**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Utilizing the Workforce System to Engage Employers: Data & Collaboration**

**Wednesday, June 16, 2021**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Menifee, CA*

LAURA CASERTANO: With that, I want to get myself right out of the way. Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's Workforce System Data and Collaboration webinar, and I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Zodie Makonnen. She's the grant lead with the Scaling Apprenticeships Through Sector-Based Strategies, the Division of Strategic Investment in Employment and Training Administration. Zodie, take it away.

ZODIE MAKONNEN: Thank you so much, Laura, and good afternoon, everyone. Welcome, and thank you for joining us for today's webinar. My name, as Laura mentioned, is Zodie Makonnen, and I am the grant lead for the Scaling Apprenticeships Through Sector-Based Strategies Grant program.

As many of you know, in 2019 – (inaudible) – million – (inaudible) – with the primary goal of – (inaudible) – the expansion of apprenticeships to new industry sectors reliant on H-1B visas. Although grantees have experienced – (inaudible) – the challenges – (inaudible) – with some employer and workforce partners – (inaudible) – --

MS. CASERTANO: Hey, Zodie?

MS. MAKONNEN: Yes.

MS. CASERTANO: Hey, sorry to interrupt. You're kind of breaking up all of a sudden.

MS. MAKONNEN: Is this better? My apologies.

MS. CASERTANO: I think you're still breaking up, but maybe if you want to try to talk more, we can see.

MS. MAKONNEN: OK. My apologies. My apologies for that. So we are all hopeful that going forward we can revive and renew these conversations.

As you see the economy moving in a positive direction once again, we are excited to reignite conversations about how businesses are pivoting, learning, and growing from the COVID-19 experience and how we can use -- how we can meet those needs with a pipeline – (inaudible) – and meet the students and employees who can manage, change, and reinvent themselves right alongside – (inaudible) – the trusted workforce system partner.

Today, we bring you some experts on workforce partnership from the Atlantic, eastern Connecticut, and the Pacific, Spokane, Washington to share some practical tips about how to maintain and sustain critical – (inaudible) – partnerships between workforce boards, – (inaudible) – systems – (inaudible) – grant program leadership.

I'm now going to hand this over to Mary Roberto, who is with the Manhattan Strategy Group and one of our Scaling Apprenticeship TA coaches. Mary?

MARY ROBERTO: Thank you, Zodie. As Zodie said, my name is Mary Roberto, and I am one of the TA coaches with the Scaling Apprenticeship Grant program, and today I'm going to serve as the moderator for the webinar and have conversation with three amazing workforce professionals that work in two different workforce systems that are miles away from one another but are very closely aligned in their passion to work together in their respective areas and communities and really think about how we can move forward through these partnerships and as the workforce system and employers open up.

So I'm going to quickly go over some of today's objectives and set the stage for the conversation that we'll have with these workforce leaders.

So the objectives for today, as you can read on the screen, is to -- really for you to gain a foundation of the workforce development system with regards to connecting with education, schools, higher ed, colleges, and so forth, the ability to use labor market and other data to inform apprenticeship program implementation, the continued implementation. We know that some of those data are fluctuating as we speak as we open up and really see more employers opening up, insights into what successful workforce and education partnerships can look like, and tips and strategies useful in partnering with state and local workforce boards.

So moving into the next slide, I want to just kind of go through some of the context for today's conversation about the workforce development system and what it's charged with, which is quite a bit, as additional context for this presentation to really dive in to some of what the workforce -- the system -- helping the community college systems ensure accessibility, relevant, high quality education.

And this is really a key strategy for scaling and sustaining apprenticeships, whether you're offering program input as a partner or collaborating on concurrent enrollment or college transition. Community colleges can really rely on partnership for that type of expertise and resources, shared commitment to the value of higher education, and the connection to the future of apprenticeships.

So we'll really go through kind of each of these areas with the presenters around strategy and planning, funding, systems and processes, and the real piece that connects everyone is that communication piece. How often? What do they talk about, things like that?

So now, on -- we're going to move on to the conversation and introduce the speakers for today.

So we're fortunate to really have three incredible panelists who have agreed to share their partnership journeys with you, explaining the roads that they've traveled and really continue to travel to get where they are today and how they're looking at the future.

So our first panelist is Mark Mattke, who is the chief executive officer for the Spokane Workforce Council in Spokane, Washington. I will refer to this Mark as Mark M. or Westcoast Mark since there's two of them.

The second panelist as Mark Hill, who is the president/CEO of the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board. I'll refer to this Mark as Mark H. or Eastcoast Mark.

And our third panelist is thankfully not a mark, but is Jemiel Rose, who is the project director for the Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Project in Connecticut.

So I'm very excited about our panelists and want to thank them for taking their time today to share their experiences with all of us. It's a great time to talk through their paths, the ones that they've taken in the areas that I mentioned earlier related to strategy and planning, funding, systems and processes, and, yes, communication.

So throughout the presentation, you'll have an opportunity to offer ideas and ask questions through that chat box, the Q&A box. So we'll go ahead and let you do that. And I'll pull those questions into the conversation where they're appropriate, where we can really -- will really enhance the conversation, which I'm sure all of your questions will. And we can go forth that way and have a real -- really complete conversation about these partnerships.

So moving on to the next slide, I want to talk a little bit about the agenda today, the process. What we're going to be talking about is really a workforce system high-level overview, the role of the local workforce boards, and using some resources that we pulled together that you'll see towards the end of the slide presentation that you can tap into later on around what the -- what those roles are and how they're carried out at the state and local level. So a very high level, but offers some resources for you to dig into later on, if you'd like, to really understand that more fully.

And then we'll move into the discussion about the evolution of the partnerships in Spokane and Eastern Connecticut, some case examples, some really down on the ground practical steps that these programs and people have taken to strengthen their partnerships and really talk through how they would assess the gaps that might exist in some other partnerships or some other collaborations around the country, if they were looking from the outside in, and what each system needs from the other to be effective, including data, understanding of programs and goals, and so forth.

And then we'll move into our question-and-answer period and do a quick wrap up.

So we're going to move into kind of a way to take the pulse on where you are all at related to workforce system and community college/higher education partnerships through a quick poll that you'll see on your screen right now.

So the question is, how would you describe your current partnership between the workforce system and the community college/higher education system?

And so, your -- you can choose from networking, we exchange information, coordinating, we alter activities with knowledge of one another's goals. So we might have a -- for example, a career fair and take into consideration that our partner is also having a career fair and coordinate those times and dates and so forth. So that's one example of coordinating.

Cooperating, we agree to share some resources with one another, whether those are monetary or in kind. And then the fourth one is really about truly collaborating. We link and leverage and align resources in ways that enhance one another's capacity. So we contribute to outcomes, for example. And in this apprenticeship environment, we know what those outcomes are and we know and contribute to the way forward in getting to those goals.

So that, and then the last one is none of the above yet. So hopefully after this, if that's the place that you're at, that you haven't really done too much in the way of collaborating or maybe you don't know that there's collaboration happening or one of these other ways of connecting, and you're looking forward to maybe checking that out or you know it's not happening and want to improve.

