**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Job Corps Scholars Program: Developing Workforce Connections**

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GRACE MCCALL: And welcome to "Job Corps Scholars Program: Developing Workforce Connections" webinar. So without further ado, I'm going to turn things over to Michelle Mills, program manager, office of Job Corps' division of policy, communication and planning. Take it away, Michelle.

MICHELLE MILLS-AJAYI: Thank you so much. And pleasant good afternoon to everyone. It's such a delight to have you all join for this exciting webinar on developing workforce system connection.

You all know me. I lead and oversee our pilot project, the Job Corps Scholars Grant, which is approximately 30 million to 26 public colleges and universities to train our opportunity youth by providing career technical training and intense personal counseling and support services. So I just want to commend all of you as grantees for the work that you're doing, especially as we're currently struggling with the pandemic.

With that said, I have the distinct pleasure of turning things over to Bruce as well as Lyle. I'm sure you're familiar with them as your coaches. They come with extensive experience. Years of experience in terms of dealing with the workforce system itself, connecting grantees, community colleges, and various other organizations, connecting with employer-partners as well, to ensure that the workforce system is working appropriately.

So I am super excited that they're here today to facilitate this conversation and help us guide us in terms of understanding how we can strengthen these workforce system partners and connections.

So Lyle, Bruce, over to you. Thank you.

BRUCE RANKIN: Thanks, Michelle.

LYLE NEUMANN: I'm Lyle Neumann, and I'm a TA coach for the -- this program and with high impact partners. I'm currently working on three DOL programs and this is my 16th program since I joined the ranks of being a coach or a subject matter expert or a program manager. I'm happy to be associated with this program.

And Bruce, [inaudible] intro.

MR. RANKIN: Sure. Thanks, Lyle. Lyle and I are going to be co-facilitating today. And if we do our job really well, we'll get out of the way, and you'll get to listen to the experts.

But a little background here. I've been in workforce development for almost 30 years, primarily in the area of project design, implementation, and performance outcomes. Like Lyle, I've worked on a lot of programs. I've stopped counting.

But it's a real pleasure for me on this particular program, I get to work with Grand Rapids Community College and TS Mott. And in this particular case, the folks from Grand Rapids will be presenting today. And on that point, we're going to go ahead and introduce those folks now.

So representing Grand Rapids, we have Julie Parks, who is the interim dean in Grand Rapids School of Workforce Development, and somebody I've had a pleasure with -- working with for many years across many projects, particularly in the federal grant space.

And joining her today is Jessica Pierce, who is the program manager for the Michigan Technical Education Center, or MTEC Champions program. Jessica also plays a central role in sort of conducting and managing their grant program -- their Job Corps Scholars Program. So together today, we're going to highlight Grand Rapids' collaboration with their public workforce system partners and explain how that's benefited their work.

And I'll turn it over to Lyle to introduce his grantee, Kelli.

MR. NEUMANN: Thank you, Bruce. It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to work with Kelli Akers of Springfield, Missouri. Kelli's the director of the Ozark Technical Community College Career Center as well as their Job Corps Scholars Program manager.

She's worked in public education in the state of Missouri for over 20 years, first as a school instructor and, most recently, in various levels of administration. She's in her eighth year as the director of the Ozark Technical College Career Center. It's a technical education program for high school juniors and seniors from 22 area high schools.

Kelli will be sharing insights on how the Ozark Technical College collaborates with the workforce and community partners to support the OJT's JSC grant.

MR. RANKIN: Lyle, why don't you keep going and tell us what we have lined up for everybody today?

MR. NEUMANN: Yes. Today's agenda, as you can see, we've already started out with Michelle's opening remarks, introductions of the presenters, today's objective and polling question. There are two of them, which we will pause throughout the presentations for you to input your perspective on various issues and concerns and opportunities of the grant.

And then, you'll hear, as we just mentioned, from Kelli Akers of the Ozark Technical Community College, and also from Jessica and Julie at the Grand Rapids Community College.

And we -- if everything goes right, we will have ample time for questions and answers. And then, wrap up with Michelle again and a review of some upcoming opportunities for you.

