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**Transcript of Webinar**

**Statewide Apprenticeship Expansion Strategies and your Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant Funded Annual Report**

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LAURA CASERTANO: With that, let me get myself out of the way. Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's webinar, "Statewide Apprenticeship Expansion Strategies and Your ASE-Funded Annual Report" webinar. I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, James Strait, with the Office of Apprenticeship, the Employment and Training Administration. James, take it away.

JAMES STRAIT: Welcome, everyone, and thank you very much for joining us today as we discuss the annual reports for the ASE grants.

I'm joined today by Gina Wells from Maher & Maher, who will help me provide an overview of the annual reports along with some best practices.

We're also very lucky to have with us some of your fellow grantees who have prepared stellar annual reports in the past and will talk to us about how they made these reports a highly useful tool, Amy Firestone and Chip Fallaw from South Carolina and Helen Carpenter from Colorado. And I'm looking forward to hearing from them later on.

I see that lots of you have said where you're dialing in from. If you haven't yet, we'd love to see what – where you are and where people are coming from. We've got FPOs, coaches, grantees on. So looks like we've got a really good group. Appreciate everybody for being here.

So let's get into our purpose for this webinar. We want to describe statewide apprenticeship expansion strategies and the role that the ASE grants play in advancing expansion goals. We also want to describe the purpose of the ASE annual report, the required elements, and the format for the report.

We want to discuss the strategic role of the ASE annual report and how it would benefit the states. We also will share some examples of ASE annual reports and approaches to writing the report. In addition to these, we also hope to answer any questions you may have about the report, writing it or any of the requirements.

So there are a few requirements for the reports, and let's briefly discuss this.

So this covers a one-year period from July 1st to June 30th of the preceding year. So it would the July 1, 2020 to June 30th, 2021. Grantees have a month from the end of that period to write the report.

The report should include an analysis on the industry sectors and occupations participating in registered apprenticeships, progress against their grant goals, including the outcome numbers, and an update to the work plan to include key goals and milestones for the coming year. It also may go without saying, but for my sake, please also include the grant number in the report itself.

So this does not have to be exclusive to the ASE grant, and it could include all statewide apprenticeship activities and their interrelationship, as well as apprenticeship expansion activities and progress as a whole.

Sometimes it's hard to separate these things out because a lot of your efforts overlap, which was the intent of some of these different grants with the SAE grant and the ASE grant. Their intent is to sort of build off of each other. So we understand that as you report on these and your efforts, there's going to be a lot of overlap in what you're reporting on.

So aside from the required elements, you should feel free to present any other information you think is relevant. We would love to hear about specific program successes or failures and lessons learned from those. Also, any challenges you have faced with employers or participants or even your state government systems, et cetera. You may wish to highlight in the annual report a higher-level view of what you reported on in your quarterly narrative reports.

There's no required template and we haven't provided one. You had flexibility on the design or the structure of your report. It does need to contain an executive summary of page numbers and have a table of contents. You can use the space that you need to tell your story.

On average last year, reports were between 8 and 10 pages, but we understand that some may be shorter or longer, depending on what you want to present or what you don't have to present. If you have report – prepared reports on your ASE grants for state level or other entities, feel free to draw on those reports.

So the ASE annual report serves three primary purposes. The reports help inform national apprenticeship expansion strategy, they support your own strategic planning, and they support your ASE grant management and your collaborative relationship with your FPO and with your coach. So let's talk a little bit more about each of these.

Your annual report gives us insight into the full range of state apprenticeship expansion activity. It's especially helpful to us when you include statewide activity beyond your ASE and your federally funded grants. We love to see what the state is up to, what the workforce agencies are doing and how they're working with other agencies and with the industries.

Information you give us helps us understand how our national expansion efforts are unfolding and what actions we might take to support continued growth of RAPs across the country. Our primary purpose is expansion of registered apprenticeships in general. So anything that's happening in that realm, we are interested in seeing.

It also helps us understand how the grant interacts with other grants or with other efforts and informs the way we structure future funding opportunities. And if you've noticed, as each one of these state expansion grants comes out, it takes on sort of a different – each one of those beasts takes on different characteristics. And the reason for that is because of lessons learned. We see what states need, challenges they've had, and we incorporate that into our conversations as we talk about future funding opportunities.

If there are things that would benefit your apprenticeship expansion effort, this is a great place to communicate your ideas to the national office, to your FPO, to your coach. We can use those ideas in our conversations.