I'll go ahead and give you a second to respond, if you haven't. So as you can see, 40 percent are networking, basically, exchanging information, and that's done in many ways. 6 percent are coordinating, not really any cooperating at the present time, but 56 percent really collaborating. So that is really great to hear that that's the position that you all believe that you're in with your partnerships or collaboration with workforce and college or higher education programs.

And that information really helps us move along in this conversation, getting a sense of what you're doing and how you may or may not be able to improve it or give information to other peers about improving it and so forth. So go ahead and move on to the next piece of information about the role of the local workforce board.

So we pulled in some information that is out there in WorkforceGPS, like so many things are, about how -- what the -- what really the rules are. There's the strategist, the -- of the workforce board, their position as a strategist to understand trends and set the collective vision.

So bringing -- and this kind of goes along with the piece about being a convener, bringing partners together and aligning services. And to do that, you really have to understand the trends and set the collective vision from that. So using, for example, labor market information to inform the next steps in the local economy and so forth.

So the other piece of it is being a manager; right, the design and management of customer centered service delivery, as we all see in the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act about being a convener but also bringing together and designing and managing to the -- not just the employer need but to the customer need, to the students.

And the optimizer, again, using the data to drive the decisions, how the labor market is moving, who's involved in the labor market, demographics, and so forth, and then who's obtaining and retaining employment and realizing growth in their position.

So there's all of that together. And, again, towards the end of this presentation, you will see this specific resource, as well as many others, about what workforce development boards, local workforce systems do in their local communities and for their local economy, which is quite a bit. So I hope that you'll be able to connect into those resources and this one in particular to understand that better, if you don't already have that perspective or knowledge or maybe you want to dig in deeper to what they do.

So moving into the data and collaboration piece and the discussion with our presenters, we're really going to go through -- I'm sorry. I'm hearing some feedback, and I'm not sure if it was a question or a problem. OK. So yeah. If you can go ahead and mute your line, if you're not talking, that would be great. My dogs are outside. So they won't be interrupting us today. That's a good thing.

We'll go ahead and move into the conversation with the presenters. And I'd like to start by having them introduce themselves. I'm going to go back to the slide with their faces so as they tell you who they are and what they do, you can kind of get a sense of which is which in this conversation, since we can't see each other.

So I want to start with you, Mark Mattke, with Spokane, the Westcoast Mark. If you could just talk to us a little bit about your role. Give us a little background and tell us what you're responsible for and just kind of a little bit of background. If you'd do that, and then we'll move to Mark Hill and then to Jemiel.

MARK MATTKE: Sure. Thanks. Be happy to. Yeah. Thanks again, Mary and others, for inviting me to take part in this important conversation about how local workforce boards and community colleges and employers all work together to improve outcomes for workers and businesses.

I think this is critically important right now as we're all looking to build new pathways into better careers for many workers impacted by the pandemic, as well as for businesses who are experiencing challenges in attracting and retaining talent.

So my role, I'm the local -- the CEO of the local board in Spokane, Washington. We're located on the east side of the state. For those of you who aren't familiar, we're not on the Seattle side of Washington. We're on the other side on the border with Idaho. And I've been in this job for the past 15 years.

Our local board's really committed to developing strategic partnerships in our community and very focused on innovation and using new methodologies and forging new partnerships to meet the changing needs of our regional economy.

As with most workforce boards, I'm -- my board oversees the local workforce system and the network of American Job Centers and other partners in the community that take part in that system. And we deliver services to jobseekers and employers in order to develop talent in response to business needs and support regional economic growth.

My overall role as the CEO is to ensure that the Spokane Workforce Council is a strong and good partner and that we're able to bridge across all the different systems in our area in support of our regional economic growth. At the foundation of our successful work is our collaboration with both employers and our regional institutions of higher ed, particularly our community college. And in Spokane, that is called the Community Colleges of Spokane.

And we have long recognized that we have shared strategic goals of credential attainment, getting people the right credential and skills to go to work, placing them in good jobs on a career path for themselves and their family, giving them wage gains so they can take part in the middle class and beyond, and really supporting those overall goals of regional economic development as we work together to help both students and businesses advance. So that's a little bit about me.

MS. ROBERTO: Mark, can you just -- as a follow-up, you're not a current Scaling Apprenticeship grantee; correct?

MR. MATTKE: Right.

MS. ROBERTO: Can you talk a little bit just for a minute about why this interested you and what you kind of know about that before we move on to Mark Hill?

MR. MATTKE: Yeah. Very much. Yeah. Yeah. We're very engaged in educational pathways for individuals, and apprenticeship is a core component of a lot of the work that we do and getting folks into pre-apprenticeship and beyond, recognizing that's just such a great pathway for folks.

And so, there's a lot of ways in which I'm involved at the local level with our community colleges to help inform program development. I sit and my staff sit on several program advisory boards, for instance, to inform curriculum and program development. And a lot of what used to be called Prof Tech, now CTE programs, such as aviation maintenance or nursing, automotive technician, because we really strongly believe in those programs as viable pathways into good jobs for folks.

And I guess I have a confession to make up front. I'm actually a recovering community college employee in that I worked for community colleges in the early 2000s and then again for a number of years. And during the time when WIOA was enacted, I was serving in the dual role of both the CEO of our local board and the chief workforce officer for the Community Colleges of Spokane. So I had kind of a foot in both worlds. And I -- that really helped me.

I got to understand how the college functions, how programs work, and then to align the missions of both entities, the planning and operations of the college with the workforce system.

And then I also directly led the noncredit division of the college, developing customized training for businesses and open enrollment courses and in-demand credentials for workers. So this work around different pathways, educational pathways into these industries is just critical and vital. And I feel I have a pretty solid understanding of what it takes to make that work across our different systems. Although we have a lot of different rules and regs that govern us both, we do have a lot of things that we share in common that are really important for our combined success.

MS. ROBERTO: Great. Thank you so much. Mark Hill?

MARK HILL: Yes, Mary. Thanks very much, and thanks for having me here today. I'm actually glad I went after Mark M. because he did a fantastic job of explaining what a workforce board does as well as what Mary's slides are.

So I do kind of what Mark M. does, but I'm located in the easternmost portion of the state of Connecticut. So my team manages the workforce development system and programs for a 41-town region the eastern part of the state. So I've been through a lot of forms where I start with kind of what Mark M. did, which is, what does a workforce board to do? I think Mark nailed it.

I guess, my sound bite that I've started to use for people is, what we do is we go out and we understand the job market of the regions we represent, and by understand the job markets of the region we represent, we know what the employers want. We know what they want in terms of number of candidates, how many candidates, and what time frame they're going to need them in and we know what skills they want.

And once we have that knowledge, we take that back to the workforce system, a consortium that consists of workforce boards, colleges, high schools, economic development, the employers themselves, organized labor, a whole series of stakeholders, and we design and then we build and we manage those workforce programs. And so, it's really an exciting proposition.

My background is more in the private employment side, large employers. At the end of the day, the reason why I think I was invited here today -- I'm happy to be here -- is my associate to come behind me, Jemiel Rose and I, were involved in leading a specific partnership.

So today is -- what I'm going to present is more of a case study of a program called Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative. We call it MPI for short. That's a program that began several years ago. It's achieved both national and state recognition for its results, and I look forward to presenting the details of this program along with Jemiel.