MR. RANKIN: Super. Thanks, Lyle.

So to -- today's objective is primarily to hear about -- from your peers how they're interacting and collaborating with their workforce system partners and how that can specifically help you with your Job Corps Scholars grant.

As Lyle just said and as Grace said up front, our goal is to make this as interactive as possible. There's some limitations here in that everybody is muted.

So there are two ways to either raise a question or, if you will, virtually raise your hand to share a comment and that is in the chat box. We'll recognize you there, and then you can press star six to unmute your phone and talk. Or if you just want to pose a question, Lyle and I will direct those to our presentations.

The one thing -- if you do push star six, we do ask you to push that again to re-mute your phone just so that we can keep track of -- or limit any of the background noises.

So to get a sense of where things stand here, we've got a quick polling question. It's a little cheeky. But what we're asking is how you currently collaborate with your workforce system in general and as it specifically rates -- relates to your Job Corps Scholars grant. So we talk regularly, we meet occasionally, or we don't really work together at all.

So if everybody could just take a second here and just click on those radio buttons you can see in the middle. You'll see those bars go back and forth. And again, we've got three great presenters here that are going to talk about how they have leveraged those resources which are substantial in terms of supporting their grant here.

And seeing more or less what we expected, and that is there's some collaboration here, but there's probably some things that we can learn from folks.

So what I'm going to do now -- and thanks, everybody, for chiming in there. We're pretty close on the numbers, but it looks like it's going to be a good program today. I'm going to go ahead and let Lyle just talk about sort of what the expectations were for you coming into the grant in terms of those collaborations.

MR. NEUMANN: Yeah. Thanks, Bruce.

On the slide that you see in front of you there, this was part of your agreement that you signed when you were awarded the grant. It's what the FOA and what DOL's expectations are for you as part of the comprehensive sector strategy. But you'll collaborate closely with public workforce system counterparts to support your program. And this includes, but it's certainly not limited to, recruitment, counseling, financial support, employment engagement -- employer engagement, job search and placement, and linkages to other public and private programs.

I'm sure you've all seen this before, but just as a reminder that this whole program today is to help you meet these expectations.

Next, we will hear from your peers from the two colleges that we've already mentioned, how they are planning collaborations with their workforce partners.

As a reminder, please type any questions you have into the chat box or raise your virtual hand to speak. We will be addressing these as they pop up. Our hope is to have this be as interactive as possible. And again, everyone has the option of unmuting their phones, as Bruce mentioned, by pressing star six.

So without further ado, it's my pleasure to introduce Kelli Akers for her comments. It's all yours, Kelli.

KELLI AKERS: Thank you, Lyle. Greetings to all peer grantees out there.

As I'm sure we all would agree, our partnerships within our community are absolutely integral to our ability to successfully enact our grant programs. So I'm going to share with you just from as a Springfield, Missouri LTC perspective what has been very important to us as we conduct all of the various functions of our grant, from recruiting to -- all the way to connecting our grantees with potential employment.

So first thing -- and I'm sorry, I don't think it made it on to this particular slide. First thing that I'd like to mention is at Ozark Technical Community College, we have a department here that we call our Center for Workforce Development. And to some extent, it functions in a way -- in similar ways to a job center.

There, they provide training. They provide customized training. They work with employers in the area. They have programs we are tapping into as the grant -- and I'll get a little bit more specific with some of this.

But this -- we have developed real tight relationships with their executive director and with her team in serving our Job Corps Scholars participants.

So this portion of our college system provides our short-term training, provides our non-credit training. And we have found -- I don't know how it's worked for y'all -- we have found these to be particularly popular with our applicants. We provide things through that particular system, such as our CNA training, our medical art assisting; welding can be offered through there, and a variety of other programs as well.

Those -- the instructors who work through the Center for Workforce Development have close connection with industry and with particular employers in the community. So they help us as well in connecting our graduating participants to connect with employers. So from the very beginning, our personal career counselors have close relationships and work closely with those folks in Center for Workforce Development as far as scheduling, helping students understand how the industry works, how they can best prepare to succeed in those programs.

