**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Sustaining Your Youth Apprenticeship Readiness Grant Program**

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JONATHAN VEHLOW: Welcome to "Sustaining Your Youth Apprenticeship Readiness Grant Program." So without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to our moderator today, Shelia Lewis, grant program co-lead, Office of Apprenticeship at the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Co-Managed with Division of Youth Services. Shelia, take it away.

SHELIA LEWIS: Thank you, Jon, and welcome, everyone, to today's event. We're very excited that you joined us today.

But I want to take a minute to go back to the poll question. So Jon, if you will bring that up for us again. It really helps us to prepare these events and also help our presenters when they're doing the live event to know who is in our audience.

So I can tell that not everyone has completed the poll question. So let's take another few seconds. I see a few more responses. Yeah. That's great. Thank you, everyone. So it gives us a good idea of who attends our event.

It looks like the majority of people attending today are authorized representatives. Next runner up we have program directors/managers. Then looks like we have a couple TA coaches and others who did not specify. So thank you, Jon. And thank you, everyone, for participating in our first poll question of today. So let's move forward.

You've heard from me, and, again, I'm Shelia Lewis from the Employment and Training Administration. And, now, I'll introduce you to our three presenters for today.

Our first presenter is Mike Laidlaw. He's a technical assistance coach from SKL Associates, LLC. Our next presenter will be Hollis Salway. She's the director of development and research CareerWise Colorado. And, finally, you'll hear from Melissa Stowasser. She's the assistant vice president of community partnerships, Trident Technical College.

So let's talk a little bit about what you will hear about in today's event. So our presenters will be discussing sustainability as four years of continuous improvement, not just in year four.

And, next, you'll hear about discovering which program components, partnerships, and systems to sustain. Next, we'll highlight the critical role and impact of partnerships in effective sustainability.

And then we'll move on to learning how to -- learning about forward thinking, deliberate planning, and timely execution and how that can lead to successful sustainability. Finally, we'll wrap up by providing examples of how program results and impacts can lead to diverse sources and resources beyond the YARG federal -- beyond YARG federal programming. I mean, federal funding.

So we have yet another poll question. So the next question is we'd like to find out where you are in your program sustainability planning. So have you started planning? You're --you have a plan in place? You're thinking about it day to day? And if you have a different answer, put that in the chat room for us so we can see what your response is.

So so far we have -- we have four responses. I can tell we have more than four participants. So I'd like to see a little bit more participation. All right. It just moved up to six, seven. We're getting there, slowly but surely.

All right. Thank you, Lisa. I see that you assist and help to execute sustainability planning and ideas. Thank you.

So it looks like there's a mixed bag. So it looks like it's pretty evenly distributed between those who haven't developed a plan yet, who have a plan in place, and who are thinking about it day to day. So again, thank you, everyone, for your participation. Jon, you can take down the poll question now, and we'll move on.

So I'm going to turn over -- turn the mic over, so to speak, to Mike Laidlaw, and he will further discuss sustainability planning. Mike, take it over.

MIKE LAIDLAW: Thanks, Shelia. Good afternoon, all. I'm Mike Laidlaw, as Shelia mentioned.

One of the most unfortunate things that can happen in grant management is when a grantee was successful in meeting all their goals and then they improved their operation. They learned valuable lessons. And they also ended with numerous success stories to share but they did not sustain the grant due to a lack of planning or execution or even the thinking process.

It is truly a missed opportunity for the grantee. It's a missed opportunity for potential participants and future participants, and also it's a missed opportunity for the overall impact on the community it served and the local economy. So it's just, again, a missed opportunity.

Thoughts about sustainability. The reality is that most grantees view sustainability only as getting the funding to continue the grant or even portions of the grant. That thinking leads to generally waiting until the last six to nine months of the grant to begin seeking funding.

But to increase the opportunity of sustaining the grant, it's important to begin planning and thinking about continuity from day one the first year and then throughout the entire four years. It's not a one-year process. Everything you're doing now is going to increase your chances of sustaining the grant and getting the resources you need to continue that.

So the different approaches. Approaching sustainability as only the pursuit of funding can also lead the grantee down the path of anxiety and quite often waiting at the end of the grant for a miracle. And I've actually experienced that with former grantees.

This scenario is even worse when the grant manager or grant director's position is directly tied to the grant and so are other staff. Then there's the additional anxiety regarding their own job security and that of affected staff. So there are many reasons not to just take this approach.

The recommended approach is to view sustainability as an ongoing workforce development initiative which continues to grow -- which will continue to grow and expand because it has proven to impact lives, impact communities, and also impact the local community. Therefore, it needs to continue. This is a much broader approach, which means it doesn't stop at the end of year four and you will plan, think, and execute to make sure it continues.

We hope that at the end of this seminar we will have demonstrated the need to consider this broader and deliberate approach to sustainability and not just getting funding from either the federal government or state government to continue the program.

While there can be several components to a sustainability plan, there are three main components I want us to consider today. One is sustainability planning. The other is sustainability thinking. And the third is sustainability execution.

I noticed, by the -- from the poll that at least a third, if not a half, of the folks who responded say sustainability is part of their day-to-day activity. And so it's something they're always thinking about, which is great. This is exactly where we want everyone to get to. Move to the next slide.

The three components. I mentioned them before. So I'm going to provide a brief overview, and then I'll go into a deep dive of each of those components. I want to take this time to provide an overview. And, again, there is no one way to plan for sustainability. I'm sure everyone on the call who have actually developed a plan, they're taking it from a different perspective.

Some folks are actually putting in their day-to-day planning. Some may have actually did the ideal thing where they put in part of their strategic planning. But when we refer to sustainability planning, we're talking about deliberately including sustainability as part of your strategic thinking, planning, and implementation and as part of your action plan, which includes goals and objectives.

While the grantee -- while the ground is is four years, the ideal thing is to even include a fifth year. That means you guys are looking beyond that four-year period. So that will get to be part of the mindset of everyone, not just your partners, but also the staff. And so as the grant directors, you don't just want to be the only person who's thinking about that. You want all of your staff to sort of adopt that attitude and be part of your organizational culture, with the expectation that you will continue to grow and you will continue to expand and as part of your growth strategy.

As part of your plan, it's important to continuously capture and record institutional knowledge and those changes that are occurring throughout the grant. Also, as part of your plan, formalize how you will integrate those continuous improvement as part of your organizational culture and the day-to-day operations. Life tends to get busy. So we just address the issues and not really incorporate those solutions and processes into how we go about doing business.