I'll do it from a workforce board perspective, and Jemiel uniquely has an employer in academia perspective to this program. But we look forward to presenting how this program came to be, what's involved in it, and what are the results. And we're really proud of it. So happy to be here, Mary. Thanks for having me.

MS. ROBERTO: Thank you, Mark. We appreciate you being here, too. And that perspective is so important to this conversation, really digging into how that specific partnership evolved and what all the components are. So I know we all look forward to that and Mark's presentation.

And then, Jemiel, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you found yourself sitting maybe across the table beside Mark Hill at some meetings and developing and creating what you have going on today?

JEMIEL ROSE: Absolutely. Mary, thank you for having me. I'm happy to be here and discuss this with you guys.

First, I'm the project director for the National Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Project working for Connecticut State College and University System. We have an $8 million Scaling Apprenticeship grant with four major anchor employers, so, Electric Boat, Lockheed Martin, Pratt and Whitney, and IBM.

So my number one goal, obviously, is to meet the outcomes of our grant with my position now, but where I think add -- I add value to this conversation is my experience prior to this and that helped me to, I guess, get this position was I worked for one of our anchor employees.

So I worked for General Dynamics Electric Boat for about 15 years. I started there in engineering and for 10 years I worked in engineering and then I transitioned to workforce development. And that's where I found myself working with Mark.

Essentially, our company, General Dynamics Electric Boat, builds submarines for the Navy, and they were awarded the largest contract -- largest government contract ever. And it was a $17.6 billion contract to build ten more Virginia class submarines. And just with that contract came a huge amount of need for hiring and a way -- we needed to create a way, essentially, to fill the need that we had quickly. And that's kind of how this program was birthed and the connection was made.

I, being on the workforce side working with youth and our workforce pipelines and the manufacturing pipelines on the employer side, and then Mark Hill being on the Workforce Investment Board.

So the big part for us on the employer side was making sure we made a connection and had the right people in the room so that we can, essentially, get what we needed as -- from a skills standpoint, a training standpoint on the education side, but also bringing in the workforce board who could help us with funding and connecting us to the right people to make this happen and, more importantly, creating something that not only benefited our large company but also benefited our suppliers and the smaller industry partners and companies in our area.

So that's kind of where my background is, is on the workforce development side and now on education. I think it basically gives me a good insight on what employers want and how they approach getting the training needs that they require. And it's been a joy working with Mark, and I feel like we have a really solid product and our program degree. And I'm trying to get other people around the country within our grant to take on the same model and continue using it so that they can experience the same benefits that we are here in eastern Connecticut.

MS. ROBERTO: That's great, Jemiel, that your role of being a former employee of one of these organizations that is is actually working in this way with apprenticeships is really interesting and then moving into the role you're in now. So yeah. That's going to be a great conversation and great learning for all of us around what you know from both sides of that coin.

So I'm going to go ahead and move into some of the questions that we have and in the area of strategy and planning. So starting with you, Mark M., what prompted the initial discussions in your training workforce collaboration or -- for you it wouldn't be Scaling Apprenticeship, but around that arena, what really prompted those initial discussions about coordination and what you needed to do and put together?

MR. MATTKE: Yeah. Thanks for that. And before I touch on that, I did want to just thank Jemiel for touching upon the youth component of this and that pipeline component. That's really important. I think K-12 in all this conversation also has to be looked at. Younger students have to have access to programs that lead into these postsecondary credentials and careers, and I think very often they don't have visibility of these as viable careers, especially in underserved populations that aren't traditionally connected to them.

And so, it's super important, I think, to work with CTE at the level of secondary schools that connect to programs with the postsecondary programs and have those articulated pathways so that students can move from high school to college and into the workforce as seamlessly as possible. So I just -- I think that's just critically important and glad that we've got that component covered.

So when it comes to us and collaborating, I think it's in our DNA that -- Mark touched upon that the role of the workforce board, I think, is to understand that the job market and then translate that back across the workforce system. And so, we have long recognized that we have got to work together effectively and collaborate, if we're going to have an impact and really take things to scale.

Otherwise, it's all these little one-off programs and you get a grant in, you develop a program, you deliver it, the grant goes away, the program goes away. So really, it's about identifying what the needs are of our foundational industries and then developing funding and long-term sustainable programs that are going to support those key industries.

And so, for us in Spokane, we've got five targeted sectors. Manufacturing aerospace is one of them and health care, of course, along with transportation and warehousing, finance and insurance, and business and professional services.

So that's where we put the majority of our energy is into identifying career pathways in those key sectors and then working across this broad partnership of our educators -- educational partners, our business partners, our community-based organizations to identify, okay. What do we need to to be successful in this arena? How do we understand what the opportunities are that these different businesses afford?

How do we understand what the gaps are that they're experiencing in their workforce, whether it's skills or credentials? What resources do we all collectively have available to support? What population can we help to access these different opportunities that are out there? And then how do we work together to make that happen?

And the latter part is often the most challenging part, that everyone does their own thing, oftentimes, in a community, and it's that lack of communication or collaboration that leads to a fragmented approach. And so really, a lot of our work is in the alignment component, bringing partners together, understanding all those different elements that I described, and then figuring out how we braid them together and blend the funding in order to develop a comprehensive and holistic service strategy.

So that's, I think, kind of where we come from in our region and coming at the work, developing the partnerships, and then operationalizing them.

MS. ROBERTO: Great. Thank you, Mark. I have a quick follow-up question to that, and it's related to, when I think about partnerships and collaboration and how they evolve, especially in the workforce system, it's usually -- or other systems, human services, others, where there's a law or an opportunity or some policy change that brings people together around the table to have discussions. And there's that foundation -- foundational piece of you have to do this, and you need to do it together.

Was that kind of how this evolved in Spokane maybe way back in the day, or how did that happen?

MR. MATTKE: Yeah. That's a great question. What's at the nucleus of this, or what's the driver for that? I think it's a couple things.

One was, again, that recognition that we need to do this work together and collaborate on that to accomplish anything. And then along came -- we had WIA, the Workforce Investment Act, that had been in place for a long time and pointing to a lot of this. But it wasn't quite compelling enough for a lot of the partners to come together.

And then, of course, in 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act passed, and that really helped to cement that this was the model that we all had to work within. And how do we operationalize that? And as I said, at that time, I was working actually as a college employee in addition to the working for the board. And so, I was able to really figure out, what does this mean in Spokane? How can we take this new law to heart and take both the innovation and opportunity, the I and the O, and make those very real in Spokane?

And one of things we did, too, a number of years ago that helped to cement some of this was being able to secure a $10 million grant from U.S. DOL. It was one of the TAAACT grants that were around for a while, and a lot of colleges took advantage of those and others. And we brought in $10 million for a grant we called Air Washington.

And it was a consortium that used the money to develop new curricula and programs in response to the aerospace industries' needs and grow that aerospace workforce in our state. And so that grant formed a partnership and then partner by partner, community college, K-12 workforce system, businesses, we worked together to figure out the needs and design around that and that has persisted.

So led by industry, we still meet regularly to discuss the status of that industry, what the skill and credential gaps are, and then strategize on ways to increase the pipeline of workers into that key sector of the economy. So it's kind of a combination of different things.

