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**Transcript of Webinar**

**COVID-19 Lessons Learned: Structuring DOL YouthBuild Work Experiences In and Out of Pandemic Times**

**Tuesday, April 27, 2021**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

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GRACE MCCALL: And welcome to "COVID-19 Lessons Learned: Structuring DOL YouthBuild Work Experiences In and Out of Pandemic Times." So without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator for today, Toni Wilson, acting YouthBuild unit chief, United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Take it away, Toni.

TONI WILSON: Thank you so much, Grace, and welcome. Good day, everyone. Welcome YouthBuild family. We're so glad to have you here today for this webinar.

As she said, my name is Toni Wilson. I'm the acting YouthBuild unit chief. For anyone who didn't get the email, Jenn Smith, who was our awesome director, has moved over to the Division of Strategic Investments. So she's only down the hall, but she isn't leading YouthBuild. So I'll be acting until a formal replacement is put into place.

But it's my pleasure to be here today. I know that under COVID, this has been one of the more challenging areas of our work in reference to that whole work experience aspect of it. So we are extremely excited to present both our white paper in this webinar today.

So let me get started in reference to who we have with us. We have Phoebe Reeves, and she is the associate director of technical assistance with YouthBuild USA. We have Soni Waterman. She's one of our great DOL YouthBuild technical assistance coaches.

We also have Lisa Newman, she is a director of YouthBuild Helena; and Jeffrey Higgs, executive director of the YouthBuild Memphis. And we have Malcolm Wallace, who is director of YouthBuild Memphis. Jaques Hamilton is one of the job developers at YouthBuild Memphis. We don't expect that he'll be on the call today, but his information is at the end, if anyone who wants to reach out to him for any reason.

All right. Our learning objectives today are to define and understand the YouthBuild work experience. So that's what we really want to make sure everybody leaves really making sure we're on the same page around that.

Examines some practical ways to show participants and employer partners the mutual value of work experience, and then, most importantly, the peer sharing. We want to get some best and emerging work experience practices and the success and challenges.

But before I hand it over to our presenters today, I want to first start out with a quiz to see where things are at. And so our first question today is, what has been the most successful part of YouthBuild work experience from your perspective as a staff?

So just the specific work the participants are doing, the work experience directly improving placement opportunities, the work has a combination of virtual and in-person with easy transitions, and hopefully no one picks no -- (inaudible), but there is that?

Once again, what has been the most successful part as the staff? And so thank you so much for participating. I see that so far it's -- majority is around that directly improving the placement opportunities. I also have done some work with the Youth Readiness Apprenticeship grants, and I know that this is a challenge across the board. So, hopefully, you'll get to leave today with some tips.

All right. Grace, can we pull up the next poll? And then our second poll is, what has been the most successful work experience from your perspective of your participants? So this one's around the participants. The specific work they're doing, that the work experience will culminate in a professional full- or part-time job, or just getting a better understanding of working virtually at least some of the time?

So what have been the most successful part from the perspective of some of your participants, at least that you think from their perspective?

All right. And so looking really close, but it looks like the majority are in that work experience that culminate in a professional full- or part-time job. But pretty much tied with getting an understanding working in that virtual at least some of the time.

Definitely agree with all of that. Thank you, Grace. You can take that down. Definitely agree with those poll responses, and it's very similar to what we're seeing across our other grants also.

All right. Let's see. This -- all right. So with that said, I am actually going to pass this over to Phoebe.

MS. REEVES: Thank you so much, Toni. Good morning and good afternoon to everyone. It's wonderful to be here with you all this afternoon to talk about YouthBuild work experiences.

So we wanted to start really at the beginning with what makes a YouthBuild work experience so important. And as you look at the context that is set around the YouthBuild work experience and the life experiences that youth are coming into the work experience with, you can see that there is a lot of pressure. There's a lot of stress. There are a lot of concerns, food and housing insecurity, many things that are outside the actual work part of the work experience itself.

And of course, with YouthBuild, why we need to create these work experiences for young people that are going to go above and beyond what may be a typical view of a work experience is that there are a lot of things that can be found out about jobs, about what a youth wants to specialize in, about the routine and discipline of a job, that it's not -- there is no magical experience that will necessarily happen between finishing active programing and entering placement that can prepare a young person for placement and ongoing work really more than a high-quality work experience.

So going straight to job placement, the question is, when do you learn about this work practice? When do you learn about the opportunity for professional skill that's hands on?

So I'd like to, again, welcome our two sites today, YouthBuild Helena, YouthBuild Memphis, Jeffrey and Malcolm from YouthBuild of Memphis and Lisa from YouthBuild Helena.

And I'd like to pitch a question to you all to start us out, because we're going to have a conversation about this today, much as we did in our last webinar, and wanted to start with, where did you all start with work experience? What were your expectations? What were your goals? And if the pandemic did, in fact, change your goals and expectations, at what point did that change take place?

JEFFREY HIGGS: This is Jeffrey. Good afternoon, everyone. I'll take a stab at it first.

So I guess, initially, we wanted to work with a local employment agency who train young people to work in maintenance at FedEx. We're the home of FedEx here, and a lot at the local hospitals. And when the pandemic hit, it really just kind of stopped all of that.

But what we did have as a fallback was one of the two houses that we had under construction. And after we initially got over the shock of the pandemic and then we started realizing, well, maybe we can come together a little bit, if we socially distance, put on gloves, and mask up. So -- and then we finally got kind of used to doing the virtual thing.