And then, our employment counselors come in after a successful completion of the program and, again, work with the instructors and the other part -- members of the team there to get our students connected to employment.

What has worked with us, too, with them in this close collaboration is we also kind of mutually advertise our services so that the Job Corps scholars show -- it's evident on their websites. We have found that a good deal of our applications are on account of folks looking at the website for short-term training and what do you know, they find the Job Corps Scholars information and application information on there. And so therefore, we receive a lot of attention through that.

So additionally, as many of you are probably in the same circumstance, we -- since we provide career and technical education and training here at OTC on a pretty large scale, we are also recipients of federal Perkins grant. That compels us and has for years and years to make sure that we have very close relationships with industry partners.

And therefore, all of our technical programs are represented by advisory committees from representatives out in industry from people that do the hiring and who help inform us as to what makes our training relevant and be prepares our students to successfully enter the workforce. And so particularly our employment counselors are becoming regulars at those advisory committee meetings, making themselves known, and learning more about what employers are looking for in a successful candidate, and also connecting with those employers in terms of what kinds of openings there are and how they can connect those with our Job Corps participants.

Let's see. College and career employment services for some of you, maybe in your colleges, that's called the career center. For us, it is career employment services. And so we have -- they're mentioned in our grant narrative as an internal partner that we are going to work with and have been working with from the very initial days of our grant to help us tap into the resources they have that help to prepare students in general to seek employment.

So they have things like career assessments. They have other types of -- particularly, like, CliftonStrengths finders' assessments, things like that, as well as tools for helping students create good resumes and work through developing good interviewing skills.

And then, finally, here we have faculty placement support, and that is our faculty comes directly from industry. They continue to network. They continue to be embedded in those industries, particularly through their involvement in their advisory committees.

And so faculty have an understanding here on our campus that part of the educational service we're providing is to help those successful students then go into the workplace successfully. So our counselors are developing those relationships with faculty so that faculty can -- we can help the student, support that student through the academic program, the training program, as well as then making those workforce connections.

Let's see. I think I list -- okay. There we go. Community partnerships.

So again, we've kind of worked the whole gamut, I think, of our community in terms of connecting to provide for the -- just a great cross-section of needs that our students might present. We have community -- a variety of community partnerships.

We work with community consortiums that pull together various service providers. They typically will hold meetings on a monthly basis. We've gotten our feet in the doors of those consortiums. So our counselors are participating in those monthly meetings, when they're sharing what it is that they can present to students in need, and particular in this case, younger adults.

And sitting on those boards, you're also going to see folks from foster care agencies. I think we all, as grantees, have assets that maybe haven't necessarily surfaced all the time in some of our conversations, but I wanted to share with you some of the things that we leverage here that's also helping us, and that is, for instance, one of our counselors has a very close connecting with a foster care agency that works with youth who are aging out of foster care. So she has very close connections there.

That same counselor also worked for a number of years with our job center locally. And so we're able to tap in to the connections that are own team has already established and is bringing to the table for the purpose of this grant.

There is -- when I talk about kind of a consortium or a group of service providers, there's a youth taskforce here in our community. Again, it gathers people together for joint purposes that are serving similar target communities.

And so once again, we have counselors -- we have other people in the college as well that participate in those consortiums and meet up with those who are providing other types of services. That could be food banks. That could be shelters. That could be shelter from domestic abuse.

It could be homeless youth service providers. And as -- residential programs as well, as I just mentioned, for victims of domestic violence. So we're working in tandem and linking arms, if you will, with those other service providers so that we can provide a wrap around service for people that need it.

Our local job center, yes, as I'm sure yours does also, has WIOA youth programs. And so we have been in connection with them. That particular relationship is still in development, but I'm excited to see how we can bring their grants and our grants together to serve young adults.

As Lyle mentioned earlier, I have spent my career working at the high school level primarily, and I work with 22 of our area high schools as the director of our career center, which is not career services, but works with juniors and seniors. And so we've been able to -- that was an asset that I brought to this particular program. And so I've been able to leverage those relationships I already had with administrators, with counselors, with some faculty.