We had the will of the community to work together in partnership. We had a federal law that said thou shalt do this and created the framework for it, and then we even had some funding that helped to reinforce that. So we continue to look for opportunities to to bring in more resources around that partnership, and that, of course -- funding often helps to bring partners together, but it's not the only thing. And so really, it's based upon that model that we still continue to do this work now.

MS. ROBERTO: Great. Thank you. I'm going to move on to to you, Mark. H and then to Jemiel. And I know that you all have this -- the case study and how that sort of evolved, the discussions, if there were discussions prior to the Scaling Apprenticeship grant, and what did that look like?

MR. HILL: Great. Yeah. Thanks, Mary. So before we dive into that, I just want to say I think Mark M. hit an important point. So any workforce board and region can launch a grant and run a grant and probably run it pretty successfully. But the name of the game is running a grant so successful, producing the results you need to produce, having the team in place, the governance structure to manage that such that your grant is sustainable. It needs to be sustainable. You need to build a model that's going to last over a period of years. That's a key ingredient for success.

So back to our eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative, MPI for short. Six years-- here's the -- here's how the background of this began. Six years ago, a number of employers, including what Jemiel outlined and Jemiel was part of that, approached EWIB, our workforce board, and said, hey, I've got one of these good problems to have in life. I going to hire a lot of people in the manufacturing, and I could use your help.

And so -- and this included, again, as Jemiel outlined, a division of General Dynamics called Electric Boat, the largest manufacturer of nuclear submarines in the nation, but also included a bunch of small, midsize, and other bigger -- big manufacturers. So they all came to the board.

So why would they come to the board? Well, there's two reasons, I think, at a high level. Number one is, as I outlined before, my earlier answer, this is what a board does. We meet with employers. We understand what the needs are. We take that back, and we take it to the workforce system. We design programs really to help our workers, our jobseekers gain access to this program. So this is what boards do, and this -- and we had a history of doing that. This is the first reason they came to us.

The second reason is -- Mark M. touched on this in his first answer, along with the Department of Labor, we manage the local American Job Centers in our region, as do, I assume, most, if not, all boards. And so, we've got these two forces going on in our community.

Number one, we have manufacturers that need to hire a lot of people. OK. And left to their own devices, what they're telling us is they can hire a good portion of that with their traditional hiring channels, but not all of that. They need our help to do that.

And, number two, we have in our region many thousands of people coming to the job center looking for opportunity. So if we can put these two together and how do we do that? Well, we develop a job skills training program that's going to extract the information from the employers? What do you really need? What do you want people trained in? And we're going to provide opportunity to the people coming to the job center, manufacturing in our region is a hot ticket. It's where things are growing. Do you want to be involved? And we're going to put these two forces together.

So that's how this program began. So what are the next step we do? Jemiel touched on this earlier. Well, we need a governance structure. A workforce board doesn't do this in isolation. A community college doesn't do this in isolation.

So EWIB as a convener, to what we had in the questions -- as a convener, organized about 25 to 30 stakeholders, community stakeholders, workforce stakeholders. As I mentioned earlier, these are employers, organized labor, college, high schools, economic development, Department of Labor.

It was 25 or 30 in total, and we said, we've got a major opportunity here. If we can design the right program, we can design -- we can create a job skills training program in our region that's not just going to serve the immediate demand of these employers, but it's going to last for years and years to come.

And so, I'll hold off to the next question or two about the results of this program. I'll tease you in that respect, but I'll say this. We started with -- just to give you a little tip as to how fast this program's grown. We started with doing the machining class. Then we did a welding class. And five years later, we're up to 11 trades and 11 trades, I'll tell you in a little bit how many classes that represents. But the program took off from the get go.

The employers realized that if they participate in this program, they can access the talent pipeline through our job center system and all the other stakeholders realized the employers were serious about this. They had this real need, and if they participated, it would make their life easier as well. So that was the birth of the MPI, and I'll turn it back to Mary and come back in a little bit.

MS. ROBERTO: All righty. Thank you, Mark. Jemiel, I'm curious. As Mark was just talking about how this all came together and back then, it sounds like you were working for General Dynamics and you actually -- it sounds like you found your way into this workforce arena that you may or may not have been aware of. What happened? What was that like?

MS. ROSE: For me, on the employer side working in workforce development, I initially got my start working in -- with building youth programs that were going to lead into manufacturing. So it's like Mark kind of mentioned and both Marks mentioned. One of the biggest problems that you see across manufacturing is the lack of viable candidates that can go into these jobs; right?

So when you have this huge need and then you don't have a huge pot of or really a pool of candidates that can go into these jobs, you got to have some type of training mechanism to get them into these positions or to get them ready for these positions. So you had a lot of people out there, like Mark mentioned, at the American Job Center that may be unemployed, underemployed, but they don't have the skills to transition into a manufacturing job.

So that's where this kind of program came in. And for me, being on the workforce side for our company was about trying to work with our community colleges to kind of develop the right type of curriculum that we wanted; right? So we created these machining classes and we created the welding courses and we really had to reach out from -- on the engine -- I mean, on the manufacturing side, we had to go to our managers and all the kind of boots on the ground folks to say, hey, what do you need for somebody to come in and be able to hit the ground running?

We're not expecting you to give us a ready-made product, but we need somebody that we're not going to have to teach everything from scratch, that's going to understand safety, that's going to understand spatial reasoning, and all the things, the basic skills, that's going to come to work on time, those employable skills. We wanted to have somebody that can come in with all of that stuff already, and we've been able to evaluate them and then hire them in and then we can train them up to skill them up to where they can be a productive member of our company.

So that was kind of the side of it from the Electric Boat side, and this program was kind of birthed from that. And that's where you see -- what it does is it creates this pool of applicants that have the skills needed to go into a manufacturing job. And that's one of the biggest things.

And to give one of the statistics on the course, 80 percent of the people that come into this program, these are all unemployed and underemployed participants come into this program. 80 percent of them have no prior manufacturing experience coming into this. And what we're seeing is we're seeing people transitioning from retail, fast food, any other industry, and they're coming into manufacturing and they're being successful because they've been given this quick training program and the right kind of mentoring to put them in a position to be successful.

And from an employer standpoint, it gives you the idea that you can go in and see how folks are doing in these classes, if they're coming to class on time. You can talk to the instructors. We're working with the community college to get these classes done, to kind of produce those classes. We're also working with the workforce board to ensure that they know what our needs are and our hiring needs and our recruitment needs.

So we're reporting that to them to say, hey, we're going to need 20 welders by the end of October. We're going to need 15 electricians by the end of June. And understanding that we had to be -- we had to have a great understanding of what our needs were from a hiring standpoint so that we can supply our workforce board with the right knowledge so that they can help us coordinate and get folks trained.

So that was that was a big piece of it. And I think, for me, it was just trying to help and kind of be that bridge from our company to kind of share the knowledge that we had and the internal things that we needed to get through to our workforce board and our community college partners so that they can provide us with a successful product.