Some of our -- we started using that particular job site and hands-on experience for our young people, short of us having anything else initially because trying to regroup around the whole issue around the pandemic. So we just kind of went from what we had planned to do with this large corporation to what we kind of could do with our training on on a site where we could control all the factors.

LISA NEWMAN: Hi. This is Lisa from YouthBuild Helena. Hello, everyone. We had always offered hands-on work experience with our housing partner Habitat for Humanity and then had done work experience kind of on a case-by-case basis pre-COVID. When we lost our ability to be at the Habitat site last spring, we then turned to our partners -- our employer partners who had signed onto our pre-apprenticeship agreement. And they were interested in having our students do work experience at their work sites, and they paid them. So that was our -- kind of our foray into working with private sector employers on a larger level than we had in the past.

PHOEBE REEVES: Thank you, Lisa. So if I can go back, Jeffrey and Malcolm, to you both for a minute, you had mentioned transitioning over to a virtual aspect with your work experience. Can you say a little bit more about that and how challenging that was and/or how it helped you to continue moving forward with the work experience even during COVID?

MALCOLM WALLACE: Yes. This is Malcolm Wallace. What we were able to do, utilizing the Chromebooks which we were -- we had issued out to the participants was to line up some -- and utilizing some cameras that we had at their work site. We were able to show some of the participants what the other participants were doing in a room setting in our office.

What we would do is take out -- take a group -- we divided our participants in groups of six, and each day we'd take a different -- (inaudible) -- out and they would be able to see what the other unit -- what the other participants were doing that site.

And then we were able to line up with some of the local contractors here, as Jeff mentioned, and they were able to see what we were doing and point out to our participants some corrective measures that they could do to improve themselves, prepare them to get ready to come to their worksite once we got the all -- the all clear to go out on the worksites.

That's what we were to do. We've actually utilized the technology that we had -- we were able to purchase and to have the participants get on their Chromebook and see what the other participants were doing, along with getting some feedback from contractors.

MR. HIGGS: But I will tell you, it was not easy. 16 to 24-year-olds who, in some cases, I know they're proficient on those phones, but we had to do some training to get them up to speed on those Chromebooks. And they were refurbished Chromebooks, too, I might add, that we got from a local national refurbisher at a real, real, real good price. So I just wanted to throw that in.

MS. REEVES: That sounds terrific.

SONI WATERMAN: Sorry. Good morning. This is Soni, and I had a question for Malcolm and Jeffrey. So was this something that you started because of the COVID pandemic, and is it something that you think was helpful to your youth, involved more youth than you would typically use, and is it something that you would continue to use post-pandemic, if we ever get there?

MR. WALLACE: Well, the answer to you is yes, yes, and yes. It was something that we started with our cohort too, and then it spread over to our latest cohort. And once we moved into another phase, we plan on utilizing that more because we are able to reach out to the participants at all times. And also, we're able to get them to do this as a part of their learning what the world of work is going to be like because not everybody is going to be able to work out on the site at all times. And there's going to be a lot of at-home learning or at-home bits work in the future.

So, yes. We plan on doing it. It was a part of cohort -- excuse me -- the pilot of our pandemic relief because our second cohort started right at the point of when the pandemic hit. We had just got through mental toughness, and we went into -- they were starting their training, and then we had to close down right at the first of -- the end of March, 1st o April.

So, yes. It was a part of our thought pattern for that. And we will plan on doing it in the future once we move into any other YouthBuild phase. Thank you.

MS. WATERMAN: That's great. Thank you so much. Now, with talking about this with your work experience versus hands-on experience, which could be two separate things or could be built upon each other, would you consider this to be the hand -- part of the hands-on training that you would do in your construction model? Or is this part of your work experience? And how do those two correlate?

MR. WALLACE: We would consider it a hybrid of both because, again, when we had to go virtual, we actually had to -- as you well know, we had shut down the sites altogether. But fortunate for us, we had the ability to -- like I said, to go out and actually show some of the construction work and some of the tools that they would be using back to the participants on -- while they were at home.

So once we came back onto the site, we were able to then utilize that knowledge as a part of their hands-on training. But we were also able to contact some employers that really thought that was a great idea and wanted to utilize some of our participants during -- using the same kind of system. Did that answer the question?

MS. WATERMAN: Yes. Thank you, Malcolm. I really appreciate that.

The next part that we're looking at is the work experience framework, and there are multiple parts to an actual framework. And as you look through this, we want to think about the purpose as to why we're doing it and what pieces are involved when we're planning it, when we're implementing it, and during follow up.

I'm looking at some of these areas on the PowerPoint right now, and, thinking about the purposes, I'm going to ask Lisa and Malcolm and Jeffrey to share in a minute how this framework aligns to what they are doing in their programs specifically.

This is about preparing youth to enter this workforce with as many skills and talents and abilities as possible. You want to have a clear job description of what youth will be doing while they're on the work experience so that they understand and the partners understand and you understand as the staff. You want them to be able to take those skills that they've learned while they're in the program and apply them to a real work experience.

Going on to the next slide, you also want to determine when your work experience is going to happen and how long it will be. Are your participants going to be there all day long, for an extended period of time? Is it a couple of days a week? Do they continue to come to your program? How does that work exactly, and how is that related to the credential?

And very importantly, we need to know who's going to supervise these youth and what -- how that supervision will take place. We don't want them left on their own too much, but we also want them to be able to use those skills that they've learned.