The process of writing these reports also allows you to reflect on your progress and to identify any strengths or areas for growth and improvement, and it can also inform future activities and help align with other state planning activities. We hope that the reports will be useful to you as well and you'll make them useful.

Finally, the report requires you to update your work plan and supports your grant implementation planning for the following year. It also serves as the vehicle for updating your FPO and the Office of Apprenticeship on your project plans for the coming year.

Now, I will turn it over to Gina and our speakers from South Carolina and Colorado to show us what they did for their ASE reports from last year. Gina.

GINA WELLS: Thanks, James. And I can see that we've got a couple of questions rolling in. So we will get to those in a few minutes.

Maher & Maher, the team and your coaches, we had a chance to read your ASE reports from last year, and there were really strong reports written. And it was great to get a chance to see your own reflections on the work you've been doing and the role the ASE grants are playing in your broader state apprenticeship expansion strategies.

We wanted to give you a chance to hear from two states who wrote those great reports and hear a little bit about the work they're doing and the process that they undertook to write their reports to give you some food for thought. And we really would love for this to be interactive. I love that some questions are coming in already. Keep them coming.

I'm going to introduce our states, South Carolina and Colorado, and feel free to ask questions. We're going to ask them to share both some background on the apprenticeship expansion strategies they're using and their progress to date, and then we'll dive a little bit deeper into their process of writing the report. So opportunities for questions are wide open. Feel free to ask about what they're doing, as well as the approach that they took to writing their report.

So I'm happy to first introduce the South Carolina team. We're joined by Amy Firestone, who's the vice president of Apprenticeship Carolina, and Chip Fallaw follow, also with Apprenticeship Carolina. They're going to talk to us a little bit about the good work they've been doing. Amy and Chip.

AMY FIRESTONE: Thank you very much. We appreciate the opportunity to share information on our ASE report with everybody today.

Just wanted to, again, introduce myself as the vice president for Apprenticeship Carolina. We have a lot of different DOL grants now that we're managing, like many of you. And the ASE grant, obviously, is just coming to a close in a little over a year. And Chip on here was actually our ASE grant administrator who helped write the report, and that's why I wanted him to join us today.

But he has actually moved on to be the SAE 2020 grant director. So he's really here just to give you some background on how he formulated the report and answer any questions. So I think we can move on to the next slide, please.

So we were asked to give a summary of the grant goals and really our strategies at this point in the grant. So like many of you, the purpose of the ASE grant is to increase the number of registered apprentices and registered apprenticeship programs in our state and increase diversity among programs and apprentices.

So as we work on these goals, we know that it has been a pretty challenging time for most of us in the country over the past year with COVID, especially when the ASE grant was just getting kicked off in many places.

So where we're at right now – and I have Donna Spigner with – on with us, who's our ASE grant administrator. I'm not going to put her on the spot, but she's been working hard to help look at strategies for where we're at right now with the grant. And I have a summary of them on the slide here.

We're currently reassessing funding. So right when COVID hit last March, a year ago – hard to believe – we had just awarded – sub-awarded our funding to the technical colleges of the state. And there have been many challenges throughout the past year or so. Donna is working on reassessing the funding that we have already allocated and reallocating funds to other parts of the state where there are needs.

And we've been working with the apprenticeship consultants on our team on new program development and having all of the work they're doing that's not a part of a different grant being counted as impacted.

We continue a lot of marketing efforts even during COVID. We're very active on social media. Every apprenticeship consultant on our team is required to contribute to at least one post per month. So that's eight folks on our team who are submitting information on different new programs, on different events.

And then we had the opportunity to participate in a diversity cohort. I guess this is now – yeah – in 2020. So we have a lot of information that we're using to work with our communications division on in terms of new outreach to help with equity and diversity.

Something new that we're starting is also a statewide employer council. In South Carolina we haven't had a formal group of apprenticeship sponsors to convene yet. So we're starting this up. This will be really important for all of our grants. We're going to have companies represented from all different industries, different parts of the state, and different size companies to come to the table and talk about apprenticeship expansion with that.

And then communication for us has been very key throughout this process because, as we know, there's a lot of moving parts with COVID and with classes happening or being delayed, programs really being kind of put on hold in some cases.