And what we do is they were some of the very first folks that we went after to say this is what we're presenting. This could be a wonderful solution for your youth who are kind of -- high school just hasn't been their thing. They're ready to move on in life, but they don't necessarily have a pathway moving forward. So how could we help them?

So we work with counselors, in particular, but not only that, we drilled down and found out where are those youth? How are the schools serving them? Who is serving them in particular? How can we get to those youth?

After some of our school kind of -- where we closed down, went virtual, when some of those opened up again last year, we were able, finally, to have a little bit of face-to-face time. That was hard for us to achieve for the first early months of the grant because of everything being virtual. And so once we were able to really get their face to face with some of these youth, that made a big different in getting our story across. So that has been -- we have gotten several applicants from working with those high schools.

Let's see. And then finally, we have internal partners as well, of course. We have an adult education and literacy program. And again, in the very early days of the -- implementing the grant, that was one of the first connections we made was with our own adult education and literacy program. It just seemed to make sense that if we've got these young adults who are experiencing some success with that high school equivalency, why don't we see if we can't take on the next step with Job Corps Scholars?

So we have regular meetings and regular presentations to groups of students who are working through their preparation for that testing and letting them know that we would like to take on the next step, and we will be in touch. So that's yielded a good number of our participants.

We also -- but that doesn't mean we just work internally. We have another large service provider who does the same kind of training. And so we've connected with them as well and said, just like with our own graduates from this program, we'd like to work with your graduates and take on the next step and provide them with additional education and training.

We've connected with social services here. We've connected with counseling services. Our counseling services here on the campus has also provided our counselors with customized training. They have a background in career assessment and working with students that may have challenges, areas of fragility in their life.

And so we connect very closely with the counseling service to make sure that we are getting in there and being proactive in our intervention and support.

And of course, we work with a quite a large number of philanthropies here in the community. Boy, there's a lot. And so we work with faith-based, youth-based, specific service-focused, such as maybe food banks or the diaper bank for students that we have that are parents and are needing those kinds of very practical resources, again, to support their success in their program.

And let's see. Does that bring me to a close? I think it does. Yeah.

MR. RANKIN: Kelli, you've done an awesome job. And there's a lot to digest there. I'll just remind everybody, if you have any questions or quick follow-up -- we'll have a discussion point a few slides from now, after Grand Rapids presents.

But if you have some questions or want some clarification, again, type that into the chat box. And while people are thinking about those questions, I did want to ask one real quick question, Kelli, while we've got your attention here.

And you mentioned your collaboration with the WIOA youth coordinator. Knowing that recruitment is probably one of the biggest challenges that we're seeing across all the grantees, just, if you could just spend a few minutes and just explain how that's worked and to the extent that that's been helpful in terms of hitting your numbers.

MS. AKERS: With the job center?

MR. RANKIN: Right. And their specific WIOA youth coordinator and sort of thinking in terms of the -- serving more or less the same target population, if it's turned out to be a, if you will, a source, if you will, of potential recruits.

MS. AKERS: And Bruce, I'll admit, that's something that we're still trying to really kind of get under our feet and kind of conceptualize as to how that would best work.

I think what we have determined is while we want to do some back and forth if we have students coming our way that we think could work through the -- would benefit from WIOA, we really felt like if they're coming through WIOA and through that job center, they can leverage what they have in terms of other kinds of support and then point them in the direction of our training programs. They have some programs themselves, but of course, at the community college, we kind of take training programs and put them on steroids, if you will.

And so we provide a pretty vast menu of both credit and non-credit. But I will tell you, we recently found that a person that's involved in directing WIOA seems to have gotten a promotion. And I think I figured out who's coming in behind her.

MR. RANKIN: Good.

MS. AKERS: She used to be someone on my committee with elsewhere in the community -- another community partnership. And so I will be going after her and we will get this going.

