**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Employer Centered Strategy to Engage New Employers in Apprenticeships**

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LAURA CASERTANO: I want to welcome everyone to today's Employer Centered Strategy to Engage New Employers in a Partnership webinar. And I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Zodie Makonnen. She's the Grant Lead with the Scaling Apprenticeship Through Sector-Based Strategies with the Division of Strategic Investments and the Employment and Training Administration. Zodie, take it away.

ZODIE MAKONNEN: Thank you so much, Laura, and good afternoon, everyone. I'm very excited to welcome you to our webinar today, Employer-Centered Strategies for Engaging New Employers in Apprenticeships. We have a great panel set up for you today. With us, we also have Jeff Brown, who's a Technical Assistance Coach with Manhattan Strategy Group. And Jeff will be helping to facilitate our discussion today. I will now turn it over to Jeff. Jeff?

JEFFREY BROWN: Thanks very much. Thank you very much. I'm actually delighted to have the opportunity to be with everybody today on this webinar. We're continuing a very important topic, which is the topic of engaging employers. We've been talking a lot about that. We're going to talk a little bit more about it today. And I just think it's -- it's probably one of the most important things that we can discuss, because there's so many different ways to approach employers and get an understanding for how they tick. And so we're going to -- hopefully today we're going to help you with some more of those sorts of questions.

And I am going to actually move the slide along so I don't terrify everybody, and get something better to look at. There you go. There's -- those are our panelists for today. I'm really, really excited to get to introduce everybody to these folks.

Today, we have Regina Serrano, who is the Director of Strategic Initiatives at MedCerts.

And we're also joined by Montez King, who's the Executive Director at NIMS, which is formerly the National Institute for Manufacturing Skills. So you guys know NIMS, I'm just going to tell you what you already know about NIMS, that NIMS is a nationally recognized organization that develops training solutions in manufacturing for apprenticeships of all kinds, not just registered apprenticeships, as it says here, but of all kinds.

And MedCerts is a national provider of online health care and IT training solutions, including registered apprenticeships.

So you can see the theme that we're that we're working on here. Right? We're talking about apprenticeships, of course, as we do. But we're also covering all of our industry sector bases. And I'm going to talk about why that's important if it's not already obvious to you. I'm going to talk about that in just a second.

So today during our webinar, there's two main takeaways I'd like for all of you to grasp, to be able to hold on to at the end of this this webinar. The first one is, I'd like for you to gain an awareness and understanding of the need to view apprenticeship programs through the eyes of industry-sector employers. Very important words there, industry-sector employers.

Remember what -- the name of this grant is a scaling apprenticeship grant, which means what we're trying to do is provide more opportunities for folks to go into high-demand occupations and trades. And one of the best ways to do that, one of the best ways to approach that is to approach it from an industry-sector standpoint.

Remember, the employers that we're talking about are in three distinct industry sectors that have unique characteristics that we need to really focus on and pay attention to. And so it's really critical that you all have an industry-sector focus as well and find ways to scale your efforts so that they span across one or more of the three industry sectors that the grant is engaged in.

And then the other big takeaway that I'd like for all of you to be able to carry with you at the end of this webinar is to be able to have concrete strategies and solutions from leaders in these different H-1B industry sectors that we've been talking to. Our big three, right: health care, IT, and manufacturing, that help engage employers to participate in building strong, successful, and sustainable apprenticeship programs.

So, again, we're underscoring the industry-sector focus and we're underscoring the scaling and sustainability.

So we've got, as we normally do, a poll question for all of you, I'm hoping that you will take some time to address this particular question on the poll. And the question is this: What are the common employer engagement pain points for the SA Grant? What are the ones that really that you're hearing from employers that they're focused on? And you could check all that apply.

So there are four options. The first one is employers do not believe apprenticeship is a viable approach for the workforce needs. Second, employers want fully trained workers. Third, employers find the apprenticeship requirements arduous. And the last one is uncertainty due to the pandemic.

So we'll take a couple of seconds. You all can respond and we'll see what we end up with. This is great. And if you have any technical difficulty responding, just leave Laura a quick note down in the chat. This is great.