So Donna and prior to Donna's arrival, Chip, were meeting regularly with community partners and with our statewide apprenticeship peer group, which is one member – which includes one member from each of our technical colleges, to discuss the status of their ASE dollars and really what's going on with the courses at the colleges. So it's been constant communication with them to understand what some of the delays are and how we can help them during this time.

So that's the overview for us. Thank you.

MS. WELLS: Thanks so much, Amy. Really appreciate this chance to get a sense of the work you all are doing. I want to introduce now Helen Carpenter from Colorado. She'll tell a similar story of Colorado's apprenticeship expansion work. Helen.

HELEN CARPENTER: Thanks so much, Gina. Really happy to be here. This is Helen Carpenter, and I'm the Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant Coordinator.

So a little background about our ASE grant. Our core purpose is to increase equity in apprenticeship and expand apprenticeship opportunities in new and innovative industries. So very similar to others on the call, obviously.

One of our big goals was around program development and developing a consistent experience for businesses interested in registering new programs to really increase our responsiveness to industry needs.

So in the first year of the grant, we really made the decision to focus on strategic planning and systems alignment and business services, given the delay in receiving U.S. DOL guidance in data reporting. And we launched what we're calling our hub model during this planning year in collaboration with our One-Stop directors and our leadership at CDLE.

And the ASE grant is really a big shift in how CDLE and our workforce centers partner. And our hub model is really shifting away from a strict compliance-based relationship of grantee and funder to a true partnership that's focused on shared goals and outcomes with clear roles and responsibilities playing to each organization's strengths.

So our hub, a single workforce center, Arapahoe/Douglas Works! coordinates statewide implementation of apprenticeship workforce initiatives. Apprenticeship is such a complex model, and especially in Colorado, there are so many players and stakeholders. And we really found that specialization, both at the organizational level and the staffing level, was really necessary for meeting our grant outcomes. So our hub and our consultant staff members focused exclusively on apprenticeship.

And our consultants support businesses and industry at every step of the way to ensure that the programs are best developed to meet business need, industry need, and if there's a roadblock, our staff have the expertise to overcome those.

So our people are engaging related instruction partners, other state agency partners. They are getting new programs on the state ETPL, getting approved for GI Bill benefits with this goal in mind of a seamless experience for businesses throughout the registration process and into the recruitment process.

One of the really big benefits of using Arapahoe/Douglas Works! as a workforce center as our hub is they also administer WIOA Titles I and III directly. So we can easily integrate with those programs and see nice, high co-enrollment levels between ASE and WIOA, which is the goal of the ASE grant -- (inaudible).

And this model has ensured that employers are connected with a diverse talent pool and other recruitment tools after they get their programs registered.

So in addition to our consultants, we also expanded our state apprenticeship teams and hired an apprenticeship specialist that has high-level expertise in apprenticeship. And she focuses on training, providing technical assistance to the system, and integration at the state level with Colorado's community college system, individual community colleges, college credentials, and other state efforts like licensure, youth, and K-12 graduation requirements. So, as you can imagine, she's busy but an invaluable asset to our team.

And we're also working on partnership development for equity in apprenticeship and business services alignment. And we have dedicated staff members for each named grant partner organization, and we're really trying to leave room for those partnership efforts to adapt and change and pivot as different practices come to light.

For example, data requirements and enrollment at different state agencies through different WIOA titles may impact developing those co-enrollment procedures.

And those named partners are the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation working on increasing access for individuals with disabilities through that partnership and increasing access and opportunity for justice-involved individuals through a partnership with Colorado Department of Corrections. So we have program development outcomes and activities ongoing with both of those partners.

So by creating these two new local positions and this one new state position to support the businesses across the state, we've gained so much capacity to register new programs and provide more extensive support for businesses moving through that registration process.

And these individuals are handling all that U.S. DOL process, paperwork, procedures that we've heard from businesses that were a deterrent to register their programs in the past. And through our streamlined program development process, our – we've reduced our timeframe for registration from as long as multiple months to just a few weeks.

And we're seeing program development nearly exclusively outside the trades, although some new trades program. And we're seeing arborist program, a lot of new healthcare programs, a lot of new IT programs, facility and operations management, and our newest program, which is actually in collaboration with several state agencies and entities, which is the workforce development specialist that just was finalized recently, which we're really excited about.

So happy to see what the next year brings, and looking forward to discussing more on this webinar. Thanks.

MS. WELLS: Thanks, Helen. Thanks to both you and Amy for giving us such a nice tour into your expansion work. And if anybody just heard something that you want to hear more about, about South Carolina and Colorado's efforts, feel free to pop it in the chat.