Next is I'm going to provide an overview of sustainability thinking and the mindset. Sustainable -- sustainability thinking is basically always considering how the current decisions and changes that you're making now will impact your future growth and expand apprenticeship programs.

How is what you are presently doing advancing your future goals and objectives? And, also, a lack of sustainability thinking and mindset will encourage the grant staff to only address those current issues, rather than solving the underlying problem which will avoid a recurrence of those problems.

It's taking a long approach -- long-term approach to problem solving and improvement because they realize that the foundation needs to grow and -- which will support the growth and continued expansion of apprenticeships, not just in your organization, but in your community, because you'll continue to also develop partnerships who will continue to expand what you guys are doing. So again, just taking the long-term approach.

The third portion is sustaining -- sustainability execution. As I mentioned before, there's a serious misconception that the grantee needs to wait until the completion of the grant before it executes on the plan and start looking for funding or expanding partnerships and looking for resources to continue what you're doing. That's something you ought to do when the opportunity presents itself.

Successful grant management generally includes periodically and systematically evaluating your current state against your desired state and then looking to see where the gaps are and bridging those gaps. Those gaps may include new employer partnerships, establishing new community-based partnerships, and also pursuing new funding sources to continue to grow.

Those sources may include additional federal, state, local, and foundational sources, but it doesn't necessarily need that in order to continue like that. The current structure doesn't have to stay the same to proceed -- pursue those funding.

I've actually experienced where the the prime grantee actually did not pursue sustainability the way they should have, but the subgrantee actually took it seriously and they developed their own partnerships with other community-based organizations and they became the prime. So again, don't think sustainability has to continue exactly how you're currently structured or with the same partners that you have right now. I'm going to turn to the next slide, please.

I'll just take a deeper dove into sustainability planning. Let's start off with the strategy. When I talk about strategy, what is your game plan? What strategies are you planning to use to grow and expand beyond the goals that U.S. DOL may have established?

I know there's a tendency to focus on that now, and it is good to focus on that because you do want to meet those guidelines and those metrics, but you also want to look beyond that. So you should really be asking yourself, who are our current strategic partners in this effort, and continue to ask yourself, what alliances do we need to form? And they don't have to be formal alliances or partnerships.

Some of these partnerships or alliances may be occasional, not ongoing, and may just be to meet a current need or for a short-term period of six months or so just to address a concern or shortcoming that you currently have.

Also, the program -- also, as the program grows, who are the additional partners that you will need to execute on the plan and also the resources that you will need as you continue to expand? The reality is we, as individuals and also organizations and programs, will live our lives on level, but we arrive in stages. So as you move the grant to another level of scaling, you're going to need additional foundation and additional partners and additional systems to support that growth. So I just want you guys to keep that in mind.

Next thing I want to talk about is prioritizing -- planning to prioritize and document the changes and the systems that you're putting in place. So it's about capturing and transferring the institutional knowledge that you're gaining as the grant moves and develops. It's really a fairly widespread challenge for many grantees, probably most grantees. And we see the results of that when a grant director leaves the grant.

So while it will be significant to capture changes for future use, it is probably more critical to capture those changes and record that institutional knowledge as you go along, as they occur to benefit you as a grantee, the program as a program, and also the rest of the staff, because it will also help sort of expedite the learning curve of new staff and even new partners that you bring on board. Noticing what you do is continuously improve the operations and also best practices. You want to capture those best practices.

As I mentioned earlier, you want to consider -- seriously consider making this part of the organizational culture and priority for everyone on the staff to continue to look for opportunities to improve the system. When I say systems, I mean process, the protocol, the communications, just how you do things, how you manage things.

And whether it is how services are delivered or even how you evaluate how much time and effort is being committed to outreaches versus -- outreach versus recruitment or even how you improve the retention rate of the apprentices and also intentionally seeking out other time and efforts -- other grantees or key partners who can identify best practices being used and integrate those best practices in your operations.

As a matter of fact, I would really recommend paying attention when we have those small peer-to-peer sharing because there are a lot of best practices that are being shared in those forum. And so I know you guys are busy and lot of times when you leave those peer-to-peers, you go back to your day to day. But try to record that and set up a systematic way for you and your staff to go back, whether it's a weekly basis or monthly basis, to say, how do we integrate that into everything that we're actually doing?

The next thing I want to talk about is returning investment, lessons learned, again, best practices and success story. In your planning process, identify how -- I mentioned this earlier -- when, and even where you will share all of this information with your stakeholders and also future stakeholders because the -- as you look for funding and funding sources in the future, your stakeholder team and group may change.

And so continue to look for stakeholders, individuals who may have a similar mission, similar interests, or they are also part of supporting the particular population that you're serving. But have them realize the value of the program and also why they should consider remaining a partner beyond the grant. So again, sustainability is beyond that four-year mark.

And results. I know we have metrics, but the reality is what gets measured gets done and also get attention. There are DOL metrics in place and those are important and they're required. But metrics that will be of interest to your current stakeholders should also be established because, if the staff only think you're only interested in what the DOL metrics are and those goals, they will not focus on what the community and what's your other local stakeholders may be interested in. And these are the folks that you want to invest in your future apprenticeship program as you grow. So making an impact.

As I mentioned before, knowing your stakeholders' interests and priorities will help you purposefully plan what you will capture, what you will share, and how you will share it and even which form and format that you actually share them information. You'll realize that, if you have a business partner and this individual or organization may be interested in data, which you can actually share through graphs and other indicators. But I would really look at how you share data and ROI, that it's done in the format that that particular stakeholder is interested in.

And so I always recommend sharing information in the most effective means and not using just one broad stroke for sharing information. Community-based organizations may want more narrative than a business partner. So we'll move to the next slide.

We're going to talk about sustainability thinking and mindset. You'll see I'm using some of the same topics because, when you talk about the plan, I guess what you intentionally plan to do, when we talk about the mindset and the thinking is what you're doing daily, but it's all the same factors of continuous improvement and impact and those sort of things. So it may sound redundant, but it's part of the process that we're talking about with respect to sustainability planning, thinking, and also execution.

So sustainability thinking, how do we sort of describe that? One of the best ways to describe it is the lens from which apprenticeship is viewed by the grantee and the grantee staff and partners. And so it's also how you approach the grant with a certain level of intentionality.

If you only see the grant as a funded project with a definitive four-year time frame and then you move on to the next thing, you will tend to focus on just the mandatory goals or metrics in front of you.

