**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Building Career Pathways Programs and Systems: Insights from TAACCCT**

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LAURA CASERTANO: I want to again welcome everyone to the "Building Career Pathways Programs and Systems: Insights from TAACCCT." And I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today. Janet Javar is a Chief Evaluation Office with the U.S. Department of Labor. Janet speak away.

JANET JAVAR: Thank you so much. Laura. Hello everyone and welcome. Today's focus is on what we've learned from the Trade Adjustments Assistance Community College and Career Training Initiative which we call TAACCCT, with a focus specifically on Career Pathways programs and systems and using evidence from evaluations. So Career Pathways was an important feature of the TAACCCT rounds and continues to be with the new strengthening community college grounds.

Career Pathways offer articulated education and training steps between occupations in an industry sector combined with support services with an objective of supporting individuals advance over time to higher skills, recognized credentials, and better jobs with higher pay. Career Pathway approaches are still evolving. So in the next hour you'll hear from two experts about Career Pathways as part of their work on different TAACCCT evaluations. One at the national level and the other at the grantee level.

We'd like you to come away from this webinar with some ideas and good food for thought for how to think about building up and building out Career Pathway programs. Whether you're starting from scratch, or scaling up, or redesigning existing ones. Our presenters will be highlighting findings they found from their work on the evaluations. I also encourage you all to check out the resources we included in the weblinks below. So now let us jump right in and introduce you to our two speakers. One moment, sorry, some difficulty. OK.

I can't figure out how to turn my camera off. But today we have Julie Strawn is a principal associate with Abt Associates. She has over 30 years of experience working on Workforce development and post-secondary education issues and initiatives. Heather McKay is the executive director at the Virginia Office of Education Economics. More recently she was director of Education and Employment Research Center at Rutgers University. I will be asking each of them questions that I have given them in advance.

In order to get through all of the questions, I will ask the audience questions at the end. With that said, I encourage you all to use the chat box to type in your questions throughout the presentation. I also encourage you to use the chat if you just want to make a comment on anything you hear that resonates with you or to use as an opportunity to connect with other colleges here and perhaps ask them questions.

So before we get into my specific questions on Career Pathways, Heather, I'm curious about your experience working with TAACCCT MTs as a third-party evaluator. I know that for many colleges especially very early on in the TAACCCT initiative colleges have never secured or even participated in an evaluation. So as you think about your experience working with Colorado and New Jersey, were there any kind of a-ha moments you saw with grantees as you reported out any of your findings?

HEATHER MCKAY: Janet, thanks so much first of all for having me today. I'm really excited to share the experience with you on TAACCCT. And we did have a bunch of aha moments. And one that comes to mind particularly as your asking the question is, at the beginning of round three in the Colorado Grant they were going to work on credit for prior learning. And I have to say not everyone in the consortium -- there were 13 colleges -- really bought into the -- people were thinking, why do we need to do this, what's the point of working on this, we already have a policy.

And so, one of the things we did for this to take a look at what was happening was we did an analysis before -- early on in the grant, the first two months to look at the use of CPO in previous years. And what we determined was, hey there's a policy, but almost no one uses it with the exception of one college that served military students a lot. And so, that really sparked the conversation and also, I think put some energy around the use of data to informed decision making and think about how to move forward with the grant. So it was really quiet an exciting thing to be a part of. Thanks.

MS. JAVAR: Great. Thanks. And Julie, you wear actually a different kind of cap if you will in that you worked on the TAACCCT national evaluation as well as a number of other national studies on Career Pathway initiatives from both AHS and DOL. And in fact, your currently involved in a different DOL study that's taking stock of all of the evidence about Career Pathways programs to date. Can you offer any quick take aways for SCC grantees who are joining us today?

JULIE STRAWN: Sure. Yeah. Well, first of all, good morning, everyone and thanks for joining us today. I think the most important take away from the Career Pathways research today is that programs are often successful in helping participants earn credentials and find jobs in industries they train for. However, with that success it doesn’t always translate to higher earnings. You know, we're not sure the -- recall all the reasons it's true, but one implication maybe that we need to just aim a little higher. And target higher waged jobs even just for that initial training or at least jobs that have strong potential for future wage growth.

MS. JAVAR: Thank you so much. I think your insights on the topic are super helpful. So my first question is on strategies. There are so many. Julie, could you give us some sense of what types of strategies were used by community colleges in TAACCCT to develop Career Pathways?