What we going to do now is move into a little bit of a discussion about Colorado and South Carolina's approaches to writing their 2020 ASE report. So I'll just kick it off. Maybe we can start with Amy and Chip. Can you all just tell us who wrote your 2020 report? We know that Chip was involved, but did you have others working with you? Who wrote your report, and what process and timeline did you use to develop it?

CHIP FALLAW: Sure. So this is Chip, and I will say that you are correct. As the grant administrator, I did lead the writing of the grant, but I will say it was a team effort. I could not have done it without the help of Amy and staff here at Apprenticeship Carolina, both internally as well as from other divisions and other grant administrators within Apprenticeship Carolina.

We took a lot of time writing the reports, using the information from previous quarterly reports that we submitted, while also reviewing the information from some of the grants that we have that are running concurrently.

So my approach was to start early. I sent information requests out to other grant administrators to talk to them about the progress of their grants and the impact it had had on Apprenticeship Carolina as a whole, because this report was not intended to be specific to ASE exclusively. It was intended to be about ASE but also to talk about the status of apprenticeships as a whole for your agency.

So we used a lot of the information that they were able to submit to include in our report, and we also used information from our finance team to discuss our progress in funding apprentices, looking at the reimbursements that had been submitted, the money that had been expended, and things of that nature, both as direct funding to participants as well as the overall picture of where we were with the grant.

So we started early. I did not try to write it three days before it was due. I probably took about a month and a half, and I would write bits and pieces of it, as time permitted. And then was able to really send it out to a number of different people, requesting that they edit it, that they look at it, that they have comments, and they submit them back to us so that we could be sure that the report we submitted was 100 percent accurate and painted a very clear picture of where we were, both with the Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant at the conclusion of that first year and where Apprenticeship Carolina as a whole was with our apprenticeship approach and our apprenticeship expansion efforts.

I think, Amy, do you want to jump in as well?

MS. FIRESTONE: Sure. I can just say that we have a pretty thorough OA kind of review process for anything. So Chip did a lot of the work, and I really just came in at the very end to review everything. And we have a lot of back-and-forth kind of with questions and things to add.

And Chip also added some really good – some tables and charts to really summarize information because a lot of it is really just kind of detailed on statuses and facts and things like that. So we did take advantage of adding tables and charts to really illustrate some of the data.

MS. WELLS: Thanks. Yeah. I really love the tables and charts that you all added in your report, especially some of the visualizations on the sectors that you're working with and who you're serving. Those were really nice.

MS. FIRESTONE: That's all Chip. He's often at the table [inaudible]. Wanted to say that.

MS. WELLS: And just as a reminder to everyone, I put it in the chat, but you can actually download a copy of South Carolina and Colorado's 2020 reports, if you want to take a look. So thanks, Chip and Amy.

And, Helen, would love to hear from your perspective, who wrote your 2020 ASE report, and what process and timeline did you use to develop it?

MS. CARPENTER: Sure. So I'm a very detailed deadlines process oriented person. So we built out a report timeframe that took into account everyone who needed to review, how long they got to review, how long we would need to take that feedback and those edits into account, and then one final review for clarity, content, and typos.

So that was a really huge part of our planning was determining what that timeframe and that schedule would look like. But once we had that schedule, it really made the whole thing a lot easier.

So we have three state staff right now dedicated to apprenticeship, and that's the state apprenticeship coordinator, Denise Miller, who is – many of you know, and the ASE grant coordinator, myself, that I provide oversight over the grant, and our apprenticeship specialist, as I mentioned earlier, who's our apprenticeship and program development subject matter expert. And then others in our unit contributed content and review, but that was the core group is the three of us.

And our process really was helped I think not only by previous SAE and ASE quarterly reports but also our team writes and submits monthly reports on overall apprenticeship expansion activities to our executive director's office. And having that – those reports to look back on really provided a helpful framework for our activities. So having that to look back at was super helpful to make the report writing in the end a little bit less onerous.

MS. WELLS: Super helpful. Do you remember about how long in advance of the submission you started the process?

MS. CARPENTER: I think it was about two months. A similar timeframe.

MS. WELLS: Great. Well, I'd love to hear from both of you, and, Helen, maybe we can start with you, sort of reflecting on the process you used and the report itself, kind of how it informed your apprenticeship expansion efforts and your management of your ASE grants.