Well, it looks like it's the third option seems to be emerging. Employers find apprenticeship requirements arduous. Heard that one before, haven't we? So that one seems to be the one that's prevailing.

So I think that's a really good backdrop for us to start hearing from our panelists. And so with that, I'm going to actually hand the baton over to Regina and to Montez. Montez, I think you're up first. And if you guys would take it away, please do.

MR. KING: Hello, everyone. This is Montez King and I want to talk to you about the employer engagement process and how it works. So first thing I want to do is identify what an employer engagement process is. It is your communication strategy with employers, this is how you're going to communicate with them. And so any time you have two-way communication, you need to have the same language. And so you need to know what language you're speaking before engaging.

So I have actually two rules that I apply when engaging with employers. Rule number one, you must learn to speak the employer's language for communication, not the other way around. So when you're speaking terms and terminology that comes from your world, it may not communicate well with the employer and a good opportunity goes out the door. So this is a really important rule.

There's a tip that I have for that as well. The most critical aspect of learning an employer's language is accepting apprenticeship in its basic form. So you really have to know how to -- how are you defining apprenticeship? And my tip for you is in a basic form. So let's take a look at that.

Apprenticeships are earn-and-learn programs that allow individuals to combine their education with on-the-job work experience. Modernization of apprenticeship refers to wrapping your choice of methods and tools around your apprenticeship programs to ensure you are training towards those specific roles within occupations.

So rule number two is wrap the employer's training needs around -- training behaviors around this basic form of apprenticeship because that's what apprenticeship is to them. So proscribing your choice would be -- would impede in your communication. Them building their training behaviors around that basic form is more acceptable by the employer.

But we got to get to an overarching truth. The overarching truth is how we carry out training does not define apprenticeship. It may be the way that you define it, but not necessarily from everyone else. So this is not the same from one organization to the next.

When we recognize the true definition of apprenticeship, then we will start to understand the true number of apprentices and -- apprenticeships and apprentices in our country.

So here's another tip. The outcome of allowing the organization to wrap their behaviors around apprenticeship in its basic form fosters modernized apprenticeship.

And here is one final tip in this area. The quality of an apprenticeship is measured by how closely aligned training is to how the organization operates. That's where you're leveraging or you're measuring the quality of the program, not necessarily based on what you're prescribing, but it's based on how well you align their training needs to their operations. So now I'm going to give it over to Regina.

REGINA SERRANO: Good afternoon, everyone. Let's talk a little bit. It takes time. So our first lessons that we'd like to share with you, as you all know, it takes time. Relationship building is important. So it's important to communicate the value of apprenticeships to employers over and over and over again in the high-growth industries such as health care, IT, and manufacturing where we all operate.

Another recommendation is to make it clear, make clear the drivers and motivations for engaging in apprenticeship, strong apprenticeship programs. They evolve and become necessary elements of the overall business strategy, but they don't always start off that way at the beginning. They sort of build and grow over time.

Connect apprenticeships to business planning. Apprenticeships more frequently are being thought of as a means to restore our workforce efforts in these times. Beyond the pandemic, the importance of apprenticeship is greater than it's ever been as well. Apprenticeship growth can be tied to continuous success of the employers.

Some of the common challenges which you all know and deal with on a daily basis.

Navigating the program design process, which is probably the most challenging, understanding the obstacles which may occur in effective apprenticeship program design. And employers are often stuck seeking clarity on the federal and state regulations, and systems and processes which they have to adhere to while trying to mitigate and understand their own regulation. So it creates -- the entire design process is extremely challenging.

Another common challenge area is insufficient funding. Lack of a funding strategy is a significant challenge in program development and implementation, as we all know. Employers often report that apprenticeship programs are often too expensive, especially for small businesses, who feel as though the additional cost is just an undue burden on their businesses.

And another challenge is misperceptions about the time required to develop apprenticeships. Over time, thankfully, employers begin to realize that the rigor and focus required in developing the apprenticeship program is worth it and of great value. But it is -- they often feel that it's a much faster process than what they have to actually undergo.

And ensuring the employer has the necessary infrastructure and that maybe that the employers need to develop new or tailored resources which do not currently exist in their organizations in order to grow the program. And then I'll pass this back onto Montez.