MS. STRAWN: Sure. So as you can see from this slide TAACCCT grouped college strategies into three types. So in round four of TAACCCT the strategies we have colleges most commonly use were creating stackable credentials, supporting academic success with basic skills help, and providing career coaching. And one quick example of that is colleges in Connecticut's round four consortium helped workers already in manufacturing to move up the higher waged jobs by adding stackable third semester credentials to their existing advanced manufacturing programs.

And those third semester certificates were tailored to local industry needs and designed to build on the first two semesters by adding instruction in more advanced skills. Or workers who'd already had those intermediate skills from having learned them on the job can jump right in to those third-semester skills. Consortium colleges can also build new labs or update existing ones in order to expand program offering and serve more students.

MS. JAVAR: Great and so, you showed us a lot of strategies there and that's just even a few of what we saw in TAACCCT. And so, my next question is, how does one make sense of which strategies to use? Could you each talk about strategies that seem to be most promising?

MS. MCKAY: Thanks so much Janet. Yeah. So I'm going to be -- I'm going to set the stage a little bit for what I'm going to be talking about today. I'm going to talk about two examples. One was the Colorado Community College system. They have three grants in rounds one, two, and three in energy, healthcare, and manufacturing. And I also evaluated the New Jersey consortium project which was a round four healthcare grant. And really colleges used two kinds of strategies in these grants and the consortiums use these strategies as well. And that was to approach things at a policy level and also to look at things in terms of a practice level.

And I bring that up because the strategies, some of them had long term impacts that we weren't able to study during the timeframe of the grant. And that was a lot of the policy work. This was really, begin the process and the grant and move forward over a long period of time. And really commit as a college and a consortium to whatever this change was decided to be. The practice was much more immediate, and you can see the impacts of it much more immediately. So something to think about is you all implement yours grants.

Some of this stuff is long term, some of its shorter term. So a couple of the strategies that were used -- articulation agreements were developed between two- and four-year institutions. The Community College of Denver and a local four-year institution developed some really interesting pathways between their manufacturing programming in their CPE area into the engineering program at that four-year school. And during the time frame of the grant, they had to do quite a lot of work creating these articulation agreements, making links between the courses and the programs and beginning to work at the competencies.

But really there wasn't yet time for students to go through and take these pathways. And so, it, -- one example of it being a very long process. Another activity was finding credit for prior learning policies. This was something that was done in both Colorado and New Jersey. These policies were something that was going to be determined at the system levels, but then they were implemented by colleges. So it was sort of a top-down, bottom-up approach and that was very effective.

It took over two years for the committee to come to consensus on what the policy should be. And it only then began to go out to the colleges in year three. That was quite an interesting process. But really important to do it carefully and make sure there was [inaudible] and that people were on board. Developing that into micro-credentials was another popular idea that emerged in the later rounds of the TAACCCT grant. Colleges began to develop these credentials along the way for folks.

And these badges and micro-credentials were really used in a variety of different ways. One manufacturing program that programs at community colleges used this idea to mark skills that were learned in a one-year program so that people would have something to hold onto. It was really a momentum point for folks in the program. It was also really important in that project for those badges to be used for people who were incumbent workers. Employees could go back to their employers and say, hey, I now know how to do this. I'm not done in that program yet, but I got this skill.

That was quite neat. Other colleges use these badges in micro-credentials in programs where they saw a lot of folks leaving before they finished. Denver Community College for instance used this in their welding program where people were leaving before they completed their program because they were able to get employment. And the quiet well-paid employment before they even finished. So that they would leave with something and not be left with nothing. Which was quite interesting.

In terms of practice activities, colleges did a lot of non- [inaudible] between their programs and courses so that people had these pathways educationally and also, in terms of careers. They created and implemented tools for student decision making. There was a big web tool in manufacturing that a lot of people could see the different pathways they could take. And also, allow them to see the skills that they might have and how they could apply to different programs. And that they could even get credit for them.

And that site is still up in Colorado today. And they also did work through line program with [inaudible] adults and incumbent worker needs. So many colleges created night programming or weekend programming or worked within schedules. One school Pueblo Community College created mobile labs and they even delivered their college programming at site so workers could finish their shifts, go out for hour and do their classes and then head home. And they wouldn't have to even travel to the college. So a lot of really interesting tools there.

MS. STRAWN: Just to build on what Heather was talking about, in the national evaluation we asked TAACCCT colleges what they saw as their most important accomplishments. So that's another way of thinking about what strategies are most promising. And what they most often said was their accomplishments were enhancing existing programs or curricula, purchasing, or upgrading lab equipment, and the third most frequent one was initiating a training program. And all of these achievements are things that really help colleges align their education and training with industry skill needs and to expand their offerings for students.