So in what ways was the process of writing the report helpful to you and your work and your planning both for the grant itself and your broader apprenticeship expansion efforts?

MS. CARPENTER: Sure. So I think it's so easy sometimes to just put our heads down and move forward with the work, and I think we're – writing the report gave us a really nice chance to reflect on our activities, to assess and evaluate what activities are having success, and what aren't.

So really taking a moment to reflect on whether we're actually moving the needle on diversity in apprenticeships. Are we expanding apprenticeship opportunities to new industries?

So it was a required element of the grant to assess the industry of newly registered programs and all registered programs. But I think taking the moment to review that, analyzing the requests for programs that are coming in and saying, are there roadblocks to program development and registration for specific industries, for specific occupations? What is not getting to the finish line? What are we not seeing finalized?

So that's just one example. But I think any of these types of activities just gives us wonderful opportunity to assess, evaluate, and take a moment to reflect on effective strategies.

MS. WELLS: Thanks. And, Chip and Amy, same question. How did the process of writing it and the report itself benefit you and sort of inform the expansion grant management work you do?

MR. FALLAW: Sure. So as we wrote this report, it was very helpful for us and for me particularly, as the administrator, to be able to not only take a pulse of where we were with the grant at the end of that year, to be able to look back and reflect and say, okay. This is what's been done. This is what we still have to do. This is what we can proudly say we have done and show and demonstrate, and these are the areas that we want to further push the needle on.

But it also allowed us the opportunity to speak to other grant administrators or allowed me the opportunity to speak to other grant administrators, see what they were doing, not just from kind of impromptu conversations that we may have but also from actually looking at the numbers, from looking at the progress that they've made, and reading it, understanding it, having the opportunity to look at some of their annual reports, the narratives that they submitted for their annual report and say, okay.

As they brag about their grants to their FPOs and to their communities, their respective U.S. DOL grantee partners, looking at that and saying, okay. I want to do that, I want to be able to say that I did that. I want to partner with them on this.

So it was really – it was really cool to be able to do that, to see the previous expansion work because we had the SAE 2016 grant. We also concurrently had the Sky grant, which we – the American Apprenticeship Initiative. We internally call it Sky grant.

But to be able to look at all of the successes that were had there and then include them into the successes that were taking place through the ASE grant and to be able to kind of comprehensively say from – for the first time, this is all that's happened in this first year of the ASE grant, not just for the ASE grant staff and for the money that we've expended or allocated to technical colleges here, but for the state as a whole.

And I think that was something that's really important, not just to be able to share with all of you on this call and with Maher & Maher and DOL, but also to be able to share with our state, as we proudly say, hey, look how important apprenticeships are. Look at the efforts that we're doing as a division here at Apprenticeship Carolina to really make apprenticeships that viable workforce development strategy that U.S. DOL, that South Carolina needs them to be.

So it really helped us to be able to look at our success not in a silo but as a whole.

MS. WELLS: That's great. Thanks. And I want to say that the Maher TA team read every report, and the coaches have read their reports for the state coach and we use the rich information that you provided in there to help us make peer-to-peer connections all across the country.

So everything that all of you included in your annual reports, both about your specific ASE grant activities, but particularly when you tie it into your broader statewide apprenticeship expansion strategies, those rich stories have really helped us make some great connections in this last year. And we are really looking forward to seeing all that you've experienced and been through this year and the ways in which you focused your efforts in this next report that will come out this summer.

I want to invite anybody who's listening in and has something they'd like to share about their experience writing their report to – don't hesitate to pop it into the chat. If you had a unique insight or found some value in talking to a partner or were able to share a great accomplishment in your report, feel free to share that with everybody over here in the chat.

And then I want to ask one last question of Helen and Amy and Chip, which is, what advice do you have for other folks as they're developing their 2021 report? I know we have some folks joining us today who just recently stepped into their roles with ASE grants and maybe didn't write last year's report. So we just want to hear what advice you have. And, others of you, if you have advice you want to share, pop it into the chat. So, Helen, do you want to go first?

MS. CARPENTER: Sure. Thank you. So I would say, first off, kind of aligned with what Chip was saying, I would advise to use this report as an opportunity to highlight all the successes of apprenticeship expansion activities that you've seen. You can do ASE, broader than ASE. So I would really take advantage of that and capitalize on that and use it as a tool to tell the story of the successes of your team.