MR. KING: Thank you, Regina. Learn about the business. So just as Regina stated, it takes time, so you must be willing to take a journey with your employers to truly learn about their business and gain their confidence. You cannot truly support your employers if you do not understand their needs.

This goes beyond just knowing their products and services. You need to know their circumstances with training. Everyone's circumstances are a bit different and so that means they have different resources. So it's not going to be an exact fit. You have to -- it has to be customized to their circumstances.

There are three rules I follow when learning about my employer's business.

Rule number one. Agency recognition of a program is always the last step. It should not be the first, to say I'm going to hang something on the wall, until you've learned their business and you've helped them increase their performance through workforce development. Remember, employer satisfaction is equally important as your grant numbers.

Rule number two. Provide an infrastructure for employers to choose and benchmark their training behaviors. Here's a tip. You will learn more about your employer's business when you trigger their dirty laundry.

Here's an example of that. We do that, but we should -- we don't do that, but we should, or we do that, but we shouldn't. This is what you're trying to prime out of your employers to gain their confidence. So putting something in front of them that says, wow, this is a great training behavior, but we don't do that, and we know we should, or we do that, but we really shouldn't. So there's ideal and there's not ideal. This is really important when triggering and gaining the confidence of your -- of the employer.

Rule number three. The length of the journey is -- it should be employer driven, meaning it should have a fork in the road framework.

So I'm going to give you an example of my employer engagement process. And everyone has their own system. But this is mine and it is a fork in the road framework.

So, for example, there are five steps. The first step is to familiarize the employer with different training behaviors associated with apprenticeship. The second step is discovery, now that they're familiar with these training behaviors, let's discover which ones they align to and where are the gaps. The third is to analyze the results of that, to determine what their needs are. When you know their needs, then you can begin enhancements. After enhancements, then you can recognize with a certificate on the wall.

But regardless of the steps, you want to have a positive experience for the employer and get a return on their investment because not everyone will reach the fifth step. But if they don't reach it, make sure it was positive for them.

Okay, so strategies that work for us.

MS. SERRANO: I think that would be me, Montez.

MR. KING: No worries.

MS. SERRANO: So, strategies which work for us.

Making apprenticeships a win-win proposition. Some of the strategies -- we'd like to outline them according to employers, employees, leveraging of resources, and offering innovative solutions.

So for employers, an opportunity exists to improve the overall -- their overall performance and productivity through their apprenticeship efforts. Apprenticeships, apprentices often contribute vital skills to the company as they fulfill their roles, and they may have a constructive effort on incumbent workers, offering new skills and -- skills to the workplace. So the apprentices coming in really will have an impact on the other employees. And it may present an opportunity to retrain and upscale incumbent workers already on staff.

So a win for the employees: the employee is able to advance along in their career pathway towards greater employment and a higher wage. And employers can view the apprenticeships as a way to advance employee skill development while they are completing their work.

In the area of leveraging resources to move past barriers: An ability to maximize the use of existing resources and minimize duplication of efforts through partnership, building system alignment and leveraging federal and nonfederal resources.

So I think that is really the great beauty of an apprenticeship program, is that you truly can bring together many partners in order to achieve the common goal or the final goal.

And offering innovative solutions: It's an opportunity to move past misunderstandings. An image of apprenticeship as a form of educational advancement, a credible form of educational advancement, versus only viewing it as a labor model. And it's an opportunity to to share and communicate frequently the opportunities which apprenticeship opportunities provide. Montez?

MONTEZ KING: Thank you, Regina.

Strategies that work for us. So to meet your numbers, you need to go to scale. This takes innovation. So tour approach should not be door to door. You need to provide resources that can empower the employer and provide you and them with real information asynchronously.

So a self-evaluation is a very good practice that allows the employer -- empowers the employer to become familiar with those practices that you're promoting and to assess and pull those triggers that we mentioned in the previous slides.

And this is a way that you can go to scale very quickly and get in front of a lot of employers in a short period of time. And this can give you the information that you need when engaging with that employer and talking about their needs and that third step that we call analysis.