MR. RANKIN: That sounds great. And again, that's -- part of this is just -- and maybe as we get to the discussion point, if folks do have some experience -- and I know Julie and Jessica are going to share their work with their workforce counterparts and they'll probably address that as well. But if anybody has any other thoughts that they'd like to share around that, again, leveraging the workforce system.

I said I wasn't going to do this, but I'm going to ask one more quick question only because it struck a chord with me. I've heard it in some of the other calls. And that is given the current labor market and the challenge -- you mentioned faculty and you're drawing those from industry. Is there any special secret sauce there in terms of finding folks? Because I think that's one of the challenges, capacity to deliver this training is really a challenge given that finding the instructors, the folks that can do this work, can certainly find jobs.

And so if there's anything there that you can share with folks just in terms of how you're able to fill out those classes and find the qualified folks to lead them.

MS. AKERS: Boy, that's a really good question. I will say in the almost eight years I've been here, we've been really blessed to be able to attract people out of industry and into our classrooms. But we are feeling the pinch that a lot of employers in the area are in at least a couple of our programs, and we are working on that.

Again, we have an obligation to be very intentional about recruiting and the retaining our instructors. I conduct some auditing from time to time. We've been in good shape there.

But we also know that we kind of need to look over ways that we can benefit people that will leave industry sometimes in very lucrative positions to come consider impacting the next generation, if you will. So we are, frankly, looking at our -- we're looking at our job descriptions right now. We're looking at pay. And we are looking at other things that we can benefit them with.

In the state of Missouri, faculty also has to get -- because our high school students, the one -- the program that I manage, is co-enrolled with our college students, our faculty also has to be certified through the state. So we're looking at ways to make certification easier, just to make the job more approachable and meaningful to them.

So those --

MR. RANKIN: That sounds great. Yeah.

MS. AKERS: All of those are projects underway right now.

MR. RANKIN: Super. Great. Well, listen, we're not supposed to -- Lyle and I are not supposed to be talking and I'm probably going to get the little signal here.

So without further ado, I'm going to push the slide along. And I think, Julie, you're kicking things off for Grand Rapids, right?

JULIE PARKS: Thank you, Bruce. And thank you, Kelli, for all of that very interesting material.

First of all, we want to thank U.S. DOL and Michelle and Bruce and Lyle for the opportunity to do this.

So I want to say to you, community college colleagues, why you really need to work to build this relationship. So I saw so many of you in the first poll talked about that you occasionally worked with them.

So we had a turning point in 2010. The college decided for one of the first times to apply for a U.S. DOL grant, pathways out of poverty. And we asked our workforce board if they would be okay -- in Michigan, it's called Michigan Works, that's our America career center organization -- if we applied and if they partnered with us instead of how it had been in the past when we were one of their contractors that helped run service centers in the county that we draw students from.

And that was a really big step and really changed the playing field that we would want to apply. And I think they just you're never going to get the grant, so why don't we just say yes?

So we applied and we got this grant, and it really started to change the playing field between our relationship with each other. Because for the first time, we had funds of our own that we didn't necessarily have to go through our workforce board to get for students to get for individuals to get retrained.

And so that started. And then, WIOA came around. If you remember, the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act that was first past in 2014 that talked about these employer sector groups. And when I -- it was a very hard relationship with each other because we -- in education, we thought that people that came into the career centers needed to get more skills. And the career centers really were judged on placement of individuals in the jobs.

And I think when we were in that contractor role, they saw us, like, we're just trying to get numbers of students. And yes, we do care about enrollment, but we really had the philosophy that people need skills. These individuals who are unemployed need skills to get good jobs, jobs that could give them a living wage.

And as the economy changes, if these people just go to work and don't get credentials and don't get verifiable skills, then when we have the next recession or the next economic downturn, these will be the first people who will lose their jobs. How can we stop that pathway of going back to poverty?

So what we also saw was, hey, community college, we have to change a little bit. So yes. I think almost every one of you have some kind of Perkins funding at your organization. And so you have to have advisory committees, and you want to have advisory committees. But I'm going to tell you, the value of those employer sector groups that your workforce board group is hosting is so much better than your college advisory committee.