And then from that, how can you use the report, and how can you capitalize off the stories you're telling in the report in various ways? How can you turn this into a LinkedIn story? How can you market it via social media and really use it broadly, submit it to leadership, share it with other state agencies? I would say share it broadly. Use it as a tool in that way.

And I would also say it's a little late for this piece of advice, but you could always start it now or early next year. Find ways throughout the year to capture broader apprenticeship expansion activities so you can write the report a little bit more easily next year.

So every month, every quarter, whatever it is, sit down and think about what happened that month or that quarter that would be broader than ASE, really notable activities, partnership, apprentice success stories. Really make sure that you're capturing and generating those that – that's not grant specific in some easy, streamlined way, especially from other members of your team. So that's my second piece of advice.

And then when it comes to actually writing the report, I would think about having individuals on your team with different writing styles that are complementary. So who on your team is really good at writing about big-picture concepts? Who's really good at data analysis? Who can talk about the process, development, and improvement activities that you did?

I know that on my team we are all really good at very different things. One of my coworkers is much better than I am at synthesizing and discussing very big picture topics. So I really rely on her for that. I'm typically the better person to do data analysis activities and efforts.

So really think about how you can have different members of your team to make an engaging but still cohesively written piece of writing. And then, just to make this easier to use for more purposes, break up the narrative with tables and charts and images and graphs. It makes the whole end product a little more dynamic.

So that's my piece of advice, but I'd love to hear from Carolina about their thoughts.

MS. WELLS: Thanks. Chip and Amy?

MR. FALLAW: Sure. So my advice would be, a lot of the times we're overloaded with work or we have things that can distract us from from the big picture. We operate on a day-to-day basis or we do things that may take away from why we do what we do as apprenticeship staff around the nation.

And I think this is really a good way and a good strategy from DOL and for us personally to take a step back to say, okay. Let me put the work of today aside, and let me see what we've done in the last year to really make a difference in our state, in our service area for apprenticeships and that expansion effort as a whole.

And I would say – because I can remember events that have happened in the past couple of months and maybe an event that happened when I first started or over a holiday for a special occasion. But I can't remember everything that happened over the last year.

So I think taking a step back, assessing where you are, talking about all the cool things that took place. Even among COVID taking place all over the country, that wasn't the entire year. That was a portion of that year. So that whole year leading up to and before that, a lot of really exciting stuff happened, I know, around the country.

And so being able to talk about that, being able to document it, I do agree with what Helen said. As you do events, as you have events take place, document them. One of the things that I've asked my staff now on the SAE 2020 grant but even previously to do was to have a shared photo album. So as they are going around doing events, they would upload those photos into that shared photo album so the whole staff can kind of see what's taking place around the state because they are strategically located in different areas.

But not only does that allow us to kind of share events that are taking place, but it also allows us to look back and say, hey, this was an event that we can talk about or this was something really exciting that took place that we have to talk about.

So my advice kind of in conclusion is, basically, don't look at it as an assignment or something that you have to do just to get it over with. I know a lot of the times I even – I even do that sometimes in looking at the quarterly reports and things like that as just work that needs to be done as an obligation.

I would say look at these reports as a way to be really specific and clear and excited about the work that's being done in your state, as a way to brag about all the exciting things that you're doing because, as was just said, these are read. These reports are read and they are looked at by Maher & Maher and DOL and your FPOs. And they don't work in your office. They don't work in your state.

So to be able to to read these reports and see all the exciting things from their perspective is very cool because they then can also report it back to their higher ups at ETA and at DOL as a whole.

And then I would say be intentional about taking pictures and documenting events that you have as you have them, because you won't remember them all, but that doesn't mean they're not important. They're all important. They're all helping somebody. They're all a step towards that expansion effort that you are tasked with doing.

So regardless of their size, I tell technical colleges all the time a success story for us doesn't have to be some incredible rags to riches story of somebody who lived under a bridge and now has a Lamborghini. Anything can be a success story from the perspective of an individual who has benefited from this grant and these expansion efforts. So just document it small to large. It's all important. It's all part of your story, your narrative. And we want to be able to look back and say, hey, this is something that's really cool that's happened in our state, in our area. So that's my advice.

MS. WELLS: Wow, great advice from both of you. Thank you so much for really reflecting on this experience and sharing with all of us today.