Another way to look at promising strategies is to analyze the links between services people received in the program and their outcome. And I just want to say she's interpreted these findings cautiously as they're really just statistical associations between services and outcomes. They don't prove that a particular service caused an outcome. With that [inaudible] some of the implications for programs from these findings are that program completion might be improved through more opportunities for hands on learning.

So practicing job skills in work like settings for example. Strengthening connections to employment through things like work study jobs or internships may help with placing participants in jobs related to their training. And third, incorporating transfer credits into pathways education and training tends to increase the chances of landing higher paying jobs.

MS. JAVAR: Thank you. So my next question is also for the both of you. Can you talk about student success and what community colleges did to support it?

MS. MCKAY: Yes. So in Colorado and New Jersey a lot of the activities around student success were focused on some big policy reforms. And so, that's what I'm going to talk about today. In Colorado during the first round there was an effort to do a wide system developmental educational reform. And of course, this is something that's happening all around the country. Developmental education was a big barrier to completion of programs in CTE and across other programs as well. So this was a real challenge for students.

Students would have to take up to three classes in math or up to three classes in English if they placed at the lowest levels. And there was a lot of leakage as we know. In literature this was also really true in Colorado. So what Colorado ended up doing was this top-down bottom-up approach. They were told they had to reform developmental education and then they got a faculty committee together to actually do that work.

And they came to consensus on what they would do, which was shortening the sequences so it was one class to college for Dev Ed creating corequisite options in both English and math, doing some contextualization to teach a new program so that they math was more appropriate to the actual job that folks would have, and people weren't getting extra things that might get them stuck.

And also, the other thing that they began to do was change the placement testing and other things there. So that work was really important to Career Pathways. It was really important to the movement of students through programs and it's actually still ongoing in Colorado. I left Rutgers a couple of months ago and was working on another study with them. So Colorado continues to look at this as a student success strategy for CTE students and for students in their rewards programming.

Another way that this move forward was thinking about that credit for prior learning and what Colorado has really had their eye on here and also, New Jersey when they did credit for prior learning is thinking about that adult student. How does that adult student succeed? What can we do to help launch that adult student when they get here? Appreciate the learning that they've already done and give them some credit for it. So while credit for prior learning policies were in place at all the colleges that they mentioned in my opening statement, they were not used.

And folks were really not aware of them. So it was really improving awareness, improving use of these programs, and also making sure each college had the tools to apply a prior learning assessment when a student asked for it. So creating different kinds of exams, beginning to look at credentials and certificates that were out there that they might be able to honor, looking at employer training programs in their local area, and really beginning to create a true offering of credit for prior learning for students rather than something that just sat on the books.

The other thing that Colorado did in terms of thinking about student success was some practice changes. And this was a lot staffing work. So in most of the colleges during in each one of the grant periods some kind of a student success or career coach was hired. And throughout the course of the grant these folks change what they did in different colleges and adapted this role in different ways. But for the most part they participated in student decision making support.

So how to get a student on a pathway, how to link them up from non-credit to credit, how to move them through, or connect them to transfer programs that they were interested in that, and also thinking about what career was right for them. So helping to talk to students about wages, and other things that they would experience when they got into the field. Academic supports were also provided with these -- by these positions as were self-skills. Often folks ran some sort of self-skills course or self-skills lesson planning within the curriculum.

And they also helped students with logistics. So getting them to register, making sure they were taking the right courses to move through the program. These career and student success coaches had varying placements in the college, and this really mattered in terms of their success and actually the role they played. So some of them were placed in advising in that regular structure. Those folks often didn’t know the students in the manufacturing program or the healthcare program as well and they had some trouble connecting with students.

But they did connect themselves into the network of the college. And so, there are some sustainability pieces there. Other coaches were in the departments themselves. They saw the students every day. This was often very helpful for the students because many of the instructors, for instance in manufacturing programs were actually workers in the field. So there were rarely on campus. So this person, this career and student success coach acted as a support and a regular face in the program which was quite nice.

And a lot of students spoke to me about that idea. Another job which was at one school was an employment engagement specialist at Front Range Community College. This person was very -- this role was very interesting, and this person was really great at it. And she's still at the college today. She would go around and really, she was the eyes and ears of the college in this employer community in the Front Range area in Colorado. And so, she would meet with employers. She would talk to them about their needs, and she ended up doing quite a lot of things.

She would help students with job placement, to be able to make those connections. She would get incumbent workers connected to classes and into programs. She would also get instructors into the field. She would get work-based learning opportunities. So just really interesting role and one of that the college decided was so important that they sustained at the end of the grant.

