**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Work-Based Learning State Best Practices Panel**

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*Transcript by*

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GRACE MCCALL: And welcome to "Work-Based Learning State Best Practices Panel."

And today, we also have a little bit of a poll that we'd love for you to vote in. Today's poll is just letting us know who's in our audience. Possible answers are TAA program-side, TRA/UI-side, WIOA partner, apprenticeship, or United States Department of Labor. So feel free just to vote on that. Give us a little idea of who is on the line.

I can see people are still voting away. I'll leave that up for a little bit while – a little bit longer. Going to move that over.

While people are still voting on that, let's kick things over to our moderator for today, Amanda Poirier, federal project officer, Region 1 and 2, ETA. Take it away, Amanda.

AMANDA POIRIER: Thanks, Grace. Hello, everyone. As Grace said, my name is Amanda Poirier, and I work in Region 1 and 2, also known as the Northeast Region, as a federal project officer in ETA. I am the regional Trade Adjustment Assistance, also known as TAA, coordinator for the Northeast Region. And I'm excited to be the moderator for today's Work-Based Learning Panel webinar.

This webinar is a follow-up to the previous webinar held on March 16. If you didn't attend that webinar, I highly recommend that you listen in after today's session.

As a quick caveat for today's session, we recognize that the audience is large and diverse and that, although this webinar is hosted by the Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance, OTAA, and is intended ultimately to share best practices around work-based learning that will benefit the TAA customer, there are several best practices that are outside of the TAA year program that are being shared today that we believe everyone can learn from based on the presenters' experiences in developing partnerships with critical stakeholders and the necessary infrastructure around work-based learning models that work.

Also today, we have a closed chat, meaning that you can ask questions in the chat, and we will address them in the chat, either directly to you or to the wider group. So please ask your questions throughout the webinar, and we will work to address them throughout and at the end, if possible.

For this webinar, we're going to discuss some common questions from the work-based learning best practices webinar held on March 16th and engage in a panel conversation with our work-based learning presenters from the March 16th webinar. Also, we will share resources.

Before we get started with the Q&A and a couple of questions – a couple of questions surfaced during the March 16th webinar that we thought it would be helpful to address prior to our panel.

In general, there are regulations that the state and locals must follow in the TAA Final Rule and in WIOA, and states and locals can make their own policies. But when considering how to expand work-based learning, it's important to first review policies and procedures at the state or local level and determine if they are supporting access to work-based learning or limiting access.

It's also very important to consider whether there are policies and procedures in place and the necessary infrastructure, like training for case counselors, job developers, doing employer outreach, strong sector partnership models. And if there aren't any of these elements or infrastructure, then that might be one of the reasons that work-based learning is not happening in your state or local area. Without appropriate guidance or training, it's unlikely that training modalities other than traditional classroom will be used.

As demonstrated in the shrinking envelope of innovation, the outer line is the federal legislation. The next blue line is the federal regulations. The third green line represents the state rules, and the fourth orange line represents the local rules. And the distance between the orange and the red represents lost – oops. Sorry about that – represents – oh, no. Give me one second. I'll bring it back. The distance between the orange and the red represents lost opportunities for innovation.

The goal is for states and locals to maximize the flexibility in the law, not limit it. Sorry, everybody. When I click to the next one, it just skips over. So I apologize. The animation did not work.

We received a lot of questions during the work-based learning webinar regarding reverse referrals. So what is a reverse referral? It's an employer or jobseeker coming to the One-Stop after they've been hired or will be hired for the job and asking for an OJT or other work-based learning option.

Reverse referrals are not the same as a participant going to an employer with a letter from a One-Stop noting that OJT might not – might be an option for them. This letter is an intervention leveraged by the workforce system to encourage reemployment opportunities and not the same as an employer or jobseeker asking for an OJT.

After they've been hired without the intervention, generally, reverse referrals are discouraged. The best rule of thumb is always to consider that this is taxpayer money and it is reasonable and necessary and allocable that federal resources are used to support the work-based learning.

If the individual is employed at participation, then the rules under Title I have to be followed for OJTs. TAA does not have a distinction between employed and not employed, but if co-enrolling the participant, then states should consider the rules under Title I for employed participants.

There were some questions around writing an OJT that is tied to suitable employment. We recommend that you review the tools provided by Minnesota and Missouri and also have conversations with your business engagement and job development staff to ensure that they understand the parameters around TAA.