So as you're thinking about this -- oh, and going on to the next -- sorry. This should be real work supervised by a real employer. So we're going to talk in a second and we've alluded to that about the difference between the hands-on experience in your program and work experience.

Work experience typically takes place in real world. Okay. Here is the definition that we're looking at how work experience is versus hands-on training. Hands-on training typically takes place in the program as part of the credentialing development process or the training.

Work experience usually is a culminating activity prior to placement phase where they're in the real world working under a supervisor.

So thinking about that, Lisa, Malcolm, and Jeffrey, can you talk to us a little bit about how this framework aligns with what you are doing and how you have differentiated between the hands-on that takes place in the program and the work experience?

MS. NEWMAN: This is Lisa. I think that the important thing is that it is real work. They are working under a supervisor. There's a job description, and there is an understanding.

I've shared a training summary on the file share, but an outline of what skills that the employer is expected to be training the participant on. And I think just an agreement with the employer whether or not it's a full-time work experience. In our case, we were able to work with an employer who allowed the students to attend the Friday activities while they were doing the work experience so they could also participate in the community service and other life skill training that we offer on Fridays.

MS. WATERMAN: So, Lisa, how many participants do you typically have at a time on your work experience training?

MS. NEWMAN: So right now, we'll probably have before the end of this cohort, probably around 15 because we're -- our cohort is -- we have a small cohort -- three small cohorts during our grant cycle. But those won't all occur at the same time, but it's -- I think it's really important to emphasize that it's the prep time getting students ready to do the work experience is going to vary because you're going to have different skill and abilities. Your students are going to have different skills and abilities.

So finding the right employer match is real important and not -- we want them to also complete the core program, which is when they're going to be getting their NCCER, their HiSET, some other credentials.

So we want to make sure that they complete that part of the program as well, because we have a real hot employer job market right now in Helena. So we want to make sure that they're fully prepared to do the work experience and then hoping that turns into a real job for them when it's over.

MS. WATERMAN: Do you have specific prerequisites for your participants? And I guess what I'm asking is, how do you determine which participants are ready to do a job training work experience and --

MS. NEWMAN: So we start right away. It's a job training program. So one of the -- in addition to education and construction, employability skills, work readiness is very important. So we train -- we use a curriculum called A Game, and it teaches seven foundational workplace skills.

But all of our students are required to complete that. It's offered -- we offer it both in person, but it's also available online. We want our students to have a resume and have some experience with interviewing, and we would also want them to have completed a job shadow.

MS. WATERMAN: Okay. And your participants, you mentioned -- maybe you could share a little bit more with us on how are your participants supported while they're in the work experience with your case managers or your academic instructors, your construction trainer, your job developer? How does that support occur for them?

MS. NEWMAN: Yeah. So our case manager will visit the work site to check on the students. The students can also access the case manager with regular case management meetings. We provide assistance with tools and work clothing, maybe some -- a gas voucher or two until they get their first paycheck. Or there may be other things that come up that they might -- they might need a -- they might need help with a phone or a phone card. But whatever it is, whatever, we have offered those support services to help them retain that job for that period of time.

Our construction trainer also stays in touch with the contractors that we're working with to kind of get an idea of how the student -- how the participant is doing and what progress they're making.

MS. WATERMAN: Ok, thank you, Lisa. I see that we have the slides up for your actual Montana Department of Labor YouthBuild Helena pre-apprenticeship training. So maybe you could walk us through that.

MS. NEWMAN: Sure. So just to note, Helena is the capital of Montana and population is about 32,000. Our program, we've been funded since 2011, and we have been fortunate to have an agreement with the Montana Department of Labor and Industries apprenticeship program.

That's a pre-apprenticeship. We have set pre-apprenticeship standards, meaning they recognize the training that we're providing through NCCER. And then those hours the students are either in classroom or on site at the Habitat site are counted, and those hours then are awarded on a certificate that can be applied towards a registered apprenticeship program. Typically, that has been carpentry in the past.

We have -- to do -- to have that agreement with the Department of Labor, we're required to have two employer partners. We have two, Abraham Construction and Highland Builders, and they agreed when they signed that that they will provide an on-the-job work experience. They will guarantee a job interview, consider possible advanced placement, and then provide -- give points towards their selection.

So this slide that's up right now shows the hours that are assigned to this apprenticeship standards, and, actually, it should -- it's 108 classroom hours and then 204, not 208, worksite hours are available to students who are half-time education, half-time construction. But every cohort we always have students who will transition out of education, and at that point, they can choose to do full-time construction or a work experience.

And if you notice -- okay. Private sector. So as I mentioned, we offer that to those students who complete the NCCER course work but also who are are ready for the work experience. We try to find a good match, depending on the training that may be needed.

Employers vary. Some employers are better than others. We will offer support services and, those worksite training that is provided on the -- through the work experience complements what's been done in our classroom and on the hands-on training at the Habitat work site. And for all cases so far, we've been -- we've had full-time work experiences.

This is just an example of last year when we partnered with Highland Builders, and they actually had six students throughout the summer. Two students are still working for Highland and we've -- we joke about it. But one of the one of the participants called recently, wondering if we had other students. So we think he'd maybe been promoted to human resources, but still there and he's doing really well. You can go to the other slide.

So the other thing that we've done to provide work experience is to partner with a WIOA program. We have both adults and the youth WIOA program at the Career Training Institute, our parent organization.

A few years ago, Habitat hired -- we did a work experience with a YouthBuild participant, and he was ultimately hired by Habitat after completing 700 hours.