MS. STRAWN: So just to provide another example of what Heather is talking about, in New Mexico their statewide consortium co-located full-time job development career coaches at each campus. And these positions are interesting in the sense that, it's a mash up of the career navigator supporting student success responsibilities with also, the Career Pathway coordinator type of responsibilities for helping develop programming and learning courses with local demand.

And also, connecting courses and students really directly to employers. So for example, bringing in employers to share their expectation for workers with students, to conduct mock interviews, and that sort of thing. One interesting thing about New Mexico's approach is that these coaches were actually co-located Workforce Agency staff. And so, that's helped them sustain the positions after the grant ended because they were able to just continue funding them out of the Workforce Agency. Another example of student success strategy is really around academic support.

So in Wisconsin evaluations on the student and faculty related valued this aspect of the TAACCCT grant activities. And one interesting aspect of how they did it is that colleges often embedded academic support staff right into required courses and labs. And students who receive support had significantly better outcomes. So just a couple examples, one virtue of imbedding those kinds of supports right into the curricula is that, that way they're most likely to be sustained after the grant funding ends. For example, Moraine Park Technical College imbedded a basics skills instructor within a weekly mandatory lab in their medical assistant program.

Moraine and Western Technical College both imbedded test prep per industry exams into the nursing assistant courses and pathways improved at both colleges. They both plan to sustain that [inaudible] grant too. Another example is industry exam prep was provided as part of a new required Workforce semester course for respiratory therapy students at Midstate Technical College. So those are all ways to think of not having academic support as sort of an add-on on the side that's supported only with grant funds and likely to be sustained afterwards, but actually something that becomes an integral part of the curricula.

MS. JAVAR: Thank you. I think you both gave really great examples about strategies that were also -- grantees were able to sustain it long after the grants ended themselves. So my next question -- let's talk about challenges. Heather what did you find to be some of the biggest challenges for colleges and consortium when trying to implement Career Pathways?

MS. MCKAY: All right. Just changing the slide there. Thank you so much. I think that as we talk about what happens in these grants one of the most important things to talk about are the challenges. This is the place we all learn, and this is the place hopefully we can begin to build from each other. So I really love to talk about challenges, and I encourage you in your grants and with your evaluators to do the same thing. I think it's just so important. So one of the big challenges that Colorado had as they were implementing their grant -- and we learned as a team. The evaluation team and the Colorado team were really -- we worked together all the time.

We communicated weekly; we were a real team effort. And so, as we moved forward, we learned that grant activities really needed to be thought about strategically. And from the beginning use and sustainability needed to be discussed and talked about. And that there would be challenges moving forward when those grant funds left in terms of affording these and paying for them. But there would also be really big challenges in making sure that the change in the server continued after the close of the grant.

These big policy shifts, these big policy changes in developmental education and credit for prior learning -- there were people who weren't as supportive of them at some colleges. There were other colleges that were really supportive and so, a lot of work needed to be done to think about bringing faculty and staff on board, creating uniformity and practice at the campuses to make sure that the work that was done during the grant itself could be sustained long-term. That was a huge effort.

It's obviously still a work in progress in Colorado and in fact Colorado kept having to come back in and do different kinds of studies to help them to move this forward and to think about sustainability after the grant. So it's many years later and they're still considering this. So I encourage you to think about the sustainability issue. It's really quite a long-term thing. It's a culture change and a shift if you're implementing policy changes. And even if you're implementing practice changes.

I also think that one of the challenges in [inaudible] a little bit in my last two comments, but change is really hard, and change is really uncertain. And a grant can come in and folks can say I've just got to do this for three years, that's it and it's over. Like, these pops of money offer opportunity and really taking the time to make sure that whatever change is being made is something that folks buy into. They're brought on board, they participate in the change -- I think that's one of the things that Colorado did really well is they had faculty and staff participate in the decision making around the changes.

Thinking about how that change would happen really brought buy in. And it was hard, it was not easy. Some of those rooms were difficult to be in at times, but really the decisions at the end of the day were collective, they were good, and many of them had been sustained. And so, that was a really good challenge, but it resulted in some wonderful success and sustainability. Equity was something else that I think ended up being a challenge in the grant. Big policy changes were made and one of them was developmental education.

And our research at the close of the grant found that, hey, this developmental education change is really working for a lot of your students, but it's not working for everybody. Our data found that black men were not doing as well in the classroom. And so, we all had to sit down and really talk about a focus on equity and thinking about equity as these efforts moved forward. And beginning to address some of the other root problems. It wasn't just the [inaudible]. There were other things going on that were hurting these students in terms of their progress of their success. And so, what Colorado did was they said, hey, we're going to look at this in different ways.