If you view it only as a means of getting unemployed individuals jobs, as opposed to changing lives and as a vehicle of a continuous transformation of communities through partnerships, it will make a difference in what and how you track and share the progress and outline the return on investment for future investment and partners. So it's really taking the long-term approach and not just a definitive approach for a particular time frame.

When we talk about community impact, it's determining who in the community will be interested in the impact you're having. And so you're not just impacting one or two things. You're impacting community, the economy, and so we had mentioned before that the impact is going to be different for different audiences.

And so if you have a community-based organization and a partner and that organization may not even be a partner but to make them a partner, what you could do is share the impact that you're making because they will be interested in how many of their clients you're placing an apprenticeship programs. An employer will be interested in how much you save them in recruitment and retention budget by creating a pipeline of talent for them. And your local Chamber of Commerce and business sectors will be interested in the economic impact of the programs, of the demographical information that you're sharing about your apprentices.

The next one is sustainability thinking. If you view continuously improving your internal management and operational systems as a chore but because the current system may not be able to support the expected growth and expansion, it will change how you, the grant director, and your staff approaches the grant and set the tone for the rest of your partners, whether they're internal or even external, and how they view the opportunity to get better and treat participants and partners as long-term future ambassadors for the program.

It will also impact the understanding, not only on their needs and expectations, but you want to understand the customer or the participants' journey so you can improve things to make the future participants more successful and the retention rate even higher.

So how do we stay abreast of ongoing changes? Internally, there's a continuation of the thought process that we mentioned above where you're always consciously and even unconsciously evaluating your current environment, ensuring that the program is still current, the organizational structure is still the most effective, the policies clearly outline what and even how things will be done, and the support systems that are more than just adequate to support the diverse demographic that you're serving.

You also need to stay abreast of the external changes and challenges and be purposeful about it and not be too busy with the internal operations because the external changes are also impacting your internal organizations and operations.

I actually had a former grantee whose focus area was IT. And the changes were so rapid in the IT industry where, by the end of most cohorts, they had to add another week of training to keep those participants competitive when they're searching for jobs because their counterparts were actually folks who were up to date on all the changes that are happening because they were obsessed with technology.

And so we also had to offer those training, those additional training to past cohorts to make that -- make sure they're staying consistent and up to date with what's happening in the field. Again, these changes are so rapid. You will need to stay abreast of what's going on and how it's actually impacting your internal operations and the career pathways that you've established.

There are also other impactful changes that are happening outside the organization. Some of them are legal, economical, political, and even the labor demands. It's always a good idea to review your LMI because the rate of change is, again, so rapid and the environment and also the local economy.

I think COVID really taught us a lot about how things can change overnight. So you have to be sure that you stay on top of what the demanding -- those particular career fields that you are offering. And if you wrote the grant a year before or six months prior to it was awarded, in three or four years, those career pathways and in-demand career fields may have changed. Again, you have to stay abreast of what's going on.

Another thing is, while you want to have strong management and operational systems, it is important to maintain a balance where you're not so inflexible so you can't make adjustments to accommodate the inevitable changes that will occur. And so, again, there has to be some sense of agility as you go about doing business.

So the next -- the last component of sustainability is sustainability execution. As I mentioned earlier, there's really no ideal time for grantees to execute their sustainability plan. By the third year, you should have a good idea of what your future programs are going to look like and also a good idea of the changes that are taking place in the program areas, including the things I mentioned before, the impact of technology, the jobs that are still in demand, and other forces and trends that are underway.

One of the things you ought to consider doing is evaluating, and I would recommend doing this at least once a year, if not semiannually. Evaluate -- evaluating your current state versus your desired or future state, because this will impact the program's growth and expansion.

It is always a great idea to not just review the performance but also the relationship that you have with all of those key partners, whether it's the community-based organizations or the employers.

Also identify those gaps, as we mentioned before, about where you are and where you want to be and where do you want to take this apprenticeship program. And then continue to make those adjustments. And you may not be able to make -- to fill all those gaps. So you may require to reach out to new partners because those former partners weren't able to actually fill the gaps themselves.

Also, evaluate how and what information and system changes you're capturing and how you're integrating those changes into your day-to-day operations for improvement.

Timing. Timing is important, but timing and opportunity is really important. So what is the perfect time to execute on your sustainability plan? There is no perfect time. There's when the opportunities present themselves. If you're ready for the change -- you don't have to be totally prepared. Just be ready for the change, and most importantly, when the opportunity will advance your vision towards expansion and also growth, that's the right time.

Let's talk about results and impact. Return on investment and results that demonstrate the return on investment. Most stakeholders will invest more and earlier than expected, if they see a sizable return on their investment. And at the end of the day, it's still about results.

If you can demonstrate the impact, there will be other grants from different levels of government, foundations, and even industry that want to see more of those results because they're benefiting from those results. Remember, it's always what's in it for me? Those employers will want to know that you have created a pipeline for them. Those CBOs want to know that you are helping them employ their clients. Those businesses are interested in local -- in the impact on the local community.

And, also, provide the talent of the first industries. And you're decreasing the poverty rate and creating a viable community for everyone. So again, those metrics, lessons learned, and success stories should be shared, and that will really advance the execution of your plan. And you'll actually have folks knocking on your door and say, I want to be part of this because it's successful.

I purposely did not focus a lot on the actual pursuit of funding because, if you do everything else that we talked about, the funding portion will be so much easier because you now have the experience. You have exceeded the expectations and metrics. You've gained a lot of lessons learned that were incorporated into your program and your operation.

And, also, you have the results and success stories to put in your proposals and also to respond to RFPs from diverse sources and also to respond to federal announcements, not just DOL that has resources. Department of Education, Human Services organizations are also interested because you may be providing services or have the potential to provide services to these diverse populations that they're interested in and that they serve.

I'm going to change -- so the next slide where we talk about determining what to sustain. At the outset of the grant, if you identify the areas that you plan to sustain, assess, and modify during the grant, such as the program areas, career pathways, staffing structures, and even the needs that you have and the support systems for the program, the employer partners and also community partnerships, when it is time to determine what you will execute, there are some criteria to consider when evaluating those areas.

And, again, I would recommend that -- when you're determining what to sustain, I would recommend taking the stop, start, and continue approach to evaluating these. And this is also one of those things I would recommend not doing just annually but semiannual, if not even quarterly.

So I would actually look at the program components that you want to consider to sustain. And when you're evaluating those program components, use the data that you're collecting in evaluating the processes, but also analyze.