And then we have also had a participant in the past enter an apprenticeship with Abraham Construction. And so both Abraham and Highland Builders right now are -- they're ready. They're waiting for a referral of students for them to start to work with. Next slide.

So just -- these are just some takeaways. We've found that employers are very willing to give participants an opportunity to work on different projects rather than -- most -- in most cases it's been residential.

Our relationship last summer was just very opp- -- an opportune time because we were limited. We had limited access to a lot of sites because of COVID. We also incentivized our certificates, the NCCER and the Department of Labor carpenter pre-apprenticeship certificates are -- we give students $200 each for each of those certificates at the end of the core program.

I think we're in a small -- on a very small scale creating a talent pipeline for contractors. So not only do we have a really good relationship with our local contractors, but we also work real closely with the state Apprenticeship Bureau. And they have also been talking with us about other opportunities like electrical, HVAC, carpentry, plumbing that are really -- those trades right now are very much in demand here.

And so I think I've covered most of my slides. But it's just -- it's a very good time right now to find employers who are willing to work with our young people and -- because they are just in real dire need of workers.

MS. WATERMAN: Lisa, can I ask you -- I want to thank you so much for that presentation, but can I ask you to follow up a little bit on that?

I've heard from many programs that -- like you just mentioned, that the workforce right now is hot, and many of our participants would prefer or say they would prefer to just go to work. So how are you balancing that, and how are you maintaining your participants in your program, keeping your potential employers at bay while you train? And how do you balance all that, and how do you make that work?

MS. NEWMAN: It's tricky because there's just -- there's a real fine line. I mean, even restaurants right now are starting to hire at $12, $13 an hour. I think trying to keep them -- trying to keep our young people focused. And we just had a real great session last week of job shadows and getting some of these -- some of our participants out meeting these employers at the worksite to see what's possible.

And we also pay a stipend that I think helps keep some of our students -- our participants here right now. It's $150 a week and then there's extra -- additional stipend, if you have perfect attendance or if you're on the leadership council. So that kind of keeps them here for now, but it's a little tricky when they -- there are just so many jobs and, in some cases, not not jobs with a lot of upward mobility. They may -- the pay may sound good right now to a 16- or 17-year-old, but there's not a long career path there.

And so just I think it's a constant conversation we're having with our students about you just need to keep your eye on your long-term goals, and what you do today is going to help you get a lot further along in the future.

MS. WATERMAN: Thank you, Lisa. We did have a question from Arthur. I just want to hit this before we move on, when he asked about per week. So I think he was asking about your stipends. Could you explain that a little more for us?

MS. NEWMAN: We -- yeah. We have a tiered stipend system, but the first three months, it starts at $100 a week. And it's all based on attendance and participation. And the second three months, it goes to $125 a week, and the last two months it goes to $150 a week. But it's all -- it's based on what the instructors report as far as attendance and how well a participant participates during the day.

If I could also add, just so everyone knows, I shared the pre-apprenticeship standards with the Department of Labor around the file share, and there's another tool that we use for pre- and post-assessments of work readiness that just might be helpful to somebody who wants to know how to evaluate the before and after. It actually could be -- there could be a midpoint evaluation as well on how well somebody is progressing through a work experience.

MS. WILSON: Hi. And so this is Toni Wilson. I just want to jump in and just flagging that definitely this is a structure that is working really well, also because of your state apprenticeship relationship at the state office. And so I know some are working with state apprenticeship offices and they each will have apprenticeship contacts that can work with you.

So I'll put a link in there. If you haven't done so already, really trying to partner to help. These things don't happen overnight. I'm sure you guys have done a lot of work to kind of help lead to these pathways.

MS. NEWMAN: And I would add that in Montana, we have the state director, but there are also field coordinators. And so we work most closely with the field coordinator who covers our region. So I would imagine there'd be something similar in other states.

MS. WILSON: Yeah. Just to flag a point in reference to the apprentice office, there are youth readiness apprenticeship grants. And so a lot of them are set up where they're -- either their apprenticeship program or their youth component is connected with the apprenticeship office, and they work with that field coordinator.

And so that bridge is really helping in reference to the placements. So definitely a piece of the model to look at and have conversations with your federal or your state, depending on where you're located, apprenticeship office.

MS. REEVES: Great. Thank you so much, Toni, and thank you, Lisa.

Pitching this out now to, again, both of the guest sites that we have the pleasure of being with today, do you lay out work experience? We have some sample fact sheets here for participants and for partners.

Do you lay out work experience for your participants and partners in either a way that's like this or some other kind of way where you really deconstruct the whole process with both so that everybody understands here all the component pieces, here's how this is going to go? And if so, what does it look like?

MR. WALLACE: This is Malcolm Wallace in Memphis. We had a little bit different situation than they had in Helena because of our relationship with our WIOA agency here and because of what was happening throughout the pandemic and the COVID here in Memphis.

We were able to create -- and because of our relationship with not over the mayor's office but the Chamber of Commerce and the Workforce Investment Board -- I mean, our WIOA board and several other agencies.

What we were able to do was create a collaborative partnership. It took about a minute, whereas the city and the workforce -- I mean, WIOA board came up with the funds, and they were able to solicit several employers in the community and because of Mr. Higgs' position with the chambers, YouthBuild pillar, which came up with an -- (inaudible) -- of work skills of not a one up skill -- not a one up skill.