We're going to begin to think about bias in the classroom. And not every college did this, not every college jumped into these changes, but a few did. And in looking at the data in recent years, certainly we can see progress in these equity outcomes. But a view of equity should really be looked at, at the front. We need to make sure that the policy changes are good for all students and if they're not we can just think about why they aren't. In terms of equity, the other piece of the puzzle of this, I think, is that a policy can be created at the top level. The system in Colorado created a policy and then each college changed how it was implemented.

And that's important. That's important for their culture, it's important for their structure, it's important for their finances. But equity needs to be paid attention too. Are there challenges that are presenting themselves for some students and not others in term of equity when these practice changes and challenges occur? So I encourage you to look at that. I encourage you to use data as your guide and just pay attention to these ideas.

MS. JAVAR: I really appreciated those points you had Heather and those were really helpful in particularly working with the evaluation and using the evaluation is really a way to learn. And for continuous improvement and looking at the challenges identified as those opportunities for making continuous improvement adjustments on -- I really appreciated those points. So my final question is again for Heather and then for Julie to wrap up.

What factors did you find helped community colleges and consortium implement Career Pathways and institutionalize their key features? I know you spoke a little bit about some strategies that were made sustainable. But could you talk a little bit more about some key features? Oh, you're on mute I think Heather.

MS. MCKAY: Thank you. I said I wasn't going to do that and of course I did it. So I talked a little about how Colorado used these top-down bottom-up approaches to do different reforms. And Career Pathways reform was certainly one of those areas as well. So what happened is, the system said, hey, a change is going to happen. But then they asked for whoever was going to be involved in that, whether it be faculty, whether it be advisors, or whoever [inaudible] was to be a part of the decision making process.

And that was just so important in terms of both implementing with fidelity, so implementing an idea in the way that it was meant to be implemented. And also, institutionalizing whatever change was made so that they could move forward long-term. And so, I really admired sitting in those rooms with the faculty and staff in Colorado. It also was not quick change. This kind of change, operating in this manner took years in some cases during the course of the grant and meant that this was quite long-term shifts, quite long-term changes.

But at the end of the day, it was really effective in terms of getting people on board and informing the colleges about how things should be done. And trying to make sure that policies and practice were united in some ways. They also did -- Colorado did allow for the schools to deviate a little bit if they needed to from the policy plan and implement things for their culture, for their community as they needed to do. But by using data to revisit things over the years and as I keep saying, we continue to do this after the close of the grant. We continue to meet and work together.

While I was at Rutgers almost every other year to take a look at developmental education, to take a look at credit for prior learning or some of these other big policy changes, revisit things and begin to see, OK, are some colleges falling behind. Hey, some of these colleges might be doing better than others. Why is that? And begin to pick apart and really begin to understand using qualitative and quantitative data to understand what's going on. So that was really great. I would also say one of the things Colorado did that was really effective and moved some of these forward was that the legislature said Colorado had to do it.

They said that Colorado had to do developmental educational reform. Would it have bubbled up to the surface for all of the colleges had that happen? I'm not sure if everyone would've volunteered to do that. Some colleges certainly would of, but not everyone. And the last thing is, is using evaluated date to innovate. We really became partners as I said, Colorado and Rutgers. We worked together all the time. I think I was in Colorado as much as I was in New Jersey during those TAACCCT years.

I was just always driving around to campuses and colleges and meeting with folks, collecting information, collecting data. Use your evaluator as a partner and use that data as a way to innovate along the way. Like, checking in on the data, making sure that you're not just looking at outcomes at the end of the project, but throughout the project is really important. But also know that data takes time. Some of these things are really longer-term effort and you may not get the results you want to see as quickly as you want it. It's hard to wait, but I promise it's worth it.

MS. STRAWN: So just to build on what Heather was saying. For Colorado example shows me staying invested, leadership at all levels in the state and locally are really key for institutionalizing Career Pathways. You know, as you all know, it just takes time to build relationships and trust to change policies, to get new programs and curricula developed and approved, and culture change.

So that may be one reason that in round four TAACCCT we saw in the national evaluation that grantees were able to build or expand more partnerships from previous grantees. And especially with the employers or industry. So here's just a quick look at some of the top partnerships in round four. The most common internal ones were with student support services and Workforce departments. But externally the most common ones were either industry associations, individual employers, or Chambers of Commerce.

