look forward to working with you.

And thank you all again for everything that you're doing to support seniors across the country. This is such a hard time just to be a person. And for this population that we all care about, it's especially hard. And we really appreciate all the diligence and the hard work and the creativity from all of you.

So, thank you, and thanks for tuning in today. I'll leave it at that.