Strategies that work for us also include performance measures. This is extremely important in your journey with the employer. So there are many factors associated with the success of an organization. How much does training factor in that success, is the question. This question is what you must answer to measure the quality of a training program.

So I'm going to say that again, because it's really important. There are many factors associated with the success of an organization. You need to determine how much training factors into that success. Until you identify key performance indicators or KPIs directly related to how employers measure success, you cannot truly measure what you are promoting to your employers.

True performance measures are employer-specific practical experiences that accurately predict employee readiness when satisfied. These measures must be contextualized into data and reveal if training is working.

Now, this goes outside the scope of engagement, but is a very important part of your engagement. So this is something that there are other resources that you will be able to access to learn a little bit more about performance measures.

Okay, so I think I will turn this back over to Jeff for a poll question.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Montez. So we have another polling question for everybody. This one is sort of operationally focused. Very curious to know whether or not your grant has a dedicated staff or team member working on employer engagement, exclusively working on employer engagement. Pretty straightforward question, yes or no. Let's see what we come away with here.

Wow, it's neck and neck. Give it another couple of seconds and see where people land. Yeah, so it looks like the preponderance of folks do not -- looks like there's a fairly good number of people who do have a dedicated person, but there is a majority who don't. And I think that's a -- really that's something for you all to consider. For those of you who do, obviously, how can you enhance the work that that person or group of people is doing for you? And for those of you who don't, maybe that's something worth contemplating and looking at.

So thank you very much for participating in the poll. From here, we want to let our panelists sort of give us a final word from their perspective. And I'm going to turn it once again over to you, Montez.

MR. KING: Thank you. So, you ever heard that saying, build it and they will come? Well, that's actually changed now to let them build it and they will use it. My experience working with employers is the one size fits all, it's on a continuum, you will come across employers that will -- maybe they are attracted to what you're offering. And it works for them, but you're always in this tug of war because any time you're prescribing something that's already built, you're going to have some people that like it and then you're going to have some people that do not like it.

But when you let them build it, they typically use it. So if you if you give them the infrastructure they need to build this, and they can pull it based on their circumstance, they can select based on their circumstances, it is something that's used and they bolster it and they move with it and you gain their confidence. So this is something that I'm hoping that everyone catches on to, is let them build it and they will use it.

Regina, any words from you?

MS. SERRANO: I will just say, from my experience is, leveraging the resources to remove the barriers and challenges that come up, it takes time, it takes patience. It may take three months or six months to get together, or maybe it'll take even longer. Your programs are in their second year, but working together to come up with solutions, I think is the most effective and trying to be innovative in your approach. Maybe not sort of thinking that something sits in the box, but sort of turn left, turn right to find the solution which works best for the employer which you're working with.

MR. BROWN: That's fantastic.

MS. SERRANO: I think we are on to questions.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Thank you, Montez. Thank you, Regina, for your insight there. It's fascinating. As I was listening to you, each slide really lends itself to significant unpacking. And there's so much more that we can discuss with all of the elements that you all share today.

And I am wondering if people have questions. If you do have questions for our panelists, please type them into the chat and we can respond to those that way.

And while people are typing, I have a -- if you don't mind, Montez and Regina, I have a question of my own that I'd like to share with you. So we've mentioned the pandemic maybe two or three times during this webinar, probably one of the most significant events of all of our lifetimes. And it's undeniable that the pandemic has played a role in our work and pretty much everybody's work over the last 12 to 14 months.

Curious to know what you're hearing from employers about the impact and specifically what has the impact of Covid-19 had, or been, I'm sorry, on employer engagement. Right. That very important relationship building. What's happened with regard to the pandemic? And what's your impression of where employers are today in the wake of the pandemic? Regina, do you want to field that one?

MS. SERRANO: Sure, and it may be very different because we work in very different industries. A large part of my work is around health care and health care was extremely challenging this past year, as simple as a phlebotomist or an individual who had to go in and gain their pinpricks and take EKGs and things like that, that was extremely challenging. But I see that opening up now and I feel as though opportunities are becoming more and more available in the health care system. Montez, do you have some feedback on the impact of the pandemic?