And while this less common to have partnerships with American Job Centers or Workforce [inaudible]. Those were still used by more than half of grantees along with partnerships with community organizations. One thing I really wanted to highlight is that an inside we heard from colleges in the national evaluation was that it's really essential to keep paying attention to and investing in industry partnerships over time in order for them to be effective. And that if you do that it pays off in concrete ways for the college as you can see here

In terms of employers helping colleges get grants to expand and continue clear pathways, we're providing their input more actively, and on multiple programs, taking on leadership roles, and so on. Beyond those kinds of partnerships expanded programs and credentials were the most important lasting contribution of TAACCCT. And that might be because they're just less dependent on grant funds and things like adding staff to support students. And I would just like to end by sharing a couple of examples of this.

So as you can see here Healthcare Montana statewide consortium created a number of new programs, curricula, and credentials. And I'm just going to highlight a couple of these. So they created three shortened nursing degree pathways, associate and bachelor pathways designed to reach real student needs. And so, some of the things they did are things that Heather talked about. Colorado for example, so they reduced pre-requisites, they just shortened sequences, generally they incorporated distance learning options, and adopted new curricula. And these pathways have continued, and they've added other features to them.

So things like financial support for world students for travel and housing, to go do clinicals all around the state. A second one I just wanted to highlight is their apprenticeships efforts were really phenomenal. So at the beginning of the grant Montana had no healthcare apprenticeships and by 2018 at the end of the grant, they had 56 healthcare employer sponsors and they had trained nearly 300 apprentices. And those apprenticeships have continued to this day. So one thing to think about is how they did this.

So essentially what they did is they leveraged their grant funding to create a number of specialized staff approvals, but then supported systems change that could last after the grant even if those staff positions couldn't. So those staff positions included healthcare transformation specialist based at each college. So they helped with things like creating or expanding programs through curricula and creating certificates embedded in degree pathways and so on. They also had five regional Workforce coordinators whose job was to build regional employer relationships, identify employer Workforce needs, and to support job placement.

They had career coaches who recruited and placed students into programs. So they were focused on really supporting student success. They had apprenticeship specialist who worked with employers and colleges to specifically develop apprenticeship spots. And so, of this specialization then worked in regional teams so that there was a coordinated effort within each region to address employer Workforce students.

And the last example I want to mention is in the state of Wisconsin -- this goes back to what Heather was saying about it sometimes taking years and just staying invested over time. In Wisconsin the state was lucky to get a series of outside grants starting in 2007, but also, state funding. And then, eventually a series of federal tax grants all of which enabled them to really work on both system change and institutional change over time to build Career Pathways programs. And this chart on the right shows the results.

So it shows that -- if you look at the blue line, by 2017 at the end of this period there were nine times as many Career Pathways programs with embedded credentials and students enrolled in them as there had been in 2013 at the beginning. The purple line shows that the number of stackable credentials associated with this Career Pathways program [inaudible] factor from just 28 at the beginning to over 360 at the end. One key to this success was college-based Career Pathway coordinators and interestingly these were folks who were usually based in academic affairs or curriculum development offices.

And they really lead Career Pathways implementation at the local level working with faculty and employers, developing programs and credentials, and then shepherding all those things through approval processes. They also had a career pathway self-assessment tool for colleges that really helped pinpoint areas that colleges needed to work on. And [inaudible] clear reference for what the vision was and what the end goals were. A quick example of the pathways was [inaudible] is from the evaluation of that grant is Northwood Technical College's Dermatology Career Pathway.

So this is the Career Pathway created especially to serve part-time students and working adults. And the courses are delivered in eight-week blocks and are open enrollment in the sense that the college could open a new section of the same course after the first section filled. And they can keep doing that throughout a semester. So there are multiple start dates for it, so -- which makes it really flexible for especially non-traditional students who perhaps are coming in more sort of last minute than a traditional student would.

And in traditional scheduling you could also find that classes are full by the time that they speak to enroll [inaudible]. So this kind of open enrollment block scheduling, that was the new way of operating for the college. That pathway's been sustained and currently offers an associates degree and two embedded Career Pathway certificates that stack towards it. Credentials are in really high demand with employers. And the college has a format that they call Your Choice which allows students to attend these courses either entirely in person, or entirely online, or any combination of the two that fits their schedule best week to week. So it’s very flexible for working adults.

MS. JAVAR: Great. That was great. We actually have a few minutes, actually more than a few minutes to answer some questions. And I see some questions here. Thank you again to Julie and Heather for those excellent examples. So first question I have is for Heather. Were their examples -- as you talked about Colorado -- were there examples in Colorado of employers that gave preference to applicants who have specific badges or micro-credentials?