They should be doing the outreach to determine what jobs would be a great fit for a TAA participants based on their current skills. If you don't have job developers and want one, then it might make sense to have TAA pay for it. Consider what is available at the One-Stop. TAA is a paying partner and should have access to the suite of services under the One-Stop partner umbrella.

Also, generally, reach out to the panel members. They are very engaged and interested in hearing from you as well. It's all about supporting each other's learning and education to help participants and businesses in the communities thrive.

There were some questions around engaging individuals with disabilities and how to engage them in OJTs. We welcome best practices on these topics and hope that states are working to engage all One-Stop partners, including vocational rehabilitation, to ensure that they are drawing upon the experience of partners. If working on an OJT for a person with a disability, states must offer reasonable accommodations through the OJT or work-based learning, if necessary, as required under the American Disabilities Act.

We also had some questions on tools and packets that support building a work-based learning. We encourage individuals in this webinar to reach out to their peers, and there is also the OJT toolkit, which New Hampshire uses and is available on WorkforceGPS.

So the next portion of this webinar, we're going to jump into the panel, but before we do, I just wanted to ask a question. What is your biggest challenge in implementing a work-based learning program? So, please, if you could, answer the poll, whether it's not enough federal or state guidance, if it's restrictive guidance, if it's case counselors not being informed, if it's lack of partner buy-in, or if it's other, please enter it into the chat.

And I'm going to move over to introducing our panelists. Please, again, if you have any questions, ask them in the chat, and we will do our best to get to them.

So our panelists today, I'm really excited to announce – oh, and even before I do that, although we would love for all our panelists to answer all the questions, we don't necessarily have enough time for that to happen during this webinar. So we really encourage you to reach out to them directly after this webinar, make the connections with them to understand what has worked for them so that you can leverage their knowledge to increase work-based learning opportunities in your state or local area.

And with that, now, I will introduce the panelists. We have Jeanna, who is Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning Manager with the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development.

We have Meg, who is a TAA specialist with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

We have Sarah, who is a supervisor for TAA, and she works with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development as well.

We also have AJ, who is an employment counselor specialist with the state of New Hampshire Department of Employment and Security.

Laura, who is an Oregon TAA liaison, the Oregon Employment Department TAA program.

And we have Deb, who is a program manager, Arizona @ Work - Maricopa County, and Nick, who is the president of Adaptive Construction Solutions.

So with that, I'm going to – Grace, if you could close out the poll. Thank you. And bring back the cameras. Thank you very much. Great. Thank you.

Hi, folks. So we're going to start with our first question, which is addressed to Jeanna. "What are the two of the most important things that you needed to do to get started in expanding work-based learning training for jobseekers and employers?"

JEANNA CALDWELL: I'll start with the most important thing that we had to do in order to establish expansion into work-based learning was definitely to coordinate with organizations that are doing that common work with you.

So what we did in Missouri is to establish a team of coordinators and champions for work-based learning. And we did this by partnering, so particularly in apprenticeship, with our U.S. DOL statewide director and our ATRs. And we set up a team of apprenticeship coordinators that included people from community colleges, local workforce development boards, those who had been doing apprenticeships for the longest time.

I believe that if you reach out to community-based organizations and start thinking about where our commonalities are, we will find that we're working towards the same thing. This is not just important to make sure that you're starting a new initiative, but it's also important to make sure that you're not overly duplicative of efforts that are being done and that you don't contribute to employer fatigue.

And we found that having – trying to role model an expectation of transparency and outreach and development was the best thing that we could do. So be clear on what you want to be able to do, and start encouraging the conversations to have a common language adopted for work-based learning. That's what's been most appropriate for us.

And then engagement with jobseekers is simply this. Listen actively that you're making appropriate referrals and relates really to making sure that we're offering the technical assistance to frontline staff to be able to engage with seekers and employers so that the next right step is discerned correctly, that you're able to listen to pain points and being able to put them into the right thing.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Jeanna. Those are all great points. I'm now going to turn it over to Deb to address the question as well.

DEB FURLONG: Thank you, Amanda. And I'm going to say I took a little bit of a different approach with this question. And so in our – in my – actually, when we did this panel last time, some of the things I talked about was making sure that you have the support of your leadership in expanding the work-based learning.

And when I say that, I mean, folks on your board. Do you have champions in your board, in your leadership? Does your executive directors and your directors support the expansion of this? And if they don't, I'm going to encourage you to – (inaudible). Show them the statistics in your area, in the nationally what the statistics are in this area, the change in which we're seeing young people and adults changing in the way that they're – hey, Nick – the way that they're getting going.