MS. ROBERTO: Great. That sounds amazing. We do have a question from a participant that I'm not sure if you want to answer right now, Jemiel and Mark, but if you want to -- or include it in what's to come. But they want to know how many participants are hired on as employees versus an apprentice. So I'm not sure if that -- if that's something easy to answer now or --

MS. ROSE: So I can give you -- so, first of all, the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative is a pre-apprenticeship program. So it's not designed -- it's designed to get people hired; right? So that's the first viable step. It's an onramp into manufacturing. So it get you hired. And the stat on that, 95 percent of the participants that come through the program are placed with a manufacturer.

How many of those participants go on to a registered apprenticeship? It really depends on them. That's not something that's tracked right now, but for my Scaling Apprenticeship grant, we will be tracking that and the participants that come through our program and when we hire them from or get them hired through the pre-apprenticeship, we'll be tracking that moving forward.

But most companies have a registered apprenticeship or some way -- some pathway for them to go to. But the goal of our program specifically right now is to take folks and give them the skills needed so that they can gain employment and then get the pre-apprenticeship certificate for -- of completing this program, and then they will move on to a full-time employment role.

MR. HILL: Yeah. I would just add to that, Mary, that the State Department of Labor looked at this program and the curriculum and said, geez, what a great program. We're going to put some apprenticeship hours at this. So the people who graduate our program, they're really trying to get jobs. That's their primary focus, but they take apprenticeship hours with them to the employer. As Jemiel said, most of the employers in our program, larger employers, have formal apprenticeship programs within their company, and they would take these hours with them.

MS. ROBERTO: OK. Great. Thank you so much. That makes sense.

So moving into the portion of the webinar that we want to concentrate on as well related to data. I want to ask you about, what data was pertinent during your initial collaborations and changed over time. And I'll talk -- Mark Mattke, if you want to talk a little bit about -- you talked a little bit about the evolution of the partnership, but -- and sort of the catalysts for it and structure being the WIOA, the law. What else -- what do you look at, and how do you use that data, those data to determine what's next?

MR. MATTKE: Yeah. Thanks, Mary. So that's just a critical piece. I guess I'd like to start by just saying that, with regard to data, I mean, the pandemic has had a huge impact on our economy, as it has everywhere; right? So we saw these layoffs occur across different sectors in our economy, with the most in the service sectors, but it also extended into manufacturing and production and construction.

And now, as the recovery is picking up steam, we're seeing labor shortages in every industry. And the data, as we're sifting through, is just challenging at times to -- because it's often in the rearview mirror. Now, we're in this real time environment.

So we're seeing employers having challenges in finding the talent they need to meet their customer needs and grow their business. And we're leveraging those relations as employers to understand the needs and opportunities and then combining that with the use of data to help us and look to the future and project what's happening.

So all that said, all of our work is really informed by these robust linkages to employers in our community. And we do a lot of very extensive economic analyses in real time to determine which businesses are being impacted negatively, which ones are still growing or are starting to grow; and data really drives all of our decision-making.

So one of our board's primary roles in our community, we resource quite a bit of our funds to it, is to gather, conduct analysis, and then provide labor market intelligence so that all of our partners can operate from the same shared understanding and the same source of accurate and timely information to base their decisions upon so, we don't have some partners thinking things are going one way and other partners thinking another way, but rather we try and, as we say, all sing from the same sheet when it comes to the economy.

And to do that, we have an array of different pretty sophisticated tools and operational practices that we use to develop this labor market intelligence. And then we share that out. I actually have a full-time staffer who is a business and industry analyst whose sole job is to constantly probe the regional labor market, determine which skills are in demand and credentials, which jobs, industries are growing, which ones are slowing, and then produce that information in intelligible reports and presentations that the layperson and others can understand and use.

We also, on an annual basis, produce an annual list of occupations in demand that points to which ones will be growing or which ones will be shrinking over the course of the next year. And then we disseminate this to -- at the Community Colleges of Spokane faculty, administrators, deans every year so they can use that to think about what's happening in the economy when they think about their program development.

And then we also create what's called a pathway planning guide, which is a CIP to SOC crosswalks. So for those of you in the colleges, classification of instructional programs is CIP, and then SOC is standard occupational codes. And so, we crosswalk programs at the college to jobs in our economy to show how they align with what the needs are out there. And that helps to inform investment decisions, program decisions as well.

And then just a couple of tools to mention that we use. We have a couple labor market platforms. One is called Jobs EQ by Chimera, and one is called Burning Glass. And those help to deal with our projections. One's a real time analysis, and one is using other sources, BLS and others, to help figure out where the economy was and where it's going to be heading and to give some current information about wages and projections for growth and such.

And so, we work closely with our college instructional research staff and instructional staff so everyone has that same information and data and tools to inform their thinking around resource deployment, program development. And we even do customized reports for different divisions of the college to help inform them down at the more granular level of program by program.

So we do a lot of work around data to help understand it and then disseminate it and then actually make decisions based upon that.

MS. ROBERTO: Thank you. Yeah. I know. Just the ability to look at and analyze data has come so far with the workforce system over the years, and it used to be so frustrating to kind of look at that and go, well, that -- it's not point in time. It's data from maybe three to six months before you're looking at it. And so, it's great to hear that you have -- you've been able to look at more point in time information and utilize that, especially now, as the economy, jobs are fluctuating and seeing growth and seeing that happen in different sectors, as things open up in the -- in each of the states around the country. So that's great to hear.

Mark and Jemiel, do you want to talk a little bit about the data that you all use and maybe specifically related to the Scaling Apprenticeship grant and outside of that too, how that informs your decisions?

MR. HILL: Yeah. Yeah. So I'll just go first, and Jemiel, you can add to it.

So I agree with what Mark M. said, that he covered all the elements. When you're running a specific program, though, obviously, the first data elements you need to pay attention to is the commitments you made as part of getting that grant.

So the two elements that bubble up to the top are how many people do you train, and how many people do you place? So the history of our program is now five years old, and it started with a competitively acquired grant from the federal government. And when we began the program, the goals -- we thought it was going to be a four-year grant and the goals were going to be we were going to do 30 different skills training classes in the different manufacturing trades that we're going to place 400 people.

30 classes, place 400 people, that was a commitment to the fed -- U.S. Department of Labor. It's supposedly over four years.

So what happened with us is the grant took off from the get go. The demand from the employers to keep pumping out training classes and people going through the jobs going to be part of these classes, we had 11,000 people apply to be in this program.

So through five years -- so, what happened was the federal grant -- again, it was supposed to be a three- to four-year expiration -- it expired in a couple -- two, two and a half years. It expired much earlier.

We were fortunate to get supplemented. It's what I mentioned earlier, why I'm passionate about kind of the sustainability of a program. We were fortunate to get funding from private philanthropy, other private sources, and our -- here in Connecticut, our state. So five years, 30 classes, 400 people was the goal. We have now 90 classes, three times the number of skills training classes, again, across 11 unique different trades. And we placed more than 800 people in jobs. So that's four and a half times what we set out to do.

So that's kind of -- when you're running a specific program, those are the commitments you make to the funders and those you can deliver on. Fortunately, in our -- with our partnership with so many great stakeholders, we more than tripled or quadrupled what the commitment was.