MS. MCKAY: That's a really interesting question. And I think that -- I don’t have a great example of a specific employer that gave -- that preferred a badge or a micro-credential. What I can talk about though is that this was a process. And we'll remember the TAACCCT grants now, how many years ago were they? Quite a few -- that doesn't make -- our credentials were pretty new at the time for these community colleges and for these local areas. And so, a lot of work that Colorado was doing and especially the colleges that were really big on this, which Front Range was one of them, CCD Community College of Denver was another.

They were doing a tremendous amount of educating around badges and micro-credentials for students, for faculty, for employers -- working with folks to help them understand how they could be used, what they delineated. And by the end of the grant, I did a number of interviews with employers and employers were saying, it's great to know my employee has that skill now that they are bringing that credential back to me. So a lot of folks were talking to me about their incumbent workers and their badges and micro-credentials. So the awareness was beginning to get there, but I think it was a work in progress at the time of the grant.

One thing that Colorado did do, which I think had some value -- one of the colleges, Front Range Community College I believe tied their badges and micro-credentials to skills that were in national curricula, like MIM and other things. So students would both get a MIM certificate, but then they would also get a badge or a micro-credential to put up on LinkedIn or wherever they want it or need it. And that was a really great learning process for students in terms of understanding how to use that social media for networking and often career navigators and coaches work with them.

So I am sorry that I don't have a specific example of that, but I think at that point in time it was a bit of a work in progress. I would be curious to see what's going on today.

MS. JAVAR: Thank you. So we have another comment and question. One is whether the grant program, whether the TAACCT grant program since it seemed to have good results if DOL would be having some similar grants coming out. And then there was another follow up question to that. But let just respond to the first part of that question. And you do see -- we've seen a lot of learning from TAACCCT and those were integrated really into the first round of the Strengthening of Community Colleges Funding Grant Initiative.

Congress did appropriate funds for a second round of SCC grants which will be announced in 2022. And as you know, Congress and the administration determine what types of grant programs that will be funded. But there is a lot of interesting conversation right now with the Build Back Better Reconciliation Package, so we will see what Congress and the Administration come up with. But the follow up comment to that was it seemed that, that question came up really because there was an interest in learning more about how grantees were able to bring on staff. That strategy seems to be successful, but the concern of after the grant funds are gone unless further funding streams are obtained the staffing struggles that grantees can experience with sustaining those types of staffing positions. So I will have either Heather or Julie take that or both.

MS. MCKAY: I'm happy to jump in on that, just briefly. You know, the staffing concern is a real challenge for projects. And it certainly is something that colleges that I worked with across the four rounds of TAACCCT dealt with and managed. But I do think there is more to be learned from the TAACCCT grant. And I think colleges started to get better at managing these challenges as they moved forward through the rounds of the grants, so that by round three many of the colleges in Colorado [inaudible] grants had structured that success coach or navigator position in a way that they felt they would be able to sustain it after the grant ended.

And that usually involved making sure that, that person was not simply tied to one department, the manufacturing department. But instead, was more integrated into the college as a whole and set in advising. And maybe over the course of the grant began to take on some other duties besides working on the manufacturing project and starting to go on college funds. So there were some successes in that way in terms of thinking about those positions. Those folks that lead the grants and do the work to move the effort forward, that was also a challenge for all projects. And some colleges were able to sustain those folks by making that person who ran the grant somebody who was already in the department.

So maybe they went on grant funds partially for the grant but weren't solely on grant funds and solely committed to that. They did other things at the college as well. So making sure that the grant is not a separate thing helped some colleges to sustain these positions, but of course it is always a challenge.

MS. JAVAR: And Julie you talked to that question; you have the example with New Mexico about totally co-locating with the Workforce agency. Did you want to speak to that a little bit more and perhaps would this relate to some of the resource that we put in here about the crosswalk of WIOA and strategies and WIOA supporting that?

MS. STRAWN: Well, I was actually going to pivot a little bit [inaudible] --

MS. JAVAR: OK. Sure.

MS. STRAWN: -- away from the example to some other ways of approaching it. So I think Heather really put her finger on it which is it's about building these functions into positions that already exist at the college. So in some cases for example if a college created say a concurrent basic skills lab that was a corequisite with a particularly challenging nursing or other kind of academic course, professional course, that concurrent basic skills lab person sometimes also would've been essentially the career navigator or success coach position too.