Do some analysis of the data and use common sense and your experience in evaluating that because, if you were just evaluating the data from last year, from 2020 and not considering the extenuating circumstances like a pandemic, that data may not tell you exactly what's going on. So definitely use the data, but also use some analysis and some common sense in the evaluating what you're going to sustain.

Also, consider your program. Is it still valued? Is it still in demand? And we've mentioned before about using local management information, LMI, and your actual knowledge of trends in the different career pathways. This should lead you to asking three questions. What should you stop, what should you start, and what should you continue? And continue doesn't mean as is. It's just may continue with enhancements.

As I mentioned before, be mindful of industry changes, especially the field like IT where changes requirements and demand vary based on location and existing employer partner needs. Really it's about being conscious of trends, data, and predictions about the future of work.

Systems. When I talk about systems, I'm talking about management systems and operational systems. Referring to how the grant is structured and the positions associated, the systems of communications and accountability, as far as how you hold those partners and team members accountable, the planning and monitoring systems that you have in place, and we talk about operational systems.

This is more about the day to day, how you are delivering services, how you operate the your human resources, your recruitment and onboarding process with the participant, how you are collecting data, what data is being collected, how you're reporting things and the effectiveness of your database.

If your database is not adequate and takes you an inordinate amount of time to actually collect the data and share it with the Department of Labor, maybe you ought to look at a more comprehensive system that can actually help you expedite that process.

The last but certainly not least portion here is relationships. And on the next slide, I'll talk more about partnerships. As you evaluate relationships, one of the things you want to do is consider are they valued and effective? One of those -- you can actually have a partnership that's more draining than it really needs to be. So evaluate, are they valued? Are they really providing you with the resources that you need? And is their presence really having an impact so, if you got rid of them, their absence really won't make a difference?

All right. So effective means they're delivering on the services they committed to and not wavering and having you having to reach out to them every month or every week. So based on the evaluation above, you should consider solidifying the relationships that are working and possibly looking for a new relationship moving forward.

And so my last slide is a continuation of the previous slide. We're talking about partnership and sustainability. If you haven't already noticed, strong partnerships is really the most important aspect of getting things accomplished in grant management. You will rely on employer partners to train, develop, and hire your apprentices. They may even sit on your advisory boards or councils.

You will partner with your community-based organizations to assist in recruiting participants, in creating a pipeline, and also with support services that you can't actually provide. And they will also really play a big role in your retention, because sometimes they serve as a secondary case manager to help you stay on board and keep those apprentices working. And they all have relationships that we may not have the time to actually go into.

So now, I want to talk about some things to consider when you're sustaining or solidifying the employer partnerships. Ensure that at the outset and, if not at the outset, as soon as possible, clarify and continue to clarify and modify the roles and responsibilities as you take on new responsibilities for the growth and expansion of the program.

Ensure that there is an ongoing and effective communication and feedback that you guys are actually using. And don't expect to take care of unresolved issues because they will resurface. And, also, if you haven't already done so, seriously consider inviting these employee partners to sit on your boards or apprenticeship councils because they can provide you some real and practical information as you continue to grow and improve the program.

Another partner is the training partners and also the intermediaries. I'm going to speed up this presentation a bit. And so it's important to work with your providers and also intermediaries to assist with -- especially with the intermediaries, with -- assist with the labor management partnerships in organizing and the training resources to make sure it's an effective and high-performing process.

And also, the intermediaries can actually play a major role in getting your registered apprenticeship programs up and running and also take some of the the details and the -- what's a better word -- the burden of employers participating in the registered apprenticeship program because it can be very detailed and frustrating for a lot of employer partners.

Last but not least are the community-based organization. That includes the schools, workforce development agency, Chambers of Commerce, nonprofit organizations. And just share appropriate data with these individuals in your presentations, and ensure that, as you build these partnerships, that there's some congruency in their commitment to the target population and they're also advocates for the positive changes that you're making.

Share success stories with these organizations at forums and through the media to reach potential stakeholders and future partners who can actually be a part of a joint venture and also assist you in pursuing grants. The process and the relationship you have now may actually be different if your training provider or community college in the future grant, that particular community-based organization can actually take the lead while you partner with them.

And always remember that most successful partnerships occur and continue when both entities see that there is something in it for them and they realize that there's some levels of reciprocity and so everyone is winning.

And so I'm going to turn it over now -- I'm sorry for taking so much time -- to my colleague and partner in presentation, Hollis Salway. Hollis is the senior director of development and research at CareerWise Colorado and they're doing some amazing things and they're continuously successful in growing and expanding apprenticeship programs. Hollis.

Hollis Salway: Thank you, Mike. As Mike mentioned, I am the director of development and research, which I think is interesting in light of the conversation that we're having today in that I really do seek to lead first with the impact we have through our work when sourcing new funding and cultivating partners who can sustain our work in the community.

So greetings from sunny Colorado. We're having a beautiful Denver day here, though you shouldn't be too jealous because yesterday we woke up to snow. So even though I can't see all your different faces, I'm happy to share a little bit more with you about the work that we're doing in CareerWise. And sustainability is near and dear to our heart. It is a founding principle in our model, and it really drives everything that we do.

So I'm not going to bury the lead here. We have one simple principle, which is that we must offer value to our partners, to the constituents that we serve, which includes, of course, our business partners, our employers, our students who are apprentices at those employer partners, their families, and the communities in which the apprentices and employers live, work, play, and contribute to the larger society for a thriving economy.

So while we're together, since we don't get to interact very much, I thought I would review just the basics of the CareerWise model. So at CareerWise, we're seeking to show the world what modern youth apprenticeship can look like. So we launched here in Colorado in 2017 with our first cohort of modern youth apprentices in modern 21st century industries like IT, advanced manufacturing, banking, financial services.

We're now also in sectors like health care and education, continuing to expand into real estate, maintenance technicians, other fields, but really looking to kind of reinvent the image of apprenticeship for both the apprentices who might be interested in pursuing an alternative pathway to mobility that doesn't exclude them from college but really gives them a leg up in their post-secondary planning. And so that's what we do here on a day-to-day basis.

So our model is built on partnership between employers and school, between supervisors who do the day-to-day work of working with apprentices, and teachers who have to help guide apprentices into those positions and opportunities.

So the CareerWise model begins in the junior year of apprentice's journey. And so it is employer led. Opportunities are created via our process of cultivating a pipeline of apprenticeship opportunities. And then in the junior year, apprentices begin their apprenticeship. So the recruitment and hiring process actually happens the year prior.