MR. KING: Yeah, I do. So when we looked at that five-step process, we had the first step familiarize, second step, discover, third step analyze; and then we had the fourth, which is enhancements, and then the fifth is recognition. The pandemic really -- not just that -- the engagement changed and it really brought this new innovative way of engaging out because, you know, getting an organization familiarized with training behaviors associated with on the job training was -- you know, you can use technology to do that.

And then we talked about going to scale. We have taken the online assessment. I mean, that was -- right through Covid, this actually increased the number of employers participating because this is the only way that you could do it. So it really fostered that new way. And even, you know, as we get into post-Covid, we gained a lot from the experience. You know, we tried to find that silver lining, and what can we do differently to get through Covid? And now what we can do even in post-Covid is based on what we did during Covid. So from that perspective, it was great.

Now, obviously, your communication with employers was a little bit more difficult because they had to focus and pivot to keep their businesses operating. But that's changing now. And they're starting to come around and think about, you know, as the market turns around, we really need to get back and focus on workforce development.

MR. BROWN: Thanks, guys, that's great. We have a question from Travis who asks, or who, he says: Our group is trying to connect businesses to colleges as we are not the workforce entity. His organization is not the workforce entity. He asks, do you have any suggestions for this situation where the college is not very responsive? That's a great question. But what do you think? Who wants to take that one?

Regna Serrano: I think I might be able to. Although I feel your pain, so to say, I understand the challenge of it, I would say definitely try to involve the work force office, if that is at all a possibility because of the business services relationship and the employer relationship, that might be helpful. If not maybe work with the workforce development component of the college, as well as the extended learning. That may be. But maybe it's a process of which department you're able to identify and which way you're able to get in. I don't know, Montez, if you have some ideas along that.

MR. KING: Yes, so there could be many different reasons why the college is not responsive. I'm not sure if I understand exactly why, but I can give you examples of what we've experienced, even because you could say, well, they're not responsive, maybe because of the shutdowns for Covid, but it could be responsive for other reasons.

One area of response for us that was lacking is -- there's this phenomenon where you can start your employer engagement process and everything's going well. You got their attention. Maybe your employer engagement process was a good communication strategy or maybe the employer was just highly motivated. But let's just say the employer is motivated.

Then you get into a stalemate once they sign the dotted line and say, hey, I want to get involved because there's -- you don't have -- some schools don't actually have a road map or know how to help the employer.

So what we've done to mitigate -- with those stalemates -- in this stalemate, meaning there's no productivity after you got the engagement, you got the contract. Well, what's next? We created these 14 training plays that provides a roadmap for the employer and for the community college that surrounds the employer. And this gives clear and concise to-do list things that must be done and how it works.

So everyone avoids the stalemate. I know what I need to do to help the employer and the employer knows what they need to do to help themselves and as well as engage with the colleges. So I don't know if that stalemate is really as prevalent out there. It happens all the time. And we come in and we help to make that seamless line between the college and the employer and that method. And I'm more than happy to show you what these plays look like so that I can help you and your -- bringing your communities together.

MR. BROWN: Travis, thanks for that question. That was a really good question, and just so everybody knows on the webinar, we are going to share contact information with you all for our two panelists. So if you're wondering how to get hold of these folks, you know, later on we'll make sure that we share that with you.

We have another couple of questions, and I'm hoping that we can get them all in. So I'm going to go for it here and and ask as many as I can. Anthony has asked about -- he's given a couple of specific examples of cutting edge, maybe even bleeding edge technology. He's talked about AI and autonomous, you know, society entities. And it seems like his question really is, how do you help -- and I hope, Anthony, I'm not putting words in your mouth, but how do you help employers to embrace technologies that really might help their operation, especially if they have a particular way of doing business that they've done for a while and they're interested in training apprentices in that old way of business. You know, are there ways to help your employer partners look to the future?

MR. KING: Regina, do you want me to take that one?

MS. SERRANO: Sure, go ahead.

MR. KING: Okay, so when working with employers -- so just imagine, any organization, and they're within their organization, they have to stay innovative to stay in business. Sometimes organizations may have some technologies or patents where they can you know, they can live for a certain period of time. But eventually it comes to the point where they have to be innovative to stay in business.