I see a couple of people are typing. We're going to transition into some Q&A and then we'll almost certainly wrap up before 4:00 o'clock Eastern.

Thank you so much, Chip, Amy, and Helen, for sharing your experience with us today.

I want to turn it back over to James to just run through a couple next steps, and then we'll take questions and comments.

MR. STRAIT: Thanks, Gina. Yeah. I love it. This is great. I completely agree with everything that Chip and Helen and Amy said.

This – apprenticeships have existed for thousands of years. We all know that. The model is nothing new. But this effort to expand apprenticeships in the U.S. is only a few years old, and these reports are one way that we try to make order out of chaos.

With all the different efforts going on, this is one of the ways that we're able to see all the different things that you're doing, all the different efforts that are taking place in your states, to hear about the challenges and how you overcame them or didn't overcome them, what you need in the future to overcome them, ideas you have for moving things forward. And we definitely use this all.

We – when we talk to our partners and when we, like Chip said, talk to our higher ups and are making decisions about future funding and how that's going to look, all these things come into play. In those conversations, we say this state had this issue and so they requested that next time that it looks differently and let's throw a bone in this way or whatever. All those things we take into consideration in our conversation. So I really appreciate Amy, Helen, and Chip giving us their insight.

I think now actually is a good time to answer a couple of questions that have come in, and then we'll move forward. Just a couple of reminders, and we can get to more questions, if people have them.

So one question said, "You say, tell your story. Is that to say that this is only a narrative, or will there be attachments with the data?"

To that I would say, structure this report however you need to. This report does not take the place of the QPR and the QNR where you will formally present your data. That's where you're going to report on your participants. It's – the QNR is what you're going to use to report on your other individual – other individuals impacted, but your data informs your narrative.

So, of course, we would love for you to include data in your report, and, as Helen said, it makes it more dynamic, helps us understand what you're saying in your narrative. And as a logistical point, inclusion of the attachments within the report itself, not as separate attachments when you send the email, that will help us as we forward those around to people.

So another question. "Do we have to submit an annual report for both the ASE and the SAE 2020 grants?"

SAE 2020 grant does not require an annual report. So this would be for the ASE grant, as far as the requirement goes, though we certainly encourage you to include all of your SAE 2020 grant activities in this report. And we hope that they're overlapping and working with each other to expand apprenticeship in general in your state.

So we can turn back to the slide on your screen real quick. Just some reminders.

The due date for the next one, July 31st, 2021, coming up in a few months. Submitted via email, the same way you do your QNRs to the apprenticeship.grants@dol.gov mailbox.

Please also send it to your FPO and your TA coach. In the subject line, when you send your email in, you can title it ASE annual report with your state and then please also include your grant number. That is crucial and very helpful to us as the grant number is in the subject line.

And then the themes and insights that come from these as we digest them and as Maher & Maher helps us figure out what's in these will come out in fall 2021.

As you've seen, South Carolina and Colorado have graciously agreed to make their reports available to those who would like to dive deeper into their examples. You can see it in the file share area where you can download their reports. So we thank them very much for providing those.

So now, if anybody has any other questions, you can throw those in the chat room, and we'll field those.

I see that some people are typing. So we'll give it just a minute. Give you guys a chance to put some questions in there, if you have them.

As people are typing in their questions, let me just reiterate some of the points that were previously made by Helen, Amy, and Chip that one of the good ways to approach this report is this can just be a byproduct of something that we all should be doing as we reassess how things are going. We're making plans. We look at our work plan and figure out what's going well, what needs to change.

And this report can be a byproduct of those conversations that I imagine are already taking place. And you all have people to answer to and you're providing reports to them and those should definitely inform this report. You can copy and paste as you need to.

MS. WELLS: James, we got a comment here from Scott in Michigan saying that he'd love to learn how South Carolina tracks and monitors its apprentices in state government and municipalities. Amy and Chip, is that something you can touch on briefly?

MS. FIRESTONE: Sure. I'm curious about the question. In terms of tracking, what exactly do you mean by that and monitoring, since we don't – we're not really in a compliance role? Just curious kind of what area you were interested in learning about.

MS. WELLS: All right. Scott's typing in his clarification.

It's too bad we can't bring back our snappy waiting room music from before the webinar starts.

MR. STRAIT: You can sing us a song while we wait, Gina.

MS. WELLS: Hard pass.

Looks like Scott just wants to know a little bit more about the overall strategy of state and municipal government apprenticeships.