And Jemiel mentioned an interesting data point earlier. We had a federal auditor that reviewed our program as part of the U.S, DOL and they came back and they're the ones that told us, because they scanned through our database that we have to support this entire program. And they said, hey, what Jemiel said earlier. Did you know 80 percent of the people you've placed in this program had no formal manufacturing experience before joining the program, yet, A, were getting placed and, B, the employer is -- Electric Boat in this case, was tracking that they had an attrition retention rate improvement of 50 percent of the people that came to this program versus those they'd hire off the street.

So you talk about a marketing message. You have a program now that's basically proven to take people that don't have kind of formal resume experience in manufacturing, but they're able to be taught through a skills training class and other elements as a part of the program. And they're able to be turned into really, really productive employees for the company.

I mean, those are the sorts of data elements that really -- they're what we committed to when we got the money, and they also help us sustain the program going forward because they're really headliners.

MS. ROBERTO: Great. Great. Great to hear. Jemiel, what do you -- what's your perspective?

MS. ROSE: A lot of what Mark said. He hit the nail on the head when it comes to the data points and even for -- from a Scaling Apprenticeship point of view, right now, we have -- we're in the works with our contracts with Electric Boat and with the workforce board.

So I have a contract with Electric Boat that's going to train roughly 1,000 participants, so, run 1,000 participants through the MPI program. And then I have a secondary contract with the workforce board exclusively just to -- that will train 150 participants, specifically, one, those participants not to go to our major anchor employers so that we can support some of the small and medium sized employers.

But from a data standpoint, what we're looking for from a data standpoint is, obviously, how many people we're training and how many people were placing. In particular, for me, from a grant standpoint, I want to focus -- or I want to bring some of the focus on the participants and where we're getting participants.

So focusing on the different demographics. So we want to look at minorities, but some of the -- we want to go down into those subgroups within the minorities when it comes to veterans, people of color, women, ex-offenders. That's one of the things that I want to look at moving forward, too, is to create -- we already have a great program that does exactly what we want. It puts -- it gives people the training. They get a job.

I said, but what I think we can do better and a part of what I want to focus on is focus in some of these courses and some of these classes and maybe partnering with some organizations that represent veterans, represent women, so that we can tap into those demographics and increase those numbers from a statistics standpoint in our grant.

And I think one of the things that drives -- what I think is driving people into manufacturing, in particular in eastern Connecticut and -- is people -- after the pandemic and so many people losing jobs, whether it be retail or working in hospitality or the service industry, a lot of people saw that volatility and don't want to go back to that.

And what it's showing is that folks want to go into something that has more stability, that can provide them with a level of benefits and pay that's going to -- and a career that can mature as they mature and grow with a company. So I think that's one of the things that is beneficial for this program, is going to push people into this program, and why the need for this program to grow in manufacturing is going to -- it's going to continue to grow.

And I think, eventually, it'll spring into health care and IT and other industries. Right now, I just know in our region, and particularly in eastern Connecticut, manufacturing is probably the number one -- is the number one job that -- that's out there. So that's really what's kind of pushing folks or pushing the direction of our grant.

MS. ROBERTO: Yeah. That's interesting, and I guess I have that same perspective and think that, as people move from maybe unemployment rolls or in public assistance arenas, that the influx of individuals looking for manufacturing careers and other careers that involve apprenticeship, specifically health care and IT, like what this grant really concentrates on is that there'll be some some movement in that area.

What I was thinking about related to your last responses, the goals, the objectives, the outcomes, the data that kind of move things along, and where it comes from, is how -- when I think about a picture of all of you together in a room talking through some of these challenges and opportunities, what the labor market looks like, having employers at the table, what do they look at?

Is it visible to everybody around what the goals are, and how do they contribute to what those are? So is there meetings that take place and data dashboards and things that they look out that really say, this is my role in helping to move the needle? And that question is for any of you.

MR. HILL: Yeah. I guess I'll jump in here first, Mary. I would just say that the key to these partnerships is a proper governance structure of the stakeholders, like I mentioned earlier. The employers want to know that the ecosystem is working for them, that they can have a talent pipeline created from job centers or any other sources such that it can support their business demand and their growth.

The colleges want to know that the employers are serious, that what they say now, they need 100 welders next year or something or colleges and high schools, that it's not going to change in three months. So for them, the worst-case scenario is -- it's you start down a path and build a program, you put into your college, and suddenly it disappears. There's no demand for it and training people for nothing.

So getting them together is -- the idea is you need to create a value proposition for each that, when they work together and a unity of purpose, they can really produce a lot of results.

So I think that's where, from a workforce perspective, you want to make sure you're addressing kind of what the needs are for each of the stakeholders in the room and make sure that those needs are followed through and that each stakeholder respects each other. When you do that, you create kind of an enduring partnership and you complement that to your question with here's some data to show you how competent your partnership is, like the numbers I gave to you before.

When people start to realize, man, not only did we hit the federal grant numbers, we did it a year or two years earlier than we were supposed to and we're triple, quadruple the numbers supplemented by other funding after that, there's a real energy in the room. Then it's a sense that, hey, this partnership works, and they're more than happy to come together for any other partnership, health care, IT, other industries, to the extent, the same partners. But it just builds on -- success builds on itself.

I think starting with the governance structure, which people respect and what each other needs from this partnership, that, to me, is where it all began -- begins. And some communities have it, and they do. They're well ahead of the game, and some may not. And that, I think, puts them in a position of scrambling and trying to make some of these workforce programs meaningful to all the people in their community, all the groups.

MR. MATTKE: Yeah. This is Mark M., and I think -- yeah -- Mark really hit it there. You've got to create that value proposition across the board for everybody and you'll clarify those needs. But -- and I think, too, that from the employer perspective -- and Jemiel can probably speak better to this than me, but our systems can tend to be pretty bureaucratic. The workforce system, we can get bogged down by the rules and the regs. And I can speak for academia, I think, as well, that that can oftentimes be the case.

That's pretty clear across all of our systems. And employers look at that and just go -- sometimes they don't want to get involved with that because they don't see results. It takes too long to do things, and there's a lack of flexibility in what the response looks like.

To just say, well, we've got a program. Here's how it works. Do you like it or not? Take it or leave it, that doesn't work for an employer. We've got to think flexibly and creatively about how we can do things differently to build a better mousetrap, if you will, and really innovate to meet their needs.

And so, that also for me is important that you demonstrate that you can think out of the box and do things differently in order to get to a solution that works for everybody. And then you build that muscle over the course of time. You build that muscle of being more nimble and be more flexible, and you can apply that each and every time you come up with a challenge in your community around workforce. And the partners become accustomed to thinking in that way, and you can create part of the culture around that.

So for me, that's another important component of it, is to demonstrate that you can indeed think out of the box and then apply that in the future to, as Mark pointed out, other industries as well.

MS. ROBERTO: Great. Yeah. That makes sense. Thank you so much for -- wasn't one of the questions that we talked about, but it did come to mind as we were talking through, what are the real practical steps?

So I'm going to step back for just one second and see if anyone that's on the line, on the call, or on the webinar has any questions. And if they do, if they could put them in the chat, I wanted to sprinkle in what you all are thinking and what questions you have, if I can, because we don't have a whole lot more time. And I just want to make sure we're meeting your needs, too. So if you have a question, please do type it into the chat and for any of the presenters, and I'll go ahead and, like I said, sprinkle those in.