So it's really – if you don't have that, I'm going to encourage you to build and gather the information that you need to get them excited for it.

One of the things that we also have, not only is our board supportive of what we do, but we have a champion on the board. If you have openings in your board, try to get someone from labor or apprenticeship in there. Representation matters. It's really important.

So when I thought of expanding, I really keep coming back to the reason I get – (inaudible) – is because I have the support of our leadership and our board. And this also includes DES. For us, the state is really involved in our apprenticeship programs. And because they know how we feel about it and how we support it, I get to sit at the table.

Willy, who is our state coordinator for apprenticeships here in Arizona, I know him. I've got him on speed dial. We text. We email often. And that just gives me the opportunity to be at the table, number one, to make sure that we're getting a voice to say what our employers need and what we're seeing the needs of the participants that we're serving.

And I – the other thing that I think is really important to really expand this and move this is really dedicated staff. I talked about this in the presentation, but you need to – this can't be something that's – in our opinion, it can't be something that's piecemealed out with a lot of different staff.

We have staff that are dedicated to this mission. They know what – they know each of their apprenticeships and how to support them. So really that – and dedicated staff not only for you, but when you make that apprenticeship, have that first point – that apprenticeship program have a point person for you.

And all of those things are going to allow you to continue to expand your current partnerships and make sure that the needs are being met. And again, when you want to expand something, it's really important to celebrate those successes and make sure that people are hearing about them at all levels, employers – success with your employer, your participants, and all over. So thank you. Back to you, Amanda.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Deb. All great points. Leadership, having dedicated staff and partnership being critical pieces. Thanks for that input.

Nick, I'm going to turn it over to you for your thoughts.

NICHOLAS MORGAN: Yeah. To build on what Deb mentioned there, that dedicated staff is critical because, when we ask an employer to make the largest investment, which is a job, a full-time job from a workforce system, we need to be prepared to do a lot of the heavy lifting to make sure that both that employer's investment is protected.

The fact that they're hiring somebody, paying them a wage, perhaps doing something they haven't done in the past or not part of their traditional workforce model. And so to protect that investment, but also for them to realize that all the value that every partner brings to the table.

So by doing some of the heavy lifting – and it looks different for every employer and every participant. So whether it's making sure that the continued follow-up occurs so that they see the retention, the supportive services, but also being responsive to that employer and the timeline in which they might set or that you negotiate with them in the beginning, because, I mean, once you kind of fail to meet those expectations that were well defined, you lose some of that trust that you built with an employer partner.

And so I would really – the big takeaway is that the organization that's going to employ folks and create expansion is really the business. So making sure that everyone comes to the table has a vested interest and positive outcomes and building programs around it and trying to minimize the disruption to that employer are really critical because, once they're successful, they're going to come back and not just expand more positions and those particular roles, but continue to consider work-based learning and apprenticeship for roles that they may not have wanted to discuss initially.

And I think through that, that's what's going to create those success stories and reminding all the partners in the end of what those outcomes were.

All of us have been in the space for a while. Depending on our roles, it's easy to become disenfranchised if you're not in direct contact with the men and women that we support. But if you're able to see the outcomes and see those success stories, it really energizes everyone involved so you can continue to expand apprenticeship and work-based learning.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Nick. Those are all really great points too, the continuous engagement piece, making sure that you're available to businesses so that you can identify any issues that come up and address them quickly to solidify that partnership. Thanks for providing that input.

I'm going to move over to question number two. First, I'm going to ask Sarah. "What are your best practices in terms of recruiting and engaging jobseekers and businesses and connecting them through work-based learning opportunity?"

SARAH SAITO: Thanks, Amanda. I'm going to cover three in Minnesota. So our TAA staff in Minnesota are centralized, and we coordinate with the WIOA dislocated worker staff, whom we refer to as dislocated worker counselors, to perform the local case management for our co-enrolled customers. Minnesota's done co-enrollment between the dislocated worker and TAA for many years. So we already have that established, which was very helpful.

Our TAA staff provide the TAA – (inaudible) – management and services via phone and email, and over the past couple of years, the Minnesota TAA staff has increased our knowledge of the OJT benefits and we streamlined the application process to make it smoother for everyone, the customer, the employer, the dislocated worker counselor, and the TAA staff.

We also emphasize OJTs with a dislocated worker counselors so they would be confident talking about OJTs with their customers. So by investing our time into learning and teaching, we have seen our OJT participation go up due to this expanded awareness and knowledge.