And so the way that we work with our employers is, remember, quality is based on how well you align training with their organization. So we get into some organizations in there that are not using the latest technology. There are many ways that they can work to improve it, but they're just not there yet. And so we have, you know, these behaviors that they can select or choose to work with in the circumstances of their business.

But then you have --- then you have circumstances where they're using a lot of technology and training has changed. And this is where the organization may be using very dated methods for training that don't align.

So in either case, regardless of how you flip the script, quality is based on alignment. So we don't push them to use innovation, but we do help them align with -- their training to whatever it is that they're doing. Because if they're doing it and they're in business, you know, that's -- that alignment is very important and they can go either way.

And so I also end it with this. Technology changes how we train, but our training systems normally stay at a snail's pace. You know, so it's like you can say for thousands of years, you know, our technology was very slow. But then in the last hundred years, we have this heavy spike. Well, with the heavy spike, our training has not matched the velocity of technology. It's really -- it's stayed still. There's been changes that have made that made. But when you look at how much technology changes from year to year, from month to month, our training hasn't as -- has not changed as drastically. So I hope that helped. And Regina, I'll just pass that to you.

MS. SERRANO: Yeah, I just wanted to add, Anthony, one thought that came to mind is the importance of continuing to work with a workforce agency as well as local nonprofits who are dedicated and working to employment. Because I believe it's critically important, having worked in the workforce system for many, many years, it's critically important to continue to develop the career pathway and the pipeline and ensuring that they're -- the participants are able to even obtain and secure stackable credentials for someone in AI, they're definitely not going to be able to do AI on their first level of computer training. So really sort of getting that message out and working with community partners as well as workforce agencies, understanding that the need is so much greater. Those are my thoughts.

MR. BROWN: It's really good, really good. Thank you very much. We have another couple of questions, one from Kathy, who has a very specific question. Do you know of any successful apprenticeships in New York?

MS. SERRANO: I could make a recommendation to you, Kathy, and then Montez, maybe you can jump on with a specific program. In many states and I think New York is one of them for sure. I'm certain of it, their Department of Labor does have an apprenticeship, a very robust apprenticeship program where individuals can register and identify training as well as employers can place their -- register their program. And they actually have a very strong apprenticeship council or committee working together on those issues. So that may be a good place to begin in terms of identification of quality or exemplary programs. Montez?

MR. KING: Yeah, and I would say for everyone on the call, be careful with -- when you go to a community and you say, hey, this is a really good program, come out and reach us, you can -- you can go out there and look at the circumstances and say, how can it apply? But there is another way that you can do it. And if you reach out to us, we can provide you a resource that can take that information that you're getting from somewhere in New York or somewhere, you know, on the West Coast. And it's all wrapped up in one resource.

And you can -- you can look at that and say, okay, these are some of the behaviors that these programs have in regard to training. And I can choose what's good for me without having to, you know, you can visit and see how it's working out. You can get feedback from them. But there is another way that you can do it without necessarily having to find that training program, because we -- you know, we've worked a way of putting that putting that all into a guide and giving you an assessment that you can take to determine what your needs are.

So just wanted to throw that out there. If you're really looking for some resources that can help you, just reach out to the contact information and we'll send some stuff out.

MR. BROWN: All right, we've got --

MS. MAKONNEN: Jeff? Sorry. This is Zodie. I'm so sorry, I just wanted to also point out that --

MR. BROWN: I know what you're going to talk about.

MS. MAKONNEN: You're reading my mind? Okay.

MR. BROWN: I am. I bet you're going to talk about apprenticeship.gov, aren't you?

MS. MAKONNEN: Yes, I am. So there is -- apprenticeship.gov is everything apprenticeship. It's a DOL site that has a lot of information, great information on apprenticeships. And it comes out of the Office of Apprenticeship at DOL. So I would encourage you to visit it and take a look at it. It has a resource on there called Partner -- Partnership Finders, which allows you to kind of search for partners that you can work with. So that might be a resource that you would want to explore. And I can -- and it's literally apprenticeship.gov so I can put it in the chat as well so you can see it. But I encourage you to check that out.

MR. BROWN: Yes, fantastic resource. A really, really great resource, and I can underscore how important it is to check there often and and and early, it's a great resource.