So during the sophomore year, we do outreach to students, schools, and communities, recruit apprentices into the kind of marketplace of apprenticeship that we create. And then the spring of their sophomore year, they're hired by employers. We don't do any matching or kind of forced prescriptive assigning of apprentices to employers, but instead conduct a true hiring process with our employers so that apprentices are selected by those employers.

So they begin their apprenticeship in the junior year, and the balance is approximately three days a week at their high school, continuing their high school education. And then they spend approximately two days a week or 12 to 16 hours per week onsite with their employer.

The balance of that experience flips in the senior year that they're spending slightly less time at school and slightly more time at their employer. So it's approximately two days a week at school and then approximately three days a week at their employer.

The CareerWise model spans through a 13th year, which bridges that gap between high school and post-secondary. And so in the third year, they're working primarily onsite with the employer, attaining debt-free college credit through advanced training. And over the course of the apprenticeship, they also obtain an industry certificate, adding to their mobility, adding value and currency to their experience. But that really depends on kind of the pathway and the occupation as to when in the experience that happens.

So the idea truly is an options multiplier for our students and apprentices who can, of course, step out of an apprenticeship and be prepared to be hired into a full-time role or to take the debt-free credit that they've earned, the experience in many cases that can translate into credit for prior learning, and pursue a post-secondary pathway and a degree pathway. Or they can do a little bit of both, working onsite with their employer and also leveraging benefits like tuition reimbursement to continue working and learning throughout their journey.

Now, none of this is possible unless we are doing one thing, which is ensuring that this experience of youth apprenticeship is valuable to our employers. And so, first and foremost, though we believe that the model has cascading impact from businesses to apprentices, schools, and out to the larger community, none of that is able to be achieved without, first and foremost, providing a service to our employers that they will invest in time and time again, not only with financial resources but also with the time and energy that it takes to run a successful apprenticeship program and that they recommend it to their peers and to their fellow businesses in the community.

And so we focus on leading with that ROI for businesses. We need to provide value so that in the long term they will come back to us because we need more opportunity for more students. And businesses here are in the driver's seat in creating that opportunity.

That said, of course, we're balancing the impact across the equation -- right -- so the impact is both on the business side and on the youth apprenticeship side, as you can see here.

And why we believe this works is that there's extensive research to prove it. There's decades of research in other contexts outside the U.S., specifically in Switzerland, which is kind of considered the gold standard for youth apprenticeship around the world. Their system has been researched extensively, and the results are proven.

Similarly, here in the U.S., similar programs like traditional adult registered apprenticeship have been studied and have been shown to see similar return on investment for employers, though obviously serving a different population. So not only do we believe this is true, we know that the emerging insight that we see from our first three years, which we just completed last spring.

So in the spring of 2020, we graduated our first cohort of apprentices. Supervisors rated them at 91 percent as effective as a full-time adult in the role for which they were training through their apprenticeship. We see them pursuing a variety of pathways and options, and we see businesses participating and returning to us through renewals at a high rate.

So again, we lead with ROI, and in doing so, that's not to say that it's easy and that's an automatic sell to the business. If you look here at the graph on this chart, the ROI comes in the latter half of the experience. So there is, over the course of a three-year apprenticeship, a significant period. It tends to be about half, based on the research in Switzerland, for which the apprentice is not a positive investment for the company. They're still learning. The wages that they're getting paid through their apprenticeship experience are still more than the value that they're adding.

However, we see time and time again that that switches and that they cross that threshold. They start becoming productive as they learn the skills. They are earning and learning together. So as they learn those skills, apply them in the context of their employer's workplace, then they start to become a value add for the company.

And what's really important is that over the long term, when they -- when they're converted into full-time employees, that return on investment skyrockets because, yes. You've raised their wage from an apprentice wage to a market rate wage, but the experience they've had being embedded in your company, knowing the kind of secret sauce of the employer culture, and really kind of feeling that loyalty of having been invested in provides outsized returns in the long run.

So again, it's kind of walking the walk here. When we think of sustainability, you can't just talk about the long term. You have to walk to walk and emphasize it and teach your partners to put their eyes too on the long term and to think beyond kind of the next week, the next month, the next quarter, as is unfortunately a little bit typical in American business culture.

So orienting towards the long term means that you need a clear picture of what you think you're going to achieve over the long term. Financial modeling has been a tool that we've used from the start at CareerWise, and it has given us the power to ask for and receive large investments from philanthropy, because we can show that over time we're aiming at a sustainability plan where we capture that value that we create from businesses. We charge them a fee for it. And as we scale and serve more and more apprentices and provide more and more value to the community, that number grows, and we reduce our reliance in philanthropy over time.

That planning, that modeling, that forecasting allowed us to ask for and receive large upfront kind of angel style investments from philanthropy. And it also allowed us to set out kind of a series of indicators and milestones that we could use. So even if growth didn't occur in the same ways or at the same pace we had anticipated, we were all kind of using a common language and kind of common guideposts and signaling to understand where we were on our journey.

So again, we base everything we do on this impact that we seek to have over the long term as we change the way education and employment works in our country. An interesting fact is that, if we look at the adult population, it's roughly a third of U.S. citizens hold a four-year college degree, and that's seen as a pervasive failure in our society; right? It means that 70 percent of our citizens aren't realizing what we say is the path to success -- right -- through the gates to college with that degree in hand into the labor market and you're on your way. Well, if that's the marker of success, then most of us are failing.

In Switzerland, interestingly, they see about the same rate of college completion. About a third of their citizens hold four-year degrees. But there's more upward mobility because the rest of the citizens have another option. They have a way to pursue growth and learning outside of the traditional academic setting that leads to upward mobility and continuous advancement in learning in the professional and education -- professional education and training system.

So we're in it for the long haul. We're out to kind of reinvent the way this works in our country. We lead with that idea. We get visionaries to follow us, and then you have to execute on it; right? So that's adhering to those milestones, collecting data along the way as you go, and then sharing that back to help people find their place within the system.

So I've talked a little bit about this already, but this -- and I think Mike underscored several of these points, but the picture will change and kind of ebb and flow as you grow, and you use the data that you collect to inform the roles that folks can play; right?

So we had to learn to replay an outside role in our startup as our angel investors. So did I do that? Okay. And then over time, as things happened -- for example, in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder last summer, we saw an increase in interest among our employer partners in leveraging youth apprenticeship as a tool for equity in their workplace; right?