While people are thinking about questions that they might have, I'm going to go ahead and talk a little bit about -- we talked about strategic or employer engagement, strategic engagement. It sounds like, you, Mark Hill, had -- and -- you had employers walking through the door asking for something.

And I think some of the challenges in the Scaling Apprenticeship grant, maybe other grants, similar grants, is that there's this outreach component that happens instead. So the employers aren't necessarily coming in, but the the workforce system or the college system is reaching out to them.

And that goes along with maybe what the challenges are that you anticipated early on with the collaboration and how you address those maybe related to employer needs and engagement or maybe something else related to the partnership or data or something else. But wanted to kind of bring that into the conversation a bit because we've heard, as a TA coach and other coaches that I've been in contact with and leadership at DOL around, what's that special sauce that really -- that meets that challenge as well as other challenges that you have?

MR. HILL: So I would say we were fortunate, like you said, Mary, in our specific case study here, that the employers kind of reached out to us first. We've got a history of engaging with the employers in which we engage them. And we see kind of, hey, this grant's out there. We like to think through this idea. We think we have a workforce that can take advantage of these opportunities. Let's get together.

And, like I said, it's just building and marketing to it. It's just building this culture of trust, such that the employers really -- and not just employers, the organized labor and the other stakeholders I mentioned earlier, that they know their time's not going to be wasted. If they spent time doing this, there's going to be something in it for them.

We first began our program, we mentioned kind of Electric Boat. It's a very big company, a division of General Dynamics. The biggest challenge we had with our partnership was we're building a manufacturing partnership, not just an Electric Boat partnership. So we had to develop curriculum that -- be doing a welding or machining class. There's a core of that curriculum that could be developed for whether you're making widgets or you're making nuclear submarines.

And the engagement of the colleges we've had in our region was really heroic because, once they realized kind of what the employers wanted was really defined and it was not going to go away, they jumped in with both feet, and they designed programs, the training curriculum that got the interest of small, medium-sized employers. We have over 200 employers that have hired from this particular program. It's just Electric Boat has taking close to two-thirds, and the other third is across 200 different employers.

So I think, when you get engaged with employers, they approach you. You approach them. As long as you have, to use Mark's word, a culture of collaboration and working together, that's the most important ingredient that needs to be in the room because then people are willing to help you design the program and help execute it. And workforce boards can never do this in isolation. There's no chance. No possibility. We'd be training people and there'd be no placements or we'd be -- we -- it just wouldn't work. And so, I think kind of that culture to me is the key to the whole process.

MS. ROSE: If I could jump in here, one of the things that I see just -- so, from the employer side but also from the education and Scaling Apprenticeship side, one of the most difficult things about these partnerships is reaching out to employers, trying to get folks on board with what you want to do from a grant standpoint.

I think it's building synergy, and I think what's been successful in eastern Connecticut is building synergy. Westcoast Mark kind of touched on, on the education side, being flexible enough to build something to cater to the employers, not to present them with something that, hey, this is a ready-made product and do you want this? But more so, what are your needs, and let's cater something to your needs?

So I think, as I reach out to employers -- so, obviously, I work with Electric Boat, but I also work with Lockheed Martin and IBM, who are national partners, are reaching out to other employers across the nation, in California and other parts of the country. I try to keep that in mind that, I'm the employer; right?

I mean, I'm the educator right now, and I have the funding. I have different models that could work for them, but I want to create something that's specific -- that specifically can help them. So I think that's one of the things that's helped me be successful, even with my other employer partners, is to reach out to them with the idea of being flexible and the idea of saying, let me understand what you need, what type of people you need, what type of skills you need to be taught. What do you want in a program?

And maybe their needs align with the program model that I already have, and I can just give you all the lessons learned and help you create something that's going to be successful based off of something that we already have. But if we don't have that, then my goal is to help you create something that's going to work for you or work for your region.

And I think every region is going to be different. Every region is going to have different strengths and weaknesses. And I think from an education standpoint and a workforce standpoint in general, you have to understand what that region needs and you have to cater to those strengths and cater to those weaknesses of that region.

And I think that's going to be what's most helpful and building that synergy where everybody is gaining something from this partnership. And I think once everybody is gaining -- like Mark Hill said, once everybody realizes that we're all benefiting from this partnership, then the partnership will just flourish.

MS. ROBERTO: Great. Mark M., do you have anything to add?

MR. MATTKE: No. I think my colleagues covered that one. Thanks.

MS. ROBERTO: Yeah. It's been a challenge as we hear that maybe the term is feeling like you're banging your head against the wall and what's the value proposition? And what if employers aren't responding and how to really get to what that value proposition really is and how to speak to them in a way -- in a language that they understand that this isn't sort of a prepackaged program. It's one that can be put -- will be put together with your input and involvement. And things evolve and change, of course, but the long-term kind of look at it is, it's there. It'll remain. It'll stay so people can rally around what that looks like and and be invested in it. So that's good to hear that that is possible to do.

When you think about first steps in communication around these types of systems, what do you -- if somebody were struggling, for example, with getting these conversations rolling, getting people into the same room, talking about what it is and what they need, what would you say? What would you look at in other programs? Let's say if you went to a different state and you were kind of assessing the system, what would you look for?

MR. MATTKE: Well, this is Mark M. I guess I'll just jump in on some of that to answer that, I guess.

You want to look for the ability to listen. First and foremost, that in order to be effective in this -- you kind of talked about it a little bit earlier -- was you've got to first listen to the the employers as the key stakeholder, what their needs are and not present them with a package that you hope they buy, essentially, but rather listen to them.

And I would look for the ability to convene employers to take in and garner input from them where they can share pain points and finding and retaining talent and the gaps that they have in their workforce, whether it's gaps in skills or credentials or even gaps in different populations that they are not seeing represented in their workforce and such. And so, you need to have a structure that creates that space for employers to speak to you and listen and not just always be presenting or promoting something.

And then you take that information back and, collectively, the partnership works on solutions that brings them back to employers and says, will this work? Do you think this would meet your needs? How can we work together to deploy this or implement this and see if it works?

So those types of structures in place where partners come together, partners listen, partners develop solutions that are made up of leveraged resources, I think is a kind of a key facet to being successful in this environment, because it is going to be dynamic in different communities, different folks around the table, different resources available. But you've got to start with, first, what is the needs case? What is the problem that we're trying to solve? Hear that clearly, and then work together to inform that solution development.

MR. HILL: Yeah. I guess I would add that, Mary, if you drop needs in other regions and assess what you think is going on, I look at it like there's probably some lagging indicators, and there's some leading indicators.

The lagging indicators would be something like a quantitative analysis. This community got a federal or state or some kind of grant. What do the numbers look like? Did they honor their commitment to their funders in what they did? And all boards -- it's incumbent upon boards in the communities to do that because your reputation is on the line. Your chances of getting future funding is dependent on producing what you said, what your commitment was, and you need to do that.

But there's -- and I think Mark M. touched on this. There's a leading indicator, which is more of a qualitative analysis. And to me, it's kind of like, what is your level of engagement with critical stakeholders you're going to need -- that you will need to execute a workforce training program? How often do you meet with the colleges, the high schools, the employers? Is there a consortium of employers in your region that can speak for a number of different employers and it's not just kind of one employer dominant? Do you have a committee, a subcommittee? Is there regular meetings going on?