Another best practice in Minnesota is to use a cover letter that explains the OJT benefits and process. We shared this cover letter in last month's work-based learning webinar, and the letter provides a summary to the potential employer and lists the TAA contact information so the employer can conveniently call us or email us directly if they have questions or simply want to learn more about the program.

To make the cover letter even more effective, we also coach the customers about how to use the letter when they're submitting job applications, interviewing, and networking. We've really seen this produce good results. It helps the customer be comfortable using the letter and builds their own familiarity with the advantages of an OJT.

A third practice that we recently started is for a TAA team member to attend regional workforce strategy meetings. Similar to what our colleagues were saying in question one, those relationships are really key in making sure people have the buy in.

So in Minnesota, we're divided into seven geographical regions, and each region has a workforce strategy consultant who focuses on connecting jobseekers to employers. They meet monthly, and at these monthly strategy meetings, there's a labor market information analyst and representatives from unemployment insurance, rapid response, business and community development, veterans, and vocational rehabilitation. Recently, they've also included external partners such as the job developers from the respective county that they're in.

The goal is to streamline and shorten the time a person is laid off. They do this by providing updates to each other and collaborating. So everyone provides updates of what's happening in their area of expertise. They're able to make connections between employers that are hiring and people who are looking for work.

At these meetings, we've also had discussions about possible OJT. So at this point, none of those options have panned out yet, but I anticipate that in the future we will have success stories of OJTs that happened because of this strategic teamwork. These important meetings bring key partners together to strategize and provide the opportunity to stay updated with the happenings in the region. And that is the best practices from the state of Minnesota.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Sarah. I love the comprehensive answer. Training, paperwork, eliminating redundancies, the cover letter, I think is such a wonderful low hanging fruit. Sorry to use that word. But it's a really great tool and easy for other folks to steal. And then being at the table and being an active, engaged partner. Thank you for all of that.

AJ, what are your thoughts on question two?

AJ LAMBERT: Thanks, Amanda. Here in New Hampshire, they've really invested into the work-based learning concept here. Over the past several months, we've hired 20 employment counselors, and these employment counselors, they work throughout our 12 One-Stop offices and they – the state's continuing to invest as we're – we have open recs to hire more people for the recruitment efforts.

The employment counselor's main responsibility is recruiting people from four of our funding sources, which is the adult – formula adult, our mature worker program, Work Now New Hampshire, which is a specific New Hampshire thing, and our trade grants.

And because of COVID, we're no longer holding 24 job fairs across the state. So what we've done is we've started doing virtual job fairs where we also have recruitment efforts as well.

Another thing that we have here is we also have employment service reps, ESRs. Okay. They're also in each office throughout the state, and their primary responsibility is to connect with local businesses basically on a daily basis. So they end up as a very, very useful tool for the career consultants.

And as I mentioned in the past presentation, we also have our marketing literature that we do hand out to the employers whenever we have an opportunity to get in front of them. Amanda?

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, AJ. I think the talking about the differences, too, is really great in terms of the virtual job fairs too and how business is done differently and how to actively engage businesses in the current environment. So thanks for that input.

Nick, what do you think in terms of best practices for recruiting and engaging jobseekers and businesses?

MR. MORGAN: So a lot of it's population-focused when it comes to jobseekers. For instance, our program works with a lot of the veteran community. I think we've had just over 700 veterans have entered the apprenticeship through – with our employer partners.

And so how do we reach those veterans has really been an effort of engaging veterans service organizations, transition assistance programs, jobs for veterans state grants, homeless veteran reentry program grantees. So it's an all approach. But we also engage a lot of veteran communities within social media to make sure that they're aware of opportunities that employers – local employers have, and especially if there's any unique hiring initiatives.

Now, switching gears to another population that's a very different approach is our work with opportunity youth, but especially with men and women who've aged out of the foster system. So that takes a coordinated effort with community-based organizations. Make sure not that they just understand the opportunity but that we provide that continuous feedback.

We realized when organizations were referring individuals over to us, if we didn't provide regular feedback to those organizations, then those sources, those pipelines ended really quickly. And so even when it's not a good fit for that particular employer, we always are sure to make sure that that organization has a better idea of what the needs are but also then to start working with that organization to see if there's other employers that might hire that particular individual.

Now, from an employer perspective, it's really about creating a clear business case for workforce who are work-based learning and apprenticeship models and understanding what resources are available and then realizing that we can leverage that as a way in the future to negotiate different types of positions and jobs that can be developed within those organizations as a way to – especially as trust is developed with that particular company.