Now, you may not believe me, but I want you to ask to go to one of their meetings and see what happens because they are a neutral party. And sometimes what the employers say to them are different than what they say to us at the community college. And when we hear what they say there, it can really change our perspective on what is the training and education that we're offering individuals?

They also have funding that they've been able to braid together. So let me tell you one of the values of that as it relates to supportive services.

So yes. In our Job Corps grant, we have monies for supportive services, which is awesome. But sometimes there are other needs that they have. And one thing that we're going to start to employ is they have on-the-job training dollars at our Michigan Works.

So when we go to an employer and we say, we have this great Job Corps candidate for you, Michigan Works can come right alongside and say, if you hire this person, we'll give you OJT money to help them start on the job there.

So now, we've reduced the risk that employer to hire that individual from our program. That's an incentive that I can offer with my Job Corps money that I can't offer with my college money. But my Michigan Works partner can offer that.

So how do you get there? So then we get to the workforce board, they have these open meetings that occur at least quarterly, sometimes monthly, and we go to the workforce. They have an open session where you can speak. There's, like, 15 minutes for the crowd. And we always try to go and speak and tell about something good that Michigan Works did for us, and that has built the relationship with that organization.

Now, we give examples of students. We give examples of companies they connected with us.

So we really started to build this mutually beneficial kind of relationship. They have youth support dollars for us. They have large numbers of people, before COVID anyway, came into their building. But they host these online job fairs. So how can we get involved with that?

And I'll tell you, the first few years, you guys, it takes a lot of time to develop that relationship, and it has to go beyond one person. There can't just be that one person that handles TANF or PATH or WIOA. You have to build a relationship that's going to last because just like in our organization, people change jobs.

And so how can you build that and how can you benefit what their metrics are so they can benefit your metrics?

So I guess that's what I really want to tell you. It is worth the time to build that relationship and really understand what do they need from it.

And so please, don't be afraid to ask questions about -- we're very open to sharing with you. There were hard times and it's still not a bed of roses every day. We have to continually talk to each other to figure out what's going on, what can work, who these individuals -- hey, can you help this student out. So that would be my advice to you.

Jessica, you want to talk about how that works with the Job Corps grant? And if you're talking, you're muted.

JESSICA PIERCE: Sorry. I was just saying happy new year to everyone. So sure. Thank you, Julie.

So yeah. Just what Julie was saying, just having that relationship is key. But some of the challenges that we've run into, of course, everybody knows the COVID closures. And here in Michigan, even though everybody wants to be number one, we don't want to be number one because we're number one with the COVID cases here in west Michigan. So that's not fun.

And how has -- impacted us is -- caused a lot of program delays because of either staff infections or low student enrollment, those kinds of things. We also have, because of COVID, smaller class sizes that have caused a waiting list for some of our programs that our students are waiting to get into.

Some of our programs, because of COVID, had gone online and numbers of our students have struggled with learning online with that platform. They want to be -- need to be in person. And especially if you think about the demographics of students that we're getting into this program. They already start off with barriers. So that -- to me, that just added another barrier.

So we just help with tutors and what we can along with that.

And other challenges, of course, with recruitment, as Julie spoke about with our west Michigan Works, and I hate to keep saying because of COVID, but it is real, they're closed. So their doors were closed. So that caused a barrier for us, the Job Corps grant here.

So just our grant staff, we did pretty much all of the recruitment. So we had to get creative. We did radio, television, flyers. We used social media, all of those platforms to do our own recruitment because a lot of our community partners and workforce, they were not open to do these things that they would normally do.

Last summer, we were able to have -- hold a couple of community events. So that kind of helped us with recruiting. And along with school visitations for those that were open and weren't just solely online, we were able to do a couple of those school presentations as well as schools coming to our MTEC building and we're doing tours and talking about the things that we have offered here with our info sessions.

I have also met with, like, the school district principals, the superintendents, school counselors, and those kinds of things as far as recruitment, just getting the word out of what we're offering and just helping to leverage those things for those students.