And so those qualitative metrics to me are kind of leading indicators. They're leading in a sense that, if you see that this governance structure doesn't exist, you begin to question whether, when a grant does come that community's way, if they'll be able to execute the quantitative measures, the lagging indicators?

And so, the leading indicators, the qualitative measures, that to me is kind of what I would look for first and foremost. What is the level of engagement like in that community in the governance structure, and how does it work and who's on it? What companies? What levels of people in those companies? How often they meet? I think that would kind of give you a sense whether this group, this team is working together or it's one group that's trying to drive home a particular grant. Working together as easily -- as I said earlier, to me, is the key to sustainability. It has to be in place.

MS. ROBERTO: That's great to hear, and it makes so much sense around looking at it from the leading indicators and the qualitative and quantitative sort of picture. Is there a governance structure? Who is the convener? Who's sending the messages? And what do those messages look like, and what's in it for me; right, for all of those involved to come to the table and continue to work through some of the challenges and opportunities related to how apprentices -- apprenticeship fits into this larger construct?

But there are other -- the other pathways or sectors that come into play in communities and state systems, local systems all over the country. I know from my experience working in the human services sector and really trying to involve individuals that are experiencing situational and chronic poverty and getting them into the workforce, it is -- the value proposition to them is really around what they want to do and how they want to do it.

And I think that's the case with most employers and employees that come to the table. It's like you can't sell me something that's already packaged anymore. It needs to be more iterative, and there needs to be consistent attention paid to it, especially right now where so many things are changing. You have to have your finger on the pulse at all times to kind of pivot or adjust, be agile to the system needs.

So that makes a whole lot of sense. And I want to stop again and ask if there's any -- we're getting down to the last seven minutes. I knew this would go fast. I didn't have a sense of how fast, but there's so much good information that I want to bring in my coach colleagues, DOL, any of the grantees that are on the line to ask any questions for the last few minutes before we head off into our -- the rest of our workday or the end of our workday, depending on where we're at.

Is there any question that people want to pose in the Q&A that we want to address? Nothing? OK.

Well, it sounds like there are structures -- there are governance structures out there, and there may or may not be known by the grantees. How would one figure that out? How would they know -- if they're just starting a grant, they're not very familiar with the workforce system, how would they go about figuring out what's already being done or has been done or how to connect?

MR. MATTKE: This is Mark M. I guess, I mean, I'd recommend reaching out directly to the local workforce board to meet someone. And this is such a relationship-based business, that you've got to get face to face or Zoom to Zoom with somebody to find out what's going on out there and learn more the details of the system, how the structure currently functions, and then how partnership works with that entity.

I think that that's -- again, that's kind of the coin of the realm for local boards is to develop relationships with all the different partners. And there's an open door for everybody to come into to figure that piece out and then figure out where our commonalities are and leverage points are. So I'd recommend just reaching out directly to establish that relationship with that local board at whatever level and then take it from there.

And it's been touched upon, but there's relationships at every level and you have that -- kind of that leadership level, that college president, CEO of the local board. But then equally important is that operational level of staff to staff that manage programs and the people who deliver the services directly to customers and students and having them understand what their roles are.

I think that what we're all learning is that no any one entity can successfully do all this work. We've got to partner to make it happen, and it's going to take a holistic system approach to being successful. And the more we can embed that culture and that learning of one another's jobs and fund sources so that we can then make good referrals and work together more closely, the more successful we're going to be in getting people into the program that traditionally haven't been successful, getting them through the program, across the finish line, and into employment. So I think that's the steps I would take.

MR. HILL: Yeah. And I would add to that to just remind people that some -- the two core assets we discussed here today, the workforce board, the American Job Center System, these are byproducts of federal investment. So they're, essentially, in every region of every state in the country. There's millions -- so, if you're a jobseeker and you're trying to understand how to navigate, there's millions of people that go to the job center system just like you that are trying to gain opportunity in an American Job Center in some region of the country.

There's -- I think there's something like 550 workforce boards in the country. So these are assets, part of federal law that are in every region of every state. And so, there's opportunity to communicate with these assets to kind of help you, whether you're an employer trying to look at maybe I would like to build a talent pipeline through the job center system or a jobseekers saying, I'd like to benefit from some job services, updating my resume, how to interview skill -- how do I gain interview skills? There's a whole set of job skills you can get in the centers.

So they're out there. It doesn't matter where people are calling in or where they're from. They have access to these sort of assets. And I would just suggest they try to leverage them to their own personal needs, as best they can.

MS. ROBERTO: Thank you, Mark. I want to -- we have about three minutes left. So I wanted to go through and get any final thoughts that you all have, starting with Jemiel.

And is there anything else that you'd like to add to what we've discussed? Anything that kind of resonated or came to mind as we had this discussion? And then we'll move back to Zodie for closing remarks. So I wanted to start with you all and see if you have anything you want to say prior to us heading off.

MS. ROSE: Well, sure. I want to comment specifically from the Scaling Apprenticeship side. As a project director, you do have to build relationships with your employers, build relationships with the workforce boards in your area. And if you're coming from the community college system, you need to have relationships with all of the folks in that arena.

And I think that's really been one of the keys to the success that I've had is the morning before I got here, I had the experience and had the knowledge and had the connections with a lot of the folks in our area that made a lot of these -- that made a lot of the work that I'm doing right now easier just because I've had a relationship with them. I worked with them before, but it takes time to build those relationships and, like Westcoast Mark said, if you want to know who they are, set up a meeting. Go meet them face to face.

I know COVID's kept everybody from doing that, but set up a Zoom call. I'm a big believer in sitting down in front of somebody and telling them exactly what you're about. From the Scaling Apprenticeship side, really explaining what your grant is, what the goals of your grant are, how you can be beneficial to that employer, to the workforce board, understanding what they have to offer, what they're looking for, what their needs are, I think that's the key to kind of building that strong relationship.

Obviously, the steady communication and keeping in contact with people helps. Setting up consistent meetings once you initiate that conversation or that relationship, I think that can be extremely helpful. And I think, I guess to finish it off, just building those relationships is going to be the key element and making sure you're build the relationships with the right people in each one of these organizations that can help you make a decision or that can help you with a challenge that you need to get fixed.

MS. ROBERTO: Great. Thank you, Jemiel. Well, we're at time. Is there anything else that you all want to add before I hand it over to Zodie for some final remarks?

MR. MATTKE: No. Jemiel said it really well. Thanks.

MR. HILL: Yeah. Yeah. I agree with Jemiel, and I would just thank Zodie and Mary and everyone here for having us here today. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

MS. ROBERTO: Thank you all so much. Zodie, I'm going to pass it over to you for some closing remarks, if that sounds all right.

MS. MAKONNEN: Yes. Thank you so much to our panelists for such an informative hour and a half filled with a lot of good information. I hope all of you found the session informative, and we look forward to seeing you on our next webinar. I know it's exactly 4:00 o'clock. So I am going to say thank you, again, to our presenters and turn it over to Laura to close us out.

(END)