So it's really that all approach. But if people don't know the successes or what didn't work, if you didn't provide the feedback, often you're not going to have that long-term relationship.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Nick. Those are great points. I think that the having the right partners, that piece is absolutely critical and making that business case and making sure that's individualized based on the employer is really great feedback for the audience.

So I'm going to move on to question three. "What kind of support or training do you offer One-Stop case counselors and job developers?" And, first, I'm going to start off with AJ in New Hampshire.

AJ Lambert: Thanks again, Amanda. We have a team of dedicated subject matter experts that supports the counselors and job developers throughout the state. The SMEs are available to the staff during all of the work hours. And, again, they support everybody in the 12 One-Stop offices that we have throughout the state. And it's nice to have them available to us because anytime we need to speak to anybody or get our answers, they're right there for us at all times.

We also use Microsoft Teams where we have monthly check-ins meetings just to, again, check in to see what's going on. And we have regular monthly meetings with the subject matter experts. And that there – from there we have all of the 20 – right now, 20 career counselors that are on board here with the subject matter experts.

We also conduct our job clubs, I think we discussed in our last presentation, for our clients. But the staff is also encouraged to partake in those as well because they can also learn from what goes on during those job clubs.

And another tool that we use – (inaudible) – tool, it's Microsoft Teams. It's a dedicated employment counselor group chat that we set up that the employment counselors and the SMEs are all part of that group. And we use that tool to communicate and share our ideas, our best practices on a daily basis.

And as we've been sitting here, been watching the little windows pop up in the corner of – left of my screen where the discussions with this whole group are going on. So it is very active, and it's used on a daily basis. And we found out that using Microsoft Teams has really helped us out as far as sharing our ideas and, like I said, our best practices on a regular basis. Amanda.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, AJ. Yeah. I think that that's a really good point, the fact that it's not just a one-time engagement or training, that it has to be continuous and having that constant communication so there's trust between you as the subject matter expert and the counselors to make sure that folks feel comfortable talking and asking questions, I think it's a really great strategy.

Laura in Oregon, what are your thoughts?

LAURA LAUSMANN: Thanks, Amanda. Well, we have several strategies to provide training. I think, for the larger American Job Center partners staff, a few years ago, there was a website developed called OrgegonApprenticeship.org. It's a really great place for staff and jobseekers to go to for really great ideas that talk about what apprenticeship is.

There's a user-friendly search for open application periods and to do more research. So that's one of the ways that we share, and both our trade staff also can utilize that website.

For TAA program, we do create written processes for on all things, including on-the-job training as well as apprenticeships. And then in addition to those written processes, we pull out the nuggets and provide just a desk reference, like a one-page guide that our case managers can refer to, if they just need a quick reminder on something.

I would say one of the most important things, we are just getting ready to sign our first apprentice into training post TAA Final Rule. And what I'm learning is, when TAA Final Rule came into place, we took our OJT paper, the agreements that you would sign with an employer, and we modified those to meet the needs for the work-based learning for apprenticeship.

But what we need to do is make sure that our case managers, our staff are comfortable and familiar and they understand those contracts and what the process is because we need to meet – we need to move at the speed of business, and they need to feel comfortable to do that. And so we're working through our first one, and we'll fine tune those processes. But, again, just checking the pulse of your staff to make sure that they feel comfortable, that is super important.

I think also just setting some expectations. So we have clear staff expectations that you have 48 hours to return an email or a phone call. We've built – we have an electronic case management system that has reminders in it for our staff.

So if they're working with somebody who's interested in work-based learning or training, job search, relocation, they can put a next contact date in there, and that will trigger them to – in their work effort to reach back out to them. Super important to make sure that we're providing those services timely and as well that we're not losing anybody along the way.

And then I think we train on processes. So we take our written process and train new staff as well as every quarterly meeting. Like Nick, we do quarterly trainings as well as our staff get together in their similar roles to meet every week to talk about what's happening, what's working, what's not working, any specific worker group needs.

But we're also developing some training, maybe looking at a designated trainer for our program that will take those processes and create module trainings. In the state of Oregon, state staff have a state-level training platform that required training could get pushed out to. And so trade's really wanting – our program managers are really wanting to build that training into that so that we can push it out to individual stuff or push it out to all staff periodically. So that – we're looking forward to that this year. Back to you.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Laura. Those are all really great tools, it sounds like. So seems like maybe some opportunities for other folks to leverage the work that maybe you've already done instead of duplicating it. Thank you.