MS. FIRESTONE: Sure. So we have different state and local governments that are participating in apprenticeship programs, and it's really just like other businesses in terms of our strategy working with them.

Our apprenticeship consultants who are spread statewide meet with the local and state agencies to discuss hiring needs and develop the programs, just like we would with any other company. And our statewide process actually includes support from leadership program specialists who are actually part of our SAE 2020 grant.

And what their role is is, after any program has been registered with DOL, no matter if it's from a state local government or a company, a nonprofit, whatever entity it is, they actually meet with the company to discuss with them implementation and support so – and we constantly are reviewing data to see which companies aren't hiring apprentices, see how we can help them, and just following up with resources.

So it's a lot of work in progress, but we really try to have a full level of support from program development to implementation and follow through. And that's really a new effort through our latest grants, given all the years that Apprenticeship Carolina has been around.

MS. WELLS: Thanks. And just a quick plug. On May 27th at 3:00 p.m. Eastern, we will do a public sector industry focused call where we really explore public sector registered apprenticeships in greater detail and look at what's happening across the country, for folks that are interested in that.

MR. STRAIT: Yeah. And I would reiterate that, please attend those calls. Be really useful to hear about those and to implement some of those principles into your own programs.

We also have a comment here from Jennifer Denning that it would be great to hear how these states are implementing the WIPS reporting requirements and rolling it out with grantees.

That might be a little bit beyond the purview of today's call. But I don't know if any of you, Helen, Amy, or Chip, have a quick comment about that. We don't have any other questions right now. So you can feel free to comment on that.

We will have another office hours for WIPS reporting before the next QPR deadline. There are also office hours scheduled for the SAE 2020 reporting. Amy, Chip, or Hellen, if you have a quick comment about that. Otherwise, we can move to the end.

MS. CARPENTER: Yeah. This is Helen in Colorado, and I would say that it's been a little easier for Colorado to transition apprenticeship grant reporting via WIPS and the PIRL because our team, as I mentioned, administers WIOA. So we already have that background and that mechanism built into our systems. But I'm always happy to be a resource, if anyone wants to chat or bounce ideas about how to do that.

I think, Chip, you had a little bit of a different experience, as I recall. I don't know if you have anything to quickly add.

MR. FALLAW: Sure. So we were different in the sense that we as a division were not actually participating in WIOA. So we had to kind of build everything from the ground up. What I would say – and you guys are absolutely right that this is a conversation that could be its own webinar and has been its webinar to include many parts.

But what I would just say is we had a lot of internal changes to our grants management system that we had to make to accommodate all of the new data elements, as well as processes that we had to absorb into our registered program specialists' duties due to just the quantity of data that we now have to collect but also the expectation that is sent down by DOL that it be done in a secure manner in accordance with their TEGL – I think it's 39-19 – regarding PII.

So a lot of our process has changed, but the main thing that we've done differently is just absorbing that responsibility to collect the data before we issue reimbursements to participants. So we not only collect it, we determine eligibility. We input it into our grants management systems to ensure that all of the information we need is there up front. And then we are able to issue reimbursements with the understanding, not only that we have the information we need to adequately report that individual as a participant to DOL in WIPS, but also that they are eligible for a reimbursement for a grant funded service through this grant.

So, again, I'm also happy to be a resource if needed. You're more than willing – or more than happy to reach out to me and I can share any of the documents or intake forms or our processes or anything like that from the perspective of a state that did not administer WIOA previously and kind of had to learn this from the ground up.

MR. STRAIT: Great. Thank you. And I know that's a big topic on everybody's mind as people are trying to get used to using WIPS and they're going to have to do it with other grants. So thank you.

And we absolutely encourage states to consult with one another on your processes for reporting and other things. So please, please, please work with each other.

So I think we can move forward to the end here. Just a couple of minutes left.

Should all have this email box. You've all used it before. But as a reminder, apprenticeship.grants@dol.gov, if you have other questions about the annual reports, and your FPOs or coaches are also a good resource.

So I just want to thank everybody for attending. You all are the front line for expanding apprenticeships in your states. Through your work, more people will have access to meaningful employment. More youth will have career pathways that match their learning styles. Industries will get a boost from the tried-and-true system that produces capable and loyal employees that is apprenticeship. So we appreciate all your efforts and your compliance with all of the requirements that comes with using these grants.

So right now, I'll turn it back to Laura to close us out.

(END)