We created a -- not only a hands on -- I mean, excuse me. I'm sorry -- work skills for us but for the whole Memphis community. And what it's allowed us to do is to have all --most of our participants in our current impact cohort to sign up for the program.

Then the -- they went through a pre-work skills training, and then they were assigned through the chamber and WIOA to select the job with -- and those were able, because of the layoffs and the supervision that we were providing, they were able to put our people into these jobs. And what we were able to do was outline to them exactly what we needed.

And that source is -- that it place was incorporated into this whole program. In fact, that program is going on right now throughout the city of Memphis. And it's because of YouthBuild Memphis that helped create the program.

So to answer your question, yes. With our program, with our work skills program, work experience program, we are able to utilize the YouthBuild information and put that before the committee. And it was incorporated into what the employers would do, what we would do, and how our participants would participate in the program.

MS. REEVES: And how many youth would they take on at a time and put in these different employer partners that they had? Would they be able to take your whole group and then split them out? Was there sort of a tiered timeframe at which they'd start out with a certain number and then go to the rest?

MR. WALLACE: Well, they were able -- they -- what they're doing is they're paring down. I think they -- in all they got over 1200 applications. So not only our participants but youth participants throughout the city of Memphis. And they broke them down into 18 -- sections of 18 and we had most of our participants assigned in and they're about to start the second half of the program with work experience. And we have a total right now of about 15 participants participating, anxiously awaiting their job assignments.

MR. HIGGS: So really -- so what they did was, of the 18 participants that we had -- -and I think this was some of cohort one and all of cohort two because cohort two was the group that really got caught up in the pandemic in this past cohort.

So, ultimately, each one of those 18 trainees ultimately found some employment, and it was either -- it was directed toward this upskill 901 jobs conference really is what it was that Malcolm mentioned. And in this job conference, they concentrated on how are we -- there was a pillar, but really every -- (inaudible). And I was -- naturally was the youth pillar.

And so what they concentrated on was, how do we get these young people employed? How are we pairing them with an employee that can provide a direct supervision, as Soni mentioned earlier, provide the direct supervision and then turn around and give them the training them needed and them put them in a meaningful job experience?

MS. REEVES: And have you -- or I should say, what kind of feedback have you received from your participants on these work experiences so far?

MR. WALLACE: Well, I mean, so for the second cohort, those guys are very happy because they're working. And so feedback has been very positive.

On this group now that we are in with this third cohort, they have been -- and I'm now being very straight and forthright. This has been a toughest cohort for us because they really got inundated with this pandemic. I mean, and I know this is not about mental health and all of that, but we've seen the effects of that. We're seeing the effects of these young people being confined.

And so this group has really been -- it's really hit them a little bit more because they have -- they have went -- we sort of lost their attention. And I don't mean totally but -- and one of the things -- and I don't know if Jaques is on, but he was supposed to help present today.

So one of the things that he has tried to do and what we've tried to do is concentrating on repairing them, how to talk to people, how to interview. I mean, we're doing some mock job interviews. We helped them with resumes. And so we've spent a lot of time trying to improve their ability to interact with employers. And we think part of doing that is building this component of engaging them so that they know how to engage with employers. And as we came in this morning, there was some mock interviewing going.

So we've had to kind of switch a little bit so that we could really grab their attention in the end. And I attribute it -- and we've had mental health professionals that have come in and talk to these young people, and it's -- (inaudible) -- on this.

And so this thin line between hands on and then real work experience is something that we've had to kind of go down. But I think we've had success because we've got -- I was on a job site this morning and -- or yesterday, matter of fact, and one of my -- one of our cohort two members was out there working and happy to see me and all that.

So it's been a challenge. I guess that's -- if nothing else, it's been a challenge working with our trainees during this pandemic period. But all of the great intentions that we've had in place, and -- (inaudible) -- that we'll -- (inaudible) -- talk about a little bit later. But it's been tough.

Can you go to the next slide, please? Okay. And the next slide right there. All right. Now, and the next slide. I'm sorry.

Now, the partnership as it's listed here was the creation because of our strong relationships that were created before YouthBuild Memphis ever got a YouthBuild grant. And it carried on once they got the grant because of our ideas with -- that we took to the mayor. The mayor actually came here and -- via Zoom and talked to our participants. And it was from there that he decided that he would help put in some additional funds to help programs like us that would address the needs of the participants similar to ours, not only in our program but in other programs similar to us.

And what the chamber did after the youth pillar and after seeing upskills 912, they wanted to create a conference where all youth programs in Memphis would come together and have a virtual conference. From that point, that came in -- if you go to the next slide, please.

That created these goals that we came up with, goals not only for YouthBuild but goals throughout the city. YouthBuild here in Memphis has been a very integral part of addressing the needs of at-risk youth, similar to those that we working.

So if you go to the next slide, this is the result of the program. And as you could see, similar to what they did in Helena, we have the employers who supervise and host our youth, and then they provide support throughout the work experience and then reinforce what they need as it relates to developing a job and a training for the youth. Next slide, please.

Okay. And this is what came out -- this is the elements of how the program is being operated right now. As I told you, the program is currently in -- (inaudible) -- state. As you can see here, the program we -- they enrolled -- the enrollment period was from February the 15th to March the 19th of this past year.

So we had all of our youth enrolled enrolled -- all of our trainees. I'm sorry. We don't use the word youth. We don't use the word participant here. We use the word trainee so they can get the idea that they are actually in a work situation, not a classroom or school situation.