So, Deb, what are your thoughts on question three?

MS. FURLONG: So this is an area of growth for us and something that we're doing. So I'm going to speak a little bit about what we're doing and also in context talk about where we're going.

So our apprenticeship career advisors are developing presentations and trainings for all staff in the apprenticeship programs that they support. This will happen yearly on the first rollout at all of our staff meetings for just kind of getting everybody on board. And then after that, we'll do yearly or bi-yearly updates in our meetings just to find out how things are going.

We've also are including this in our new hire training. So our onboarding process actually includes a meeting with apprenticeship staff and learning all about it, making sure that everybody knows.

We also have industry specific BSRs, which are business service reps. I think, AKA, some people call them job developers. So we – whatever that terminology is, that's – we have those folks that are industry specific. So they are connected. So our folks that do constructions are really heavily tied to some of our apprenticeship staff that are working in that area to just stay connected on the job and what's going on.

So our goal really is to have apprenticeship be integral part of everything that we're doing. We – our weekly job – (inaudible) – include all the apprenticeships openings and recruitment. We have fliers. Our CA's talk about it with our staff.

Again, we talk about celebrating those the stories; right? Those are also really important to make sure that staff are hearing about the goals and the outcomes and so that everybody else can get excited about it.

And then I think that's really important and sometimes helps you have the excitement but also really connecting performance goals around your target. So we have a real goal of getting just more justice-involved individuals engaged in our apprenticeship programing. And so we're going to – we're providing – we're writing a performance goal around that to help our staff really focus in on what that measure is.

So those are some of the things that we're doing to just kind of keep everybody connected. I think really it's really, as a program, are you going to live and breathe it? Is this just something that you do on the side, or is it part of the work that you do and everybody being – I talked about a champion at the board, but you really need champions within your own team to really get the message out and get excited about it and just keep talking about it.

Don't talk about it only when it's recruitment time. Talk about it all the time. Get people excited. So that's some of the stuff we do to get the support and training for our team. Thank you, Amanda. Back to you.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Deb. I like the enthusiasm too. For question four, "What next steps are you considering to expand work-based learning further?" And I'm going to start with Jeanna.

MS. CALDWELL: Thanks, Amanda. Missouri is looking at expanding the work-based learning further by really identifying what the needs are of our talent pipeline. So, significantly, we have utilized – and this might not be something that others have done – we utilized our statewide funds to support work-based learning opportunities, as well as registered apprenticeship.

Now, we're pivoting towards meeting the needs that employers have identified, meeting the needs of filling the gap that we obviously have with getting people into opportunities by focusing on pre-apprenticeship.

We've also made sure that we're offering high-quality technical assistance to those who are developing the on-the-job training programs, those who are developing the incumbent worker training programs. The technical assistance and the attention and time that we've put into that is what's allowing us to be able to partner better.

So we work first in stages to where we develop the people who are on the frontlines with working with individuals, make sure that they know that they have a common language and a firm foundation of what we are doing. And then you move across to other interagency partners and then onto community-based organizations and be able to establish partnerships that ensure that, not only are you creating opportunities that are needed, appropriate, and relevant through work-based learning, but you're also meeting the needs and filling the gaps that exist from decades of operating within our own silos.

So whenever you reach out and you establish those relationships beyond your own agency, your own organization, you're actually making efforts that ensure that more people can access the types of training that are proven to be able to get people back to work faster and prepare them for the opportunities that they need.

So some of the other things that we've done to support that would be the development of technical assistance guides for those who do the work and who are working directly with jobseekers and employers and then also work on our own policy to ensure that the things that we create are in the best interests of jobseekers and employers.

And we also have developed playbooks for things such as apprenticeships that allow a seeker to walk their way through the process and be able to answer common questions that we would encounter. It helps to build up the confidence of the staff that interact with jobseekers and the staff that interact with employers.

That type of development allows us to ensure that what we're doing is going to make sure that work-based learning isn't something that we just do alone as an organization, that those same tools that we develop and we're confident about with our own staff are able to be used by other agencies doing the work, are able to be used by our intermediary network that we have as far as coordinators for work-based learning opportunities. And really it's looking at, how are we able to do better to reach beyond our walls and partner with those who are doing the work already?

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Jeanna. I like the idea of having those – the infrastructure in place in terms of partnerships and how to build that from the ground up and making sure that you have all the right tools, whether it's toolkits or playbooks, as you mentioned, and just having active technical assistance that responds to the needs of your partners.