Regina, I do have a question, a specific question for you. Can you differentiate your work in IT from your work in health care? Can you tell us how it's different when you engage employers in each industry sector, as you know, in one industry sector, as opposed to the other, with those two industry sectors? What works in one sector and not so well on the other?

MS. SERRANO: Well, I think it's actually quite similar in terms of engaging employers. A lot of what Montez and I shared today are some strategies and tips that, maybe one or two of them will be helpful to the teams on the phone. And so hopefully what we've imparted some knowledge based on the success or the experience that we have.

IT, anymore, it's just so interesting that you can literally be anywhere in the country and work in the IT industry. Health care, you do have to be pretty much in person. So that's sort of the biggest differentiation, in my opinion. But anymore, with all of the really amazing tools in terms of simulations and strategies, you don't necessarily -- you can definitely do a great deal of your training online, but the in-person portion of it, you definitely have to be in-person. So I guess that's the biggest differentiation, I believe.

MR. BROWN: That's great. Regina, thank you very much.

Montez, here's one for you from Dan, and he was obviously compelled by your discussion about let them build it and they'll use it. And his specific question is, when you say that to you mean to build in flexibility and selection of elective classes or help in adding class length, or modifying the classes themselves? What specifically are you talking about there?

MR. KING: Yes, so that's very similar to -- so when you say let them build it, again, what we do is we start with general training plays and then we we can work with them to enhance or develop those plays. I'm going to give you a couple of them so you would see what I'm saying.

So we -- we take them through. We give them -- we familiarize them with 56 training behaviors, and one of them would be -- you want to yeah, well, a series of these plays could lead to doing what we call employer courses, and then some would be asynchronous courses that you would do in college.

So, based on their circumstance, they may not have a community college around them. So they have to create this or they may purchase online content from a third party, bring in LMS and their training asynchronously, or they may decide, hey, we have a college down the street and we're going to use the college to teach these courses. They may also decide, hey, I need trainer course, employer courses, too, because it's great that I get the general pipeline knowledge from the employers or I get the theoretical, but I have very specific work that I need done and I have to train them towards it.

So this assessment will determine if they need to actually do employer courses where you're going through, this is what I'm going to show. This is what I'm going to talk about. This is what I'm going to allow them to do and how I'm going to check for accuracy. And so we create -- we help the employer create those courses that they would teach there.

So that's just, you know, that's what they're selecting. It's the structure that they're looking for. We can get content anywhere or we can get the tribal knowledge from the employers if it's very specific. But we need to understand the structure. And that's what the employer is selecting. It's selecting structure based on their circumstances. What resources do we have and what would work for us to impart or transfer this knowledge?

MR. BROWN: Fantastic. Regina, I have one more question for you. This one's from Debbie. She wants to know if you are aware of a dental assisting apprenticeship program and if so, can you share the contact info?

MS. SERRANO: Absolutely, Debbie, if you don't mind, you can certainly -- on the next page or the final slide, there is my contact as well as Montez. If you send me an e-mail, I'd be happy to sort of help you think about that. I think, too, it depends on the state that you're in, whether there are any state rules of guidelines. But I'd be happy to help you think about it.

MR. BROWN: Fantastic, thank you, Regina. I think we have time for maybe two more questions. So these are sort of general questions. We'll see how we do it the first one and maybe we'll get to the second one.

So in your opinion from both of you, what are the best initial indicators that engaging employers in a particular industry sector is actually working? Some indicators? And then what are the early signs that perhaps your engagement and the work that you're doing isn't working and maybe it's failing?

MR. KING: Regina, do you want to go first at that?

MS. SERRANO: Yes, I'm giggling a little bit. Maybe not working is a great deal of frustration, but as long as you're still communicating, you're still working together, you're still trying to work through your challenges and not giving up -- I think that's an indication that things are working in the sector.

And also tangible things -- or intangible things like, as I recommended in the earlier slides, which I presented -- just, the participants and the incumbent workers already working in the organization are learning more from the apprentice coming in, or incumbent workers who are already employed are interested in apprenticeship and apprenticeship apprentices excuse me, an apprenticeship. And so they're actually you're changing culture, in my view.