And so we have to be eager to support that; right? So their role has changed a little bit in helping align business to a solution that doesn't necessarily comply to market forces; right?

Government can be used to build infrastructure and kind of consistency across programing. So initially, we used Colorado state funding here to build some of the tools and mechanisms and processes like credit for prior learning and cross-walking curricula and development of MOUs and kind of standard practices.

And then over time, as we've receive federal funding, we believe that it can be used to support scale and that it enables quality and consistency, quality especially for small to medium sized businesses that might partner with us, that might not have the resources to develop programs like this all on their own, and then consistency for large enterprises like some of our Fortune 100 companies that partner with us across their geography. They don't want seven different programs in seven different states. They want consistency and quality. So we see government playing that role.

And then by pursuing value first, by constantly asking our partners how we're doing, collecting that information, sharing it back with them, we cultivate that value, and we capture it through earned income.

At CareerWise we charge a per apprentice fee to the businesses that partner with us. We haven't done that from the beginning. We've warmed up a little bit before we made that ask, but we are doing it now. And in two years we collected $170,000 of employer fees. So this is a real income source.

We've also leveraged our position as we've expanded to help new communities and to provide consulting capacity. So that's a little bit unique to us, but it's just thinking constantly about where you can capture the value that you're creating for your partners.

And then over time, as apprenticeship kind of seeps into the system, we believe that some of our costs will be absorbed by partners. So for example, we do a lot kind of helping our students navigate transition to training within the college system and transitions into or out of the college system at whatever point they may be.

And so over time, as that kind of becomes more standardized, we believe that the capacity that we're building with those partners will enable them to sustain that work in the long haul.

So that was the time, and I think it's time for me to turn over the mic here to my fabulous colleague Melissa who's in sunny South Carolina near Folly Beach, where I luckily get to go to. So Melissa Stowasser, it's my honor to turn it over to you.

MELISSA STOWASSER: Thank you so much, Hollis, but, honest to goodness, we're really having a different experience here right now because, unlike you in sunny Colorado, at the moment it is rainy and dreary in Charleston and the temperature has dropped from 85 yesterday to 55 today. So it's not the place you want to visit this day.

But we're happy to be with you and tell you a little bit about our experience. Just like the weather, our program started a little differently than CareerWise Colorado's program started in Colorado.

We actually started because we had an employer who approached us with pain point. And so out of that pain point, the Charleston Regional Youth Apprenticeship was born. And I'm going to tell you a little bit about that. Oh, look at this. I'm going crazy on my mouth here. Okay.

Tell you a little bit about that. But to give you some background, I want to tell you a little bit of history, because we have been -- and I have not touched that. So why is this moving? Okay.

A little bit of history about Trident Technical College in the region that we're in. Trident Technical College is part of the technical college system in South Carolina. And each of the colleges in that technical college system are designed for the purpose of workforce development for a specific region. And so we serve a tri-county region in the Charleston metro area.

And as a part of that, we have been doing apprenticeships with some of our larger companies like Bosch for over 40 years. But in 2007, we really began to be strategic about the desire to do apprenticeships with companies and help them build out programs that would meet their training needs and help them to solve their pain points. And so we've been doing that since 2007 in the adult space.

We actually created an Office of Apprenticeship. It is now a division of the college with multiple employees working in that space.

So in 2013, our region was experiencing some really exciting growth. Boeing had come to town, and we had a small manufacturer -- a number of small manufacturers, actually, who were panicked because Boeing was pulling all of the skilled labor that they needed in their manufacturing industries.

So in that world, we were approached by a German-based company who was familiar with apprenticeship. Of course, that's what they do in Germany. And they asked us if we would be willing to create a youth program.

So we started from day one saying, yes. Of course. But we did it with sustainability in mind from the very first day. So the very first question we asked them was, are you willing to work with your peers, with your competitors? And, fortunately, they said yes, because we knew that to build a program with one company, one smaller company, was not going to create something that would be sustainable over time, that in order to create something that would last for the next 50, 100, 150 years, we really needed to be working with multiple employers in that space. So that was one of the very first strategic asks.

If you'll notice on the screen, you see this is the Charleston Regional Youth Apprenticeship, and it says that it is at Trident Technical College. And that's because we never, ever, ever say that this is our program because it is not. We could not do this alone, and we would never begin to believe that we could. So it is its own entity, and it was created from the very beginning as a collaborative partnership of local community partners who were interested in engaging this work.

And so I'm going to spend a little bit of time on the screen talking to you about the different partners and the role they play in making sure that this is sustainable over time.

First, we have the Trident region employers, and the employers are critical in this space because they enable us to ensure that we are going to be able to build a sustainable program by partnering together in these sector partnerships.

We also expect them to tell us what their pain points are. We don't build programs that are not meeting the critical workforce needs of the region that we're serving. We want to ensure that we are creating something that meets those critical workforce needs through customized apprenticeship programs for companies, but we also want to make sure that we are really strategic in mentoring the next generation of skilled workers for the low country. So not only are the employers really essential in this space, but the school districts are essential in this space as well.

So when we started thinking about sustainability, we wanted to make sure that we were building a structure for the program that was sustainable and that we were building a cultural landscape in the community that we serve so that everybody began to understand the viability and the excitement that could surround a program like this so that the community would want to sustain it. And you do that by building really strong collaborative partnerships.

So our employers are the first, but we can't do this without other entities as well. And the next entity I'm going to talk about is Apprenticeship Carolina, and some of my wonderful colleagues are on this call. So a shout out to all of the folks from Apprenticeship Carolina.

Apprenticeship Carolina is our statewide intermediary that's really tasked with moving apprenticeship across the state. So they're a critical partner because any time an employer wants to do an apprenticeship program, they work with them hand in hand to make sure that everything involving U.S. DOL is really seamless and easy for that company.

They help them with the registration process. They assist with making sure students get into RAPIDS. They raise revenues and really help us to get major grant funding that enables us to be able to move this across the state. So they're critical in so many ways. I can't even begin to name it. Marketing the program so that we do change that culture and make sure that it's sustainable is really important. So Apprenticeship Carolina has really key place at the table, but we also can't do this without our school districts.

Our school districts are critical partners. So when we were asked to do this, we didn't start out on our own to design it. We got the employers to the table, and we got our K-12 partners to the table. And, collectively, we envisioned what this program could be and how it could really change the face of the community that we serve.