So I'm going to turn it over to Meg next. What are your thoughts?

MARGARET ODANGA: Thank you, Amanda. One of Minnesota's TAA next step will be to offer technical assistance to dislocated worker provider, and we say dislocated worker providers, because during TAA informational session in 2019, Minnesota TAA – (inaudible) – had a chance to educate some of the dislocated worker counselors that attended the event. And the education was on OJT benefits.

The dislocated worker counselors ask a lot of questions about OJT. They wanted to know how these benefits work and how they can offer the benefits to those who – (inaudible) – to work-based learning as opposed to classroom entitlement.

Since then, Minnesota TAA has been an increase of OJT applications from that – (inaudible). Because this was so successful, we're glad to extend this to other regions by offering technical assistance to dislocated worker providers in those particular regions.

Another strategy that we have is to create packets with information that we would share with employers. This will include OJT fliers, TAA brochures, and more information on how to connect with TAA program, if a person is interested in OJT.

We hope to collaborate with workforce strategy consultants to reach out to employers that are hiring and inform them of the OJT benefits. These companies can – (inaudible) – utilize their knowledge of OJT benefits to offer a work-based learning opportunity to the customers during the hiring process.

This strategy will help in creating awareness of TAA programs, OJT opportunities, and, hopefully, connect customers to employers. Please note that the strategy that I've just highlighted is not the same as the – (inaudible) – model that was earlier discussed. Back to you, Amanda. Thank you.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Meg. I like the fact that you guys are sharing what you've learned too from work-based learning with your partners. That's a really great way to continue the conversation and expand work-based learning across the workforce system.

So next up, we have Laura. What are your thoughts on question four?

MS. LAUSMANN: Thanks, Amanda. For apprenticeship, we have a strategy that we reach out proactively to all apprenticeship programs to educate them on our program, as well as review our work ready talent pool with them and what they can bring. So we'll continue that outreach moving forward. But we have added an additional phone call.

So if a case manager has a participant who they've indicated they want to apply to a program or that they're on a waiting list, we're doing those proactive calls, that second call out to say, hey, we have somebody that's either applying or is on a waiting list for your program, reminding them of the benefits that they could bring, since they're trade impacted.

And then also this week, what we've learned is, for apprenticeship, when someone is selected – an example this week is we have a participant who was selected, is starting her work-based training next week, but they actually – get actually enrolled in this program as an apprentice until they actually – that first day of work.

And so what we've done is, is that we're creating – we're asking for those tool lists. We're getting everything in place so that we are ready to just turn on a dime to make sure that our participant has everything they need for their work-based learning. So it's just making those connections with that apprenticeship program more than once.

And then I think what we're really excited about this year for all work-based learning is that our TAA program manager has asked for some job developer positions. So we'll have at least one job developer in each of our – (inaudible) – areas. In the more urban area of our state – (inaudible), we'll have at least three job developers. And we're still in the approval process, but support from leadership is there.

And then if these are truly approved, these positions will be fully funded by trade, but they'll be leveraged throughout the greater WIOA partnership. So if there is a work-based learning or a job placement opportunity and we don't have a trade participant that fits that need, we are not going to let that employer's need go unfulfilled. So we will work with our partners and then – and make sure that we're filling that with – even within the greater WIOA programs or partners and that we meet that need.

And that will ensure that we're meeting the needs of the employers, the local workforce board strategies, and, ultimately, the local economy.

We're still kind of fleshing out all the pieces of what those job developers could do and how we can braid them in. But what we know currently is that most work-ready customers are – (inaudible) – find your work sites or find your – look for your apprenticeship opportunity. And it's already a challenging thing for them to do to sell themselves. But then when you add on some complexity with program benefits, adding that on can be pretty overwhelming.

And so our hope is that with these new job development positions, that they'll be able to close that deal, close that – (inaudible) – a little bit better. We, too, are also going to set some goals. And so they'll be goals that hopefully the job developers and our program staff will set. And then we'll be analyzing that data quarterly and then looking for best practices and some things that they've learned. So it will be just a continuous improvement piece of what we do. Back to you.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Laura. Just as a quick follow up, if you don't mind, can you just define what you think job developer is for Oregon or what it's going to be?

MS. LAUSMANN: Sort of fleshing that out, but I can do my best. And so in trying to – what is in our mind is they – these positions are a part of the Oregon Employment Department's Business Services. And so Business Services are part of the American Job Center all across our state.