And so I think that's sort of some indication that things are going well. But the failing part of it, I think it's important to just keep trying and you'll find a way to come to resolution.

MR. BROWN: Thanks, Regina. What do you think, Montez?

MR. KING: I'll add on to that, so to know when it's working is when you're -- I'm going to go back to that statement -- when you can trigger what we call the prime, probe, and stimulate. This is what you're trying to do with your employees when you're engaging with them. And when you can get them to say, we don't do that, but we should, or we do that, but we shouldn't. That's when I know it's work because I'm getting them to talk about their dirty laundry.

Now, some early signs that it's failing. Well, it's really early. You know, I wouldn't call it failing, but there's always an uphill battle because you're talking about apprenticeship and it's the cornerstone of our training system. So everything's wrapped around apprenticeship, but it's how you associate with apprenticeship, is where we've got to make ground because we've been telling everyone, this is apprenticeship, this is apprenticeship. Well, how can you tell everyone what apprenticeship is when they're already -- they're already doing it? You're just telling them a different form of it.

So we have that battle. And so sometimes you're going to get people pushing you away regardless of what your communication or engagement process is. But so that's -- it's your early sign. But it doesn't mean that you are failing, because eventually, if you get enough, you know, if you can give a positive experience, they typically come back and you can get that one carrot that's put out there and you're going to gain their trust. So the early signs are very early. They just don't [inaud] to the door.

MR. BROWN: Right, right, right. That's really good. Thank you. I think we have time for one more question, and Regina, you alluded to this earlier, but I'll go ahead and ask the question again. Maybe you can both kind of drill down a little bit more. You know, you all may or may not be aware that our grantees are right at the halfway point for their grants with about two years left. I'm just curious to know how much time should they expect to spend engaging new or rekindling relationships with, you know, with old partners? How much time should they expect this to take, you know, before they either are off to the next thing with a great new partner or to the point that we just raised earlier, it may be time to move on to somebody else. What's a good time frame? A good gauge?

MS. SERRANO: Goodness, I would say at minimum, six months, sometimes even longer, and relationships are complex, and so it takes time to develop and they may start very small piloting, and it may get larger and more significant over time. And so really sort of beginning at where you can begin and then expanding as time goes on based on the employer's interest and success that you're experiencing. But I bet Montez has some great ideas.

MR. KING: So -- and you -- remember what we talked about, a fork in the road process. You want your employers to be able to fork out. You're not going to get all the employers to go through your steps. Remember the last step -- that's a rule, rule number one, your last step is recognition. Every step in between can fork, they fork out of that. And so you're -- you're creating a dynamic approach to that rather than saying, I'm going to bail out. You're giving a positive experience for every step and you'll know when they're ready to move to the next step because you have created the steps. So you don't have this question mark of, what's next. You always know what's next because you have your process and you have clearly, clearly defined when they're in those different steps. So it's very dynamic. And it's nothing that -- if you follow these steps and these rules that I mentioned, you don't even have to think about when to stop because it will happen naturally or it will progress naturally.

MR. BROWN: Really, really great responses from from both of you, Regina and Montez, on that last question. I mean, it's very clear that the idea is that it needs to meet the needs of the employer. And so, if you follow the steps that will do that. And I think that's really great. Thank you very much.

Well, I think we're at the end of the webinar. I do -- before we go, I just want to point out to everybody once again, it's already been mentioned, but I just want to point out once again that there -- down the bottom of your screen where it says file share, there's some really great resources there for folks. So if you choose to, please do download the resources there as well as today's PowerPoint.

Perhaps one of the most valuable nuggets of information on today's PowerPoint is the slide you're looking at right now, which is the contact information for both Regina and Montez. So I'm sure -- I'm going to speak for you guys. I hope you don't mind, but I'm sure that neither of them will mind if you reach out. So please do if you have questions about what they presented or other related questions.

And with that, I believe that we have finished everything up. Montez, Regina, thank you so much. I really appreciate your insight and your experience. And I really also appreciate everybody showing up and listening to what what both Regina and Montez had to say today. I really appreciate your attendance. With that, I think we're all done.

(END)