Another way some colleges have done it is to build it in to an instructor position and reduce the teaching load a little bit and add an office hour component in a way that it was really like a proactive advising function. So I think that's one way to think about. The more you can try to build it in to those permanent positions the less likely it is that, that important student success component will go away once the grant ends. And Janet, I'm not sure I remember what the second part of the question was.

MS. JAVAR: That was it, but I was -- it was actually one of my questions. I was wondering whether there were other -- whether you did see any partnerships with the Workforce System that could -- that helped support some sustainability or leveraging there -- if you found any practices on strategies that community colleges have there.

MS. STRAWN: Well, one thing we saw was the -- initially a number of colleges thought maybe a lot of participants for the Career Pathways they created would come from referrals from job centers and Workforce System. And in the end that didn't happen so much. But what did happen -- excuse me -- was a fair amount of reverse referrals, so that the Workforce System was really supportive of the Career Pathways work, but didn't necessarily always the ability to come up with the right match of participants to the programs of the college.

But the college could identify people who were eligible for WIOA services and reverse refer them once they had matched them to a Career Pathway program back over to the Career Center, which then could help them connect them to things like IPAs or other kinds of supports including job placement, career advising that the career center was well commissioned to deliver.

MS. JAVAR: Thank you. So we have another question and I'll put this to you Julie as you have a national perspective on this. The question is, what is a specific evaluation standard process that was referenced earlier in the presentation? Could you just talk a little bit about does that evaluation standards in general?

MS. STRAWN: Yeah. So it's [inaudible] a little complicated because we refer to a number of different evaluations finding during this session. So most of the evaluations in TAACCCT of local TAACCCT programs were ones that were done by third-party evaluators and often used what we would call Quasi Experimental Method. So this is where colleges, their evaluators would try to come up a with a comparison group that looked like the participant in the pathway activities which were broader than Career Pathways, I want to underscore.

And then use their statistical techniques to try and understand how the outcomes of participants in TAACCCT compared to the similar individuals who didn't get those services. That is the most feasible method for a lot of folks. It does have the drawback of it's not always possible to come up with a comparison group that is exactly the same in terms of their characteristics as the participants.

In particular it's hard to account for things that aren’t directly observable, like, how motivated somebody is, how much family support they may have in pursuing their career goal. So what's considered the gold standard for evaluations of outcomes of a program is something that looks just like what you might think of if you think about a company testing a new drug. And this is a random [inaudible] method, call it experimental method where say a college is offering a program, they only have 50 slots in that program, but a 100 people show up.

They would randomly assign through a lottery process basically. Half of those folks would fit in the program. Half of those folks would control group. In that case you can be pretty sure the folks you're comparing outcomes to between the participants and the control group, that those folks really are the same. Because they both really wanted that program, wanted exactly the same thing, there just wasn't enough room to serve everybody and it took advantage of that scarcity of slots to come up with this really strong method for figuring out impacts.

So what I mentioned at the very beginning of this session about the findings we've seen about Career Pathways programs really doing a great job of helping people get credentials and finding jobs in the industries they train for, those come from those really strong kinds of evaluations [inaudible] so that the findings that those successes don't always translate into higher [inaudible]. I don't know if that's helpful Janet.

MS. JAVAR: Oh no. Thank you. And I just wanted to also iterate all here too is that as you're thinking about having a third-party evaluator come on board -- the important part is really thinking about what you want to know, what are your research questions, and your evaluator will then be able to identify what the methodology -- what the best methodology would be to help answer those question.

So you have the college or grantee really think the important pieces, thinking through what you want to know about your grant. And the evaluator will help figure out the best technical piece to that. So we are near time. What I did want to do, first of all I again, wanted to think our presenters here for taking the time to summarize to summarize key pieces of findings. We hope those who joined were able to get some good take always her.

I did want to before they time is up to just let you know that there are some resources also included here. You 'll see that the first one on TAACCCT findings. There's a number of publications in there, it's several on finding the right topics. We included some additional good pieces again looing through the over hundreds of evaluation studies were completed under the TAACCCT grants. Many of those that I linked here are synthesizing findings across them.

This page includes the specific papers that our presenters drew their findings from. And then this page, we hope you can look at this, it's clear [inaudible] our DOL, clearing house for labor evaluation and research and there is a specific link here that is tailored for community college topics.

And also, a really great resource is the skills commons online resource that has free documents, learning materials, programs support. It is downloaded by so many. Really just go through it. This specific link is for the evaluation reports, but pleas browse through it. There are other super helpful documents that we think would be helpful for you. And then finally there's a Career Pathways toolkit. And so before -- I will now just hand it over to Laura for some very quick remarks. Thank you everyone.

(END)