So the first in March, they did the enrollment. Then we came -- then they came back to our situation, and we just finished the employment prep situation. And then they have now started to be notified of their employment situation.

And as you can see, their wages are $12 an hour for 25 hours of work, and that is not being paid out of our funds. That is been paid by the WIOA funds for this particular situation and from the city funds. And we told the employers that why they all -- I think they signed on almost -- at least 18 to 25 employers, and they were able to tell them this is not going to cost you anything. And so they like this situation.

And, therefore, we were able to get -- as -- (inaudible) -- said, most of cohort two and most of cohort one. And we've got two or three of cohort three that will be receiving their assignment in the near future. Next slide, please.

And here is what the benefit, as you can see, to our particular trainees. And everyone who has already participated in the program, both from the employer's standpoint and from a trainee standpoint, as -- (inaudible) -- pointed out, is beginning to give us positive feedback on what they're learning, how they're learning, and how it's going to benefit them in the long run.

And what we're projecting that during this period, that the trainees will have the opportunity to earn at least between $700 and $5700 during this, if they participate in the program for full-time. And that's where I think -- because we are in a city that is understanding that we have a mayor that understands the need to help the youth get help, move forward and not be a detriment to the community but be an asset to the community.

This is where YouthBuild Memphis and this training -- this work experience training program benefitted not only our program but throughout the city. And the mayor has sent his people, his staff down here to talk to us about how we can carry on this program and how we can link them together. But it wouldn't be -- the program wouldn't be the way YouthBuild is unless we had the support of not only our staff but the workforce that's out there, WIOA staff and the people at the AJC that we talk to every month. We meet with them every month and discuss the benefits of their OJT program and other programs like this.

MS. REEVES: And do trainees participate in those monthly debriefs?

MR. WALLACE: Yes. Some of them do. Yes.

MS. REEVES: Nice. And have they expressed, meaning your training trainees -- have they expressed a favorite work experience in all of the work experience offerings that you've been sharing with us? Is there one that stands out for them as highly desirable? Are there work experiences that they'd like to do that currently there aren't partners for?

MR. HIGGS: Yeah. I mean. They have. And so what's occurring with that is, as we sort of transition -- right now, we are not a Construction Plus YouthBuild site. Hopefully, if the planets line up, we will be next time, but right now, we're not. And so we see young people all the time. They come to us that want to do some other kinds of things.

And then that is -- I mean, we have -- -- (inaudible) -- the second largest medical device manufacturer in the country. So that's a big need for that. And so yeah. We get that all of the time.

And so, you know what? What I will say, which is something that's exciting that's coming down the pipeline, despite all that Malcolm said, we've had an employer who have approached us in the last two or three weeks about a hands-on experience that actually was presented to the board. It's our local utility company. We have a three-service utility company.

They had a situation where they had these air conditioners that they would install in seniors' houses and people who needed air conditioning. And -- but during the pandemic, it's been sitting in this warehouse. So they heard about what we were doing in one of our quarterly newsletters, and they've approached us.

And so now, we're setting up this program where we are going to be using the installation of air conditioning window units as a hands on. They will pay our participants. We're going to train them. I mean, it's not rocket science. It will give them an opportunity to learn the skill, some electrical skills, how to use certain tools, install these units, and they will be getting some hands-on experience.

So that's why I mentioned earlier this fine line between hands on and real work but this is real work, but it's really some hands on I think. And we are really excited about that because they are -- I mean, to have as a partner moving forward is very exciting. They have monopoly in town. So to have them on board with YouthBuild, we're excited about. This is a benefit to the community. Yeah. And it's a benefit to the community. It's a community service event as well for our young people. So we're really excited.

MS. REEVES: So does that mean that there is -- given that you have all of this community support, you have all of this partner support, how does that influence what the sweet spot for total number of hours in the work experience is?

So is it something where the trainees can go on and on and it doesn't matter if it's a lot of hours? It's that exciting. They're learning a lot. There's a lot of engagement with the community. Or do you think that there's a number of hours that sort of aligns as here's a good number before we switch them on to doing something else, whether it's another work experience or on to something different?

MR. HIGGS: Well, I mean, you know our young people. They're going to do what they are required to do. I'm not just -- (inaudible). They're going to do what is required of them. But what we have found though is, while they are doing the work, that they are learning these skills -- we had a young man, I mentioned him earlier, who I went by the job site and he's graduated and gone on. And he was just commenting. He was saying, I'm finally learning. Some of that stuff you all taught us is sort of coming back.

So we don't want to overwhelm them with a bunch of hours. What we try to do is meet that number that we've outlined. And if they can get that and as they move away from us and move maybe to an apprenticeship program or a regular job, then they'll have this experience sort of in their back pocket and they're not -- and not just have them doing hands for the sake of doing hands on.

MS. WATERMAN: So thank you so much, Malcolm and Jeffrey. Does anyone have any questions for any of our presenters at this point? Lisa? Jeffrey? Malcolm?

I know there may be lots of questions on how this partnership evolved. They explained some of it to you. But it's definitely been an exciting experience for me to observe this and see how this progressed.

I do have a question for you as far as to kind of start this off. Do you anticipate that the work experience will truly help with placement and having these youth maintain a job either in that area or in some -- in another career field?

MR. HIGGS: Yeah. So this is Jeffrey. Sorry. This is Jeffrey. I'm sorry. Yeah. I mean, I think for us, for sure. If we can get them -- and you all -- (inaudible) -- on this call, this conference know what I'm talking about with these young people.