Then when we get into our job openings, I particularly -- I think I have 10 bills on my hat right now as we talked about the different openings we have -- three different openings on our team. So basically, it's myself -- a team of me, myself, and I. But even with that, that's okay. We're still getting through that.

The college we have with our onboarding sometimes can be slower than what we like. And then, we've already talked about the difficulty finding instructors. So we've lost some instructors from retirement. And then, like you said, trying to replace industry instructors -- quality industry instructors. They've been kind of slow on that end.

And then, losing staff to other organizations or whatever, that has been a challenge for us. And still, we're still keeping our heads up. And we know that we're going to come out on the right side of all of this.

And as far as long-term sustainability, Kelli and Julie have kind of spoke to that, just continuing -- putting on our thinking caps and how can we broaden that relationship and deepening that relationship with our workforce boards, being able to -- they said going back and forth. You have this student, how can we help that student? And I think in this time of COVID, just -- it puts us in a position to be creative, and that's okay.

So Julie, did I forget anything? Is there anything else that you would like to add?

MS. PARKS: No. I think that's great, Jessica. Thank you. Bruce?

MR. NEUMANN: Thank you, Jessica, Julie. Great presentation.

Are there any questions for either one of those presenters? Hearing none, we've just put up a couple of -- a few discussion questions here to perk your mind a little bit.

We've got about five minutes or so. Anyone want to address any of these questions here and share with the other grantees?

MS. PARKS: So Lyle, this is Julie. And I see that there's a question from Jackie Freeman. Jackie said will you please explain the specific process for co-enrollment with our job center?

So this is a great question, Jackie. So we are so lucky because they are experts on what we can co-enroll and what we cannot co-enroll because they're U.S. DOL and a state entity.

And so in Job Corps, when we enroll them and if we pay tuition and support services fees, they don't enroll them to do that. They enroll them in a different funding stream for the OJT dollars. And so they are very familiar with our grant and what we can co-enroll and what we cannot co-enroll. And we have -- that's probably what we have the most discussion of in the program is about what is -- what can we do and what can't we do.

And we have had to talk to our program officer a couple of times and we have had questions. And so we've been very open to that. So I would encourage you to do that, to -- if you need guidance in doing that. But we really find is our workforce board is helpful with that and helpful in figuring that out.

And some of the grants are through our state. And so -- or we have a reconnect program in Michigan. And so those don't interfere since those aren't federal funded programs. So they really know what to look for. In fact, they've helped keep us out of trouble, which is a great thing.

So thank you for your question.

MR. NEUMANN: Great. Thank you for your response. Any other? I think Darryl, if you're on, if you could unmute, I think you had something to add.

DARRYL: This is Darryl with Chemeketa Community College, and I really appreciate the information that was shared by Julie and Kelli. At Chemeketa, we work closely with the Willamette Workforce Partnership, which is the local workforce development board.

When the college was awarded a grant and I came on board, I conducted outreach and I proposed a memorandum of understanding for a workforce partnership between Chemeketa, the workforce board, and some community partners. And I've spoken on several occasions about that MOU, which clearly outlined the role of each organization.

And we meet on a quarterly basis, and they refer potential students to us. And we work collaboratively to implement that grant.

MR. NEUMANN: Great. Thank you. And I believe Tom Brown, you had something to add. Unmute. Star.

TOM BROWN: Can you hear me now?

MR. NEUMANN: I can. Yes. Go ahead.

MR. BROWN: OK. Great. We have a great relationship with our local WIB, and it's -- I really echo a lot of things I've heard today. It takes a long time to develop those relationships, and it takes a lot of management to really keep them going.

Earlier, last year, the local WIB posted an opportunity. It was kind of similar to, like, the old civilian conservation corp. They had federal funding to do clean up work after the wildfires that we experienced here in 2020.

And Debbie went to work and recruited six people for Job Corps Scholars that she intended to help get into that program. All six of them got in. And one of them did drop after about a month, but he went on to a four-year university when his financial aid came in.