So all of our school districts -- we have five of them, four physical school districts and a statewide charter school district that participate. They recruit students. They market the program. They talk from middle school all the way up through high school about this as a viable opportunity, an exciting option. They invite us to stand on every stage. They do -- they rearrange student schedules. They do everything they can to really facilitate the growth of this. And you'll see what that has meant to us over time.

I'm going to skip the next couple of partners that you see there. And I'm going to go down to Trident because Trident really is serving three critical roles within this space.

In one way, we are enrolling these students who are high school students. It is designed as a program for juniors in high school. It's a two-year program. We are enrolling them in the same courses in a career specific field that we enroll our adult students in at the college. So they are dually enrolled, conceivably starting in their junior year, although some of our employers will hire them starting their senior year or as they're immediately graduating from the program. But in any case, they are going to move through this curriculum at the college.

We also serve as the intermediary for the partnership, and we also serve as an employer. So you're going to see that in several occupational areas or a couple of occupational areas that we actually serve as the employer of the student, and we have a registered program as well.

But when you're putting students into a college classroom, tuition is always a cost. And so, although the state is funding our salaries as the intermediary to do this work, we knew that it would be critical for equity, for every student to be able to have the opportunity to participate, to raise the revenues that were necessary to cover the tuition and the classroom experiences, any kind of tools that the students might need, any kind of resources to make it equitable for all students.

And so we did not want to ask our employers to carry that lift. We were asking them to already employ these students who basically knew nothing when they walked in the door and to provide mentoring for them. So they had skin in the game. And it was the small employers who'd approached us. So asking them to pay for the educational expense or to pay us that fee did not seem reasonable because we were defeating the whole process -- the whole purpose of enabling them to build their own population.

So we reached out to our Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, and they were incredibly enthusiastic. They were very invested in the talent space. And so they agreed to raise scholarships to support the students. And so we started it out with the Charleston Metro Chamber providing scholarships to cover all of the expenses for every student. And in the beginning, that was easy to do.

But I will tell you that it quickly became unsustainable over time. They were writing for grants. They were doing everything they could to raise the revenues, but the program grew to the extent that it was beyond their capacity. So we started looking for other funders. And trust me, I have pushed my hand into every single pocket I can find in low country to try to raise revenues to support this.

And, initially -- I'll be honest -- that was hard. But since this has taken off and since we've had success, the funding is following, and it's following to the extent that we now have more revenues than we can actually expend on the students at this given point in time. As a matter of fact, some of our philanthropic donors have explained to us that -- or we told them this year that we did not need their funding, actually, because we had sufficient funding.

The state had passed a new scholarship, which is called SC WINS, which is the Workforce Industry Needs Scholarship, to support students in these critical workforce areas. And so we didn't need quite as much revenue. And with COVID, we had a little decline. We also had fantastic grant funding coming through Apprenticeship Carolina. And so we actually told some of the long-term funders that we didn't need their money, and they insisted that we take it.

So what I'm saying is that Mike is right. If you build something that works and the community gets excited about it, they want to invest, and it gets really -- it really alleviates the burden for you, but it also generates that kind of excitement within the region.

So we built our programs through the model with the DOL. Every one of these programs is a registered apprenticeship program. It is not a pre-apprenticeship program. The students are in job-related educational or RTI through the college, for the most part, although not always. They do on-the-job training, and they earn a scalable wage through the Department of Labor.

The students do start as juniors in high school, if they're ready to do that. So they are employing these students at 16 through 18 years of age initially, and we enroll them in those college classes.

One of the things that I believe helps to make this sustainable over time is the fact that we have designed this with the idea that it's not just filling the critical workforce needs for those employers and helping them address their pain points, but it provides a ladder of progression for the students.

There is a vision for student attainment with upward economic mobility in mind. And so all of them show a ladder of progression. And so when the students complete the program, they earn their high school diploma.

They earn a certificate from Trident Technical College in a career specific field, which is about 30 credit hours, and they are halfway through their associate degree. Most of them continue on for either their associate degree or some other form of education. They earn their credential from the U.S. DOL, and they have two years of paid work experience.

And to show you what sustainability looks like, the young man on the slide you see here is Byron Porshay. Byron Porshay was in high school. He'd been a football player. He could no longer play football because of an injury and was kind of rudderless. He fell into a passion for cooking and decided to do a culinary apprenticeship with one of our major resorts, Wild Dunes. This is him receiving his journeyman's credential.

I will tell you that this spring he called us because he's now a manager in one of the restaurants at that resort, and he asked us if he could get some applications for youth apprentices. So the sustainability becomes cyclical. They have a great experience. They become the managers. They start hiring, and it really helps to build it with that platform for the students in mind.

One of the ways that we did this was to make sure that we really built in the energy that would help to grow this. And you will see that, when we started in 2014 and '15, we had one pathway for manufacturing and industrial mechanics. We started with six companies, and we had 13 youth apprentices.

This year we have 18 pathways. It fluctuates in a given year from 18 to 20, depending on who's hiring, 9 industry sectors, and we have over 180 companies in our region who have registered apprenticeships with the -- registered youth apprenticeship programs with the DOL.

This year we have 106 apprentices. We are in the hiring cycle, and the next group is coming in. It's a little bit down from last year, but in the middle of COVID, we thought that 50 new hires was pretty awesome this year. So there is exponential growth.

And one of the reasons we believe that's true is because we built in from the beginning a change in the culture by creating a signing day event that was a big, huge community splash that gave a profile to this that showed that there was -- that this is the new apprenticeship program, as Hollis was explaining, and not some old apprenticeship program that was not designed to lead a student to greater success. So that's been really helpful in changing the perceptions of our audience.

We also started with an information session in that very first year where we had just the one pathway and six companies. We did an information night. We had about 30 to 40 people show up. Within four years, our information session had to be moved to a Friday -- to a Saturday morning with rolling sessions going because we have over 1,000 people showing up at that event now.

A lot of that, I believe, is a testament to the fact that the community has really embraced this. This young man in this picture is Marquel Rolax-Smalls [ph]. He took machining with us. He was from a rural school districts, single parent household. Mother is an administrative assistant at the high school. On Saturday, he graduated from Clemson University with a degree in industrial mechanics, and he's planning on entering their mechanical engineering program this spring.

Tell the stories. It makes a difference. Show the data. It really helps to create that kind of cultural change and energy.

So this slide shows you the nine industry sectors in which we currently have apprentices being hired, and all of these are students of ours. The young lady in the upper right-hand corner bought a house at 19 years of age.