If you can just get them to stay concentrated on what you're trying to engage with them and teach them, I think it definitely will pay off because the young man that I mentioned earlier that I came back to the job site, he was one of the -- (inaudible). He comes up there. He's going to not come, and something just happened and it clicked for him. And so, now, he's working every day on a construction site making pretty good money, $16, $17, $18 an hour.

So, yeah. I think that hands on, while we didn't do as much with him because he was in one of our first cohorts since the COVID -- I don't know if you remember this guy, but he is now -- (inaudible). I think yes. If you can show a young person that, if you can stay here and master this task, here is a job, a workforce opportunity that can help you further in life.

MS. NEWMAN: This is Lisa. I would agree. And I think one of the positive aspects of the work experience is that you have all these supports around the young person. The case manager's there. The instructor and the teacher are still available to them. The placement specialist is available to them, and they just are sort of wrapped into all these supports. So if they're having any challenges, they have a place to go and and then can work that out with the employer.

MS. WATERMAN: Lisa, Malcolm, and Jeffrey, do you have any questions for the listeners? Can you think of anything that you would like to know from them of questions that they might have for you?

MR. HIGGS: I would like to hear from some of the other programs what have -- what are some of the kinds of adjustments they've had to make in light of the COVID pandemic in terms of this hands on because it's been a challenge I know for all of us. But that would just be sort of something I would be interested in hearing, if somebody had something to share.

MS. NEWMAN: And I'd be interested -- two-thirds of our students are under the age of 18, and so when we're working with particularly 16-year-olds, getting them on a career path when they're very -- everything is about just what's happening today and how -- getting them to look long-term is challenging and if anybody had any thoughts on that.

MS. REEVES: So those are some questions for our attending grantees from the presenters. And, unfortunately, we can't have you come off mute to be able to answer those, but if you can put your responses in the main chat, that would be terrific.

If I can ask Lisa and Malcolm and Jeffrey, if you wouldn't mind just repeating your questions just one more time for the folks to be able to answer in the chat, that would be great.

MS. NEWMAN: This is Lisa. I would just ask if anybody had any strategies in particular in working with 16-year-olds and helping them develop career paths and what that -- type of work experience that might lead to.

MR. HIGGS: And this is Jeffrey, and my question was just simply, what are some of the sort of experiences that other programs have had during the pandemic in sort of adjusting in midstream to work experience and hands on in light of the population that we're dealing with?

MS. REEVES: Thank you so much.

MR. HIGGS: You're welcome.

MS. REEVES: And we do have a question for both of the presenters regarding whether either of you have the ability to bring a work experience into the follow-up time if a participant or trainee loses their job placement.

MR. HIGGS: Yeah. This is Jeffrey. I think the air conditioning installation will probably be one for us because it's something that we can train somebody on relatively quickly. The utility company has agreed to pay for that, and so I think that will be something, as I just think about where we could really supplement somebody who maybe lost a placement and get them trained, because, ultimately, I think it's going to lead to us having a larger relationship with Memphis Light, Gas and Water. So that -- for us, I think that could really be the beginning of something big.

MS. NEWMAN: And I would add that we've done that in the past and -- but it's been through a co-enrollment with the WIOA youth program. But I don't see any reason why we couldn't do that after the core program ended.

MS. REEVES: Great. Thank you.

MS. WATERMAN: I think with YouthBuild Memphis also, just because of the time frame, some of their participants will have been exited while they're still in the work experience. Also, for Malcolm and Jeffrey, what do you anticipate the placement to be? Do you believe that these -- many of these youth will be hired in these positions? Is there an opportunity for them to be hired into these positions? How might that work?

MR. WALLACE: This is Malcolm. Yes. It's our feeling that once they get through with their special work experience program, that many of the youth who are -- like Lisa in the -- in Helena, we have certain number of people that are 16. We're going to -- hopefully they won't be the ones that the employer wants. But if they are, we'll deal with that.

But those folks that are -- one of the placements that we know of over there in West Memphis, they're redoing the casinos over there. We have -- they want to place -- (inaudible) -- that have participants -- we've had four participants over there, but they are all of the age between 20 and 24. So they're all going to be able to -- they're going to be able to keep the job once they come off of work experience.

So, yes. The answer to that question is yes.

MS. WATERMAN: Another question that I had. I was -- speaking about follow up, not for the participants but kind of feedback, I mean, for -- with the participants and the partners, do you have a process for gathering feedback? And how does that feedback impact how you might change or improve or modify your work experience?

MR. WALLACE: Yeah. Again, our program will end in the end of June with the work experience. And, as you well know, that will lay over into once we've transferred this cohort. What we're planning to doing is two phase.

Once -- (inaudible) -- is made, we're planning on contacting those employers that have worked with those -- our trainees and give -- and ask for a mid-term evaluation of them, and then at the end of the program, ask them to give us a complete follow up and analysis of the good, the bad, and the ugly about what happened, again, because this part -- this is a program not just with YouthBuild. The AJC and the city, and it's -- they're going to do their own evaluation too, and we're going to meet and do a post for -- on the program to see if this is something that we want to do in the next -- continuing in the next fiscal year for the city.

So, yes. We're going to follow up with the employer and do some evaluations and some analysis of what's going to go on.

MS. NEWMAN: This is Lisa, and I would concur with that. We would do, at a minimum, a monthly check-in on feedback, but during the work experience, it would be preferred that we would be on site at least every two weeks at a minimum to find out what's going on and see how things are progressing or if there's problems that need to be discussed.