And so they'll be – we're going to be leveraging – there was a question about how do you get somebody's job ready? So we'll be leveraging services within our greater American Job Center. So they may be going to partner workshops. They may be doing interview skills. And so the goal for the job developer is really to just be only working with people who are truly a job – a work-ready talent pool. That's what we're going to hand them. And then they'll be making those connections.

In some areas, Business Services, there's a lot of – they may be tied to a certain sector strategy. Those job developers will work with all partners to create – just looking for that one job-ready candidate that will fit that need. They're going to make those cold calls. They may go to – in my mind, they might go to a manufacturing place to say, hey, I've got five engineers. So there's a great pool that you can choose from.

And then I think just making sure that they're connected to the economists, the workforce board, that they're doing what they can, but they're also open and understanding that we live in rural Oregon. So maybe they don't have anything in this really small part of Oregon. But with the Trade Act benefits, we also have relocation. So making sure that they're connected to the larger state system. Those are the kinds of things I'm thinking of, but we're still fleshing it out.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Laura. Thanks for that impromptu definition. I appreciate it. There were some questions that came in through the chat. So I wanted to make sure that that was addressed.

Deb, what are your thoughts on next steps that you're considering to expand work-based learning further?

MS. FURLONG: Thank you. One second. So we are expanding in different things. Right now, we're doing a lot of construction. So what we're doing is looking at the different job markets, where are our needs, and really trying to pay attention to the employer side of the house and building based on what our employer sides are.

Again, to be at the table with our state, making sure that we're advocating for different programs that we see a need for and that our employers are having vacancies for. Really looking at a pre-apprenticeship program and putting some foundational pieces in place and talk about being a good partner to your program is building a pre-apprenticeship program based on what their needs are. So that is something we're really looking into doing this year to expand the opportunities.

I think I mentioned really looking at the in demand in our area, which is changing a little bit, given what's happening in the market. I think there were some questions in here about, how this is working in a different kind of environment?

And I have to say we're still trying to figure that out. I think there's still a lot of questions for all of us on this panel and all of us around the nation about how some of us are going to be affected by that. So just taking and being very aware and looking for opportunities.

And I'll say this. Really starting to work a lot heavier with our BS, our Business Services team, our job developers, whatever that terminology would be. We've really focused a lot of our energies on the side of the house of our career advisement and partnerships with our apprenticeship program.

And really this year, we really want to step outside of that and really kind of take that same momentum with our Business Services team and spend it on that side.

And, honestly, Nick – I got a chance to be with Nick even before this webinar and looking at some models that Nick was doing in Texas where he was leveraging the apprenticeships and OJT dollars at the same time and seeing how that might be able to open opportunities for some of the employers that we work with.

And I think – I can't remember who mentioned it here. But seeing apprenticeships – I think with Nick – in a nontraditional way and helping people really start talking with more employers in our county about that it's not all just construction. And how can this work for you? And really building a collaboration to support our smaller businesses. And that's kind of what I see as exciting right now.

I'm working with the state on a A-Plus certification apprenticeship that's coming together, and that's really targeting small employers that don't feel like they can really sit at the table and play an apprenticeship and building this collaboration. We're excited. We feel confident it's going to do well, but it'll hopefully build a model for us to support smaller businesses and see themselves at the table for apprenticeships. That's just some of what we're going to do. Thanks, Amanda.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks, Deb. And thanks, everybody on the panel today. Really awesome feedback. Everything was, I think, very helpful for the audience.

As I said earlier, I highly recommend that you all connect with these folks. They are very engaged and interested in having a conversation. So please reach out. At the end of this PowerPoint, there's everyone's contact information. So feel free to send them direct email.

So to wrap up, I'd like to just note that if you have any questions, you can continue to enter in the chat. We have about four minutes left, but feel free to reach out to us, again, anyone on the panel, if you have any further questions as well.

Some resources. We have a fair amount, but I just want to highlight two that are new from the last webinar. That's the OJT toolkit. There were several questions that came in through the chat that asked about what are the tools available for OJT, if there is a toolkit for that. And it's on WorkforceGPS, I believe.

And the DOL case study ACS and Gulf Coast Workforce Development Board, I highly recommend that everyone check that one out too.

And upcoming we have two webcasts. One of them is TAA Technical Assistance Materials: What Are They and Where to Find Them. That will be posted by April 29th at the latest, and a Successor-in-Interest, which will be posted by Monday, May 31st at the latest.

And with that, I'd like to turn it back over to Grace to close out. Thank you, everybody. Thank you for your time, your energy, and your interest in work-based learning.

(END)