And we just heard this morning from one of the participants that he's been offered a job with a local fire department -- a full-time job. He's starting at $73,000 a year. We couldn't be more happy for this young man. We just found it out this morning.

And that has been our most successful program because the training was short and it was one of the trainings that was one of the trades that we selected, and you went to work right away. And so it really fit with what the Job Corps Scholars needed.

I'm going to post a video in a chat. This was a video that one of our Job Corps Scholars shot last year while they were on a -- while they were on wildland fires. And this video that he created is being used this year to recruit more Job Corps -- or more participants into the WIOA program to build up the crew and fill the empty slots on this year's crew.

And it's been a really successful program for us. And thanks for letting us share.

MR. NEUMANN: That's a great news story. Other comments anybody? Anything you see there on the discussion questions that spark an interest to share?

OK. Well, hearing none, we'll move ahead. And we have another polling question here. If you would just look through those and respond.

Feel free to click all that apply. Well, that's a great response.

We've got about 60 percent that you will reach out to learn more about recruitment. Nearly 50 percent more about job placement. Forty-five percent on employer engagement. And a lot of these subjects that you're responding to, we have all -- we have plans in the near future to address in either a peer-to-peer session or a webinar session.

So I think we're all walking down the same path here. That's great.

OK. Thank you for your response.

I would like to take just a moment to review a couple of upcoming events we've got here. On January 26th, we have a webinar on effective retention. On February 22nd, we've got on the calendar a peer-to-peer discussion on strategic partnerships.

And the national convening -- I think you've already been informed of this, but make sure it's on your calendar, April 19th and 20th. It'll be a virtual event. And I think tentatively, we're looking at two afternoons. The afternoon of the 19th and the afternoon of the 20th.

So hopefully all of you on this call have got that marked on your calendar and you'll be able to work around any conflicts that come up.

And also, please note that there are several resources that are available. This is -- once you download the slide presentation, you'll have this to review. But this is just a few of the resources that you might want to refer to.

Those are hot links there, so you can get right on those and take a look at them. There are many more, but these are some that we thought would be applicable to the presentation that we shared with you today. And we invite you to visit those at any time.

MR. RANKIN: And I especially want to thank our presenters today. Kelli Akers, who's one of my grantees. They do a fabulous job there in the Springfield, Missouri area. And I'm sure that after listening to her presentation, you know that she's very passionate about the work that she does.

And also, Jessica and Julie, it's been a pleasure having you share your program with us. It was just a valuable presentation and I'm sure everyone learned a lot from that.

Also, you'll see that we have their email addresses. So feel free to connect with them as you see and fit. And also, don't forget the Job Corps Scholars mailbox address is there.

And of course, you all have a coach. And as things come up, you're free and actually encouraged to please check with your coach on anything that comes up that you would need some help with, as also, of course, your federal project officer. We all work hand in hand to ensure that the outcome of all of your programs is positive and successful.

Having said that, I will turn this program back over to Michelle to wrap us up. And we're right on schedule. And if you still have --

MS. MILLS-AJAYI: Thank you so much.

MR. NEUMANN: -- any questions -- I'm just going to mention if there's any last-minute questions that pop up, put them in and we'll see if we can address it. Go ahead.

MS. MILLS-AJAYI: Absolutely. That's right. Just want to echo thanks. I've seen a lot of exchanges in the chat.

This was an incredible session. I learned a lot certainly, and it was great to hear from the grantees who are doing the work every day.

And to all our participants as well, thank you so much for your engagement. Again, to contact us, information is up. We also have the JobCorpsScholars@dol.gov email address.

As always, you can reach out to your coaches as well as your FPO at the program office.

We appreciate you and we hope that you'll make use of these new resources. And we continue to encourage you to continue the great work despite COVID. We all know that you're doing a wonderful job. So we appreciate these efforts.

And I hope that you all enjoy the rest of the afternoon. Looking forward to engaging with you again next week during our regular program office hours.

So thank you all.

MR. NEUMANN: And I add my thanks to you. Enjoy the rest of the day. And I sincerely thank you for your participation today. And good luck to everyone. Thank you.

(END)