When you're looking at this, you'll notice all different career fields. We have an autistic young man on there who is now a full-time employee of the college and network systems. We have a young lady over there in culinary who is working with one of the high-end restaurants. She's an amazing employee as well.

But when you're thinking about this, I want you to think about building this not just with the obvious employers and the large companies that do these particular skills. The young man in the upper left-hand corner is Dakota. Dakota was hired by Berkeley County School District as an HVAC technician, and he's still an employee there. He's one of their rock stars.

So we have had colleges. We've had Medical University of South Carolina, the hospital there, the school district hire HVAC employees. That's critical. In IT, the college has hired. The City of Charleston, your municipalities can be hiring IT. Credit unions, major manufacturers have hired in these spaces.

So you need to think out of the box in creating these sector partnerships to tap into those nontraditional employers for a particular occupation who may have a critical pain point. It's the pain point that really motivates them to want to participate. And then when they see the success of the students and they really begin to get excited about what they're receiving in terms of the ROI, they really get on board.

So just as a glimpse, these are our occupations for this year. The sterile processing technician is a new one. And I do want to say that, in terms of building out your occupation and your educational structure, should never be competitive. One of the things I hear all over the country is that there is a competition between the K-12 or the college or whatever educational provider is providing these.

We never compete. We sit down at the table. We figure out what our resources are, and we design a program. So some of these are solely college classes. Some of these are a combination of starting in the high school and then moving into college classes. Some of them are noncredit courses that lead to credit programs, but they're all designed to provide some sort of upward economic mobility for the students that are involved and to provide that critical workforce for the employers as well.

So one of the other things that I think is worth note, and I share this data because people get excited about it. When we did this, we did not target any specific group. We simply said, here is an opportunity, and we spread it out to all of the school districts. And they started talking about it with their students.

And what we found is that, to date, we've had 351 students hired, not including the new ones that are coming for the new cohort. 41 percent of those students have been students of color, and our region is 36 percent persons of color. So we're attracting a population that we really wanted to attract because they have lower employment within the region, to some extent, and they're also less likely to go on to postsecondary education.

Same is true with the male, 66 percent male across the country. It's primarily the female who is going on to postsecondary. So in terms of the educational space, we're attracting a population we really want to attract.

In terms of the Department of Labor, they love to point out the 34 percent that are female because we're also receiving a real interest by females and some of them in very nontraditional fields. The young one I told you bought a house was in industrial mechanics in our very first cohort. We've had five students buy houses under the age of 21 now. So when you tell those stories and you put out the data, the funding follows.

I would advise you not to start with the vision that you have to have 18 pathways and 9 industry sectors. I'd advise you to start small, build well, and the rest will follow. And with that, I'll turn it back over to Shelia.

MR. VEHLOW: And, Shelia, you might be on mute right now, if you're talking. Shelia, I see you dialed back in. I just unmuted you again.

MS. LEWIS: Can you hear me now?

MR. VEHLOW: We can, Shelia. Great. Go on ahead.

MS. LEWIS: Great. Great. Thank you. Yeah. I was disconnected, and I dialed back in. So I didn't tell you. So I apologize for that.

But, anyway, thank you to all three of our presenters for your -- lots of information there, and I'm sure that our participants -- our attendees today got a lot of information and valuable information you can take back to your grant.

So before we open up the floor for questions, I want to remind our attendees of two upcoming events. The first is on June 16 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. It's a Grantee Achievement in Year 1 event where our grantees will present at least one achievement and one lesson learned from year one of your YARG grant.

The next event will be on June 23rd from 2:00 to 3:30 Eastern. It will be the Youth Apprenticeship Intermediaries/YARG Exchange, and this event -- exchange event will provide an opportunity for youth intermediaries to present their respective project activities, as well as resources and supports available to YARG grantees.

So with that, I don't see any questions in the chat room, but this is your time to either unmute your phone line or type your questions in the chat room. So far, I don't see any, but this is your time. So we do have time remaining in today's event. So please feel free to ask any of us any questions that you may have.

Great. Looks like we have one from Emily. It says, "For our Charleston counterparts, what are the average total RTI and OJL hours required for registered apprenticeships? Most construction registered apprenticeships in Ohio require a minimum of 2,000 OJL and 144 hours of RTI and last three to four years. What is the average time frame for completion of registered apprenticeships?"

MS. STOWASSER: That's a really great question. We have been able to register our programs as competency-based programs. They do meet the 144 RTI hours. So they are certainly meeting that plus more in terms of their educational classroom experience.

But the on-the-job training is designed as competency-based. There is a series of competencies designed for each of the companies. Every company registers their own program so they can be customized for that particular program at that particular company. And then the student is tracked by the employer in terms of how they are accomplishing those competencies.

Some employers -- we said it's designed as a two-year program. I'll be honest. Some of our students do the RTI in less than two years. They double up on class work and they get that part done and then they work more.

In some cases, the employer may say, after the two years are up, well, I still think this student needs another six months of on-the-job work before they're really mastered this particular skill. And they will wait until two and a half years or three years before they're awarding that journeyman's credential because they want to ensure those competencies on that.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Thank you. It looks like Emily may have a follow up question. So her question is -- well, first of all, she's saying, "Thank you. And how did you begin the conversation with the vocational schools to get them on board?"

MS. STOWASSER: We have -- I have been working with our K-12 partners for over 20 years, since the 1990s, to develop strategic relationships with them, and we do a lot of creation of seamless educational pathway. So we already had strong relationships with them, and we just brought them to the table. We don't do anything without our K-12 partners being a part of that conversation, and we build those out collectively.

In one of our regions, they're just opening what they call Centers for Advanced Studies. And the new sterile processing technician program is built with some of their coursework at the very beginning of that apprenticeship program, and then they funneled into the college coursework. So we never do it without the partner.

MS. LEWIS: Great. Thank you. Looks like -- all right. Thank you. Thank you, Emily, for your question. Are there any others?

All right. Well, hearing none, I'll move on. And if you do think of any questions that you have for our presenters, their contact information is on slide 35 of the slide deck.

If you haven't already, you can download the PowerPoint presentation. You'll see Jon moving the file share window there. So you can get the contact information for Mike, Hollis, and Melissa.

So I'd like to thank all three of our presenters today. And with that, thank you all for attending today's event. And, now, I'll hand it back over to Jon. Jon.

MR. VEHLOW: Thank you so much, Shelia.

(END)