MR. HIGGS: I'm upset with Malcolm because I didn't know about this adult WIOA individual training account that he has a great relationship with our WIOA office. So we -- might be a fight this afternoon after we get off this call because I didn't know about that. I'm sorry.

MS. WATERMAN: This is part of the learning process.

MS. REEVES: Well, I'm just going to move us this into the summary. I hate to have to start to bring this to a close, because this is a really in-depth, important conversation.

We've got a few key questions here, again, where we're trying to have our fellow attendees who are on today be thinking about some big questions for how to put together the work experiences.

We've listed some questions here. Can it take place over nonconsecutive periods of time? Can it take place virtually? Do you see any other questions, or have you experienced any other considerations that are not listed here that you would offer as advice to those who have joined to listen to the conversation this afternoon?

MR. WALLACE: So this is Malcolm again. And I'll tell you how valuable your relationship is with the other program people in your community. As I stated in our PowerPoint, we had strong support from our mayor's office. We had strong support from our workforce invest -- excuse me -- from the WIOA board and their staff. We had strong support from our chambers of commerce and stuff.

And that helped us develop our work experience program that was, like I said, adopted for the whole community, and that paid off. That has paid off. A great deal of participants -- excuse me -- our trainees loved it, and the employers who are engaged in the program loved the trainees in the program. So that one I think -- (inaudible).

I would say look beyond just your program and look at your matching programs and see if you all can collaborate on some of the things that will help both programs.

MR. HIGGS: For me, I would just say -- and I think it's a group of employers that we don't normally think about -- is small business entrepreneurs. I think a lot of times they are looking for quality people and -- because they don't have a big name or they don't know some of the programs that are available, that that's always I think a place where you can find great partnerships and people who are very knowledgeable about their business and their industry and who are willing to share because they are looking to find a workforce that probably can grow along with them. And what better than a young person who has an interest in that particular business.

So I would say reach out to your SBA or business associations, places that help small business people, and see if there are some opportunities to partner with them.

MS. NEWMAN: That's a great point, Malcolm. Here we have something called the Montana Business Assistance Connection for New and Emerging Businesses that we work with pretty closely.

But I would also add that the construction umbrella is pretty big, and there's just a lot of different occupations supporting the construction industry that I don't -- sometimes I think we just overlook. But there's so many opportunities out there when it comes to cabinet making or flooring or countertops or tiling or painting that are just other excellent career paths for our young people.

MS. REEVES: Wonderful. Thank you all so much. I think that these considerations, looking at, again, the absolute integral importance of your partners and not only what their needs are but what their participation and partnership is going to be with you to further this venture is of supreme importance and that it really goes back to that original point about why the YouthBuild work experience and what makes that different than other work experiences.

And this whole support system with the supportive relationships with adults, which goes beyond the program staff to these larger social and professional networks, it's just -- it's wonderful. And it says so much that all of you have really been able to forge those relationships and have them be so integral to the whole active life of work experiences and of your larger programs. So thank you so much for sharing those experiences with us.

And, Toni, I will turn it over to you for any Q&A and to take us out.

MS. WILSON: All right. Thank you so much, Phoebe. I know what you mean. This has been a really great discussion. So hate to come to an end, but we are coming to the end of our time here. I -- let me just change the slide here.

We did answer a lot of the questions along the way, which is great. I did put into the chat here, if you have a question that wasn't -- you weren't able to add it in time or you think about it afterwards, feel free to send it to our email address where we can make sure we can get back to you on that.

And as a reminder, we have great resources here in our file share. So please, this YouthBuild work experience was really a piece to start this webinar. So if you haven't had a chance to read that, there's some great examples in there. And then, obviously, the PowerPoint and the pre-apprenticeship standards, the Work Readiness Tool and the YouthWorks training tool are in the file share.

All right. And so resources certainly have, in addition to our work experience paper, there's the connecting opportunity youth, paid and unpaid work experience, our journey together, the apprenticeship resource page, and then a registered apprenticeship on-the-job training, providing that work-based opportunity. So please check that out.

These are all great resources, and this is a conversation that's happening across the agency. And YouthBuild is definitely being promoted as a model that I know we don't always feel like we've -- we are the front runners on things, but we definitely are in this area. So a lot of lessons learned to share. So we're excited about that.

Just a few things I want to say about save the date. YouthBuild USA is actually having a human trafficking awareness presentation, which we do encourage all of our DOL YouthBuild grantees to attend. We have the link here in reference to the series. So you can just check those out.

And then we have our MC3 Train the Trainer. It's online, and that's going to be May 5th and 6th. So if you haven't registered, please do.

And then our next webinar is going to be designing an inclusive virtual learning environment for academic success. Stephanie Pena will be moderating that, and we've been doing -- we have a -- kind of a tip sheet that will be coming out to go with that. So we look forward to that discussion, and that will be held on May 11th. So, hopefully, everyone will be able to check that out.

In the meantime, if you need to reach any of us, here's our contact information. And a special thank you to our presenters today, Lisa, Jeffrey, Malcolm, and Phoebe. You guys all did an excellent job. So I want to thank you for taking your time from your organizations to present and peer share today. So thank you for that.

And thank you to our YouthBuild family for joining us today. We will have this archived. That will be sent out. So for any of your peers that were not able to make it, please share and discuss.

All right. With that said, I'm going to pass it back over to Grace.

(END)