

Workforce³One

Transcript of Webinar

Round 2 TAACCCT Virtual Conference Job Placement: Hitting Your Numbers

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*Transcript by
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ERIC BELLINO: And to kick things off I'll turn it over to Cheryl Martin who is the TAACCCT program manager. Cheryl?

CHERYL MARTIN: Thank you, Eric, and hello and welcome. I'm really glad to see so many of you as I look down the list of people who have logged in today. It's just really exciting. I want to say congratulations to those of you in round two for being at this point.

For those of you who have been on board since the beginning of round two, can you even remember back to that first day or week or month or whatever that you were working on this project and it all seemed a little hazy perhaps or daunting, I'm sure? And now, look where you are.

And round two has done so many amazing things. You just really have some terrific things going. So congratulations on that. We're getting close to the finish line on this one, and that of course is why we're doing this series of webinars so that we can help you to a strong finish.

And we do want to have you let us know if there are ways that we can help you during your final year. So please continue to reach out to us, reach out to your FPO. Those of you who started out in round two were not used to having technical assistance at the beginning but we do have it now and it's available to you as well. So if there are specific things, like you want a quick phone call or something – or something longer – just let us know.

I'm going to spend one minute talking about this slide, talking about showcasing your innovation because, given all the wonderful things that you have done and are about to finish up doing, we want to make sure to capture that. We know there are so many good stories to hear from round two, and so please send us your thoughts on the questions here. There's a lot of text on this slide.

We're going to send out the exact same information in an e-mail that will come out very shortly and – probably tomorrow. So you can just refer to that, but we wanted to give you a heads up to that now that we would like to hear back from you about some of these questions and also if you have any videos, brochures, or write-ups of any kind, please send them to us via the TAACCCT mailbox so that we can make sure to include them in our library of wonderful things from round two.

And I also just wanted to let you be among the first to know that we did get a TAACCCT convening approved for early 2016. We're looking at the month of February, and that this year we're doing something a little bit different. We're going to ask people to send in their proposals to – for workshops on that, and you all are – I'm sure are full of ideas for that. So we would definitely love to hear your thoughts about what you would like to share with your TAACCCT colleagues and what you think would be really beneficial for TAACCCT colleagues. So that request for proposals or call for proposals will be coming out very shortly as well.

Now, I would like to introduce our moderator and speakers for today. Our moderator is Christian Lagarde. You can see him in action there on his picture. He was an early-round TAACCCT grantee in Louisiana and Mississippi, but now we are fortunate enough to have him on board this project via the American Association of Community Colleges. And so he'll be moderating our webinar today.

He will be working with Mark Stewart from South Carolina ACCELERATE as well as Stephanie Oppel from I-AM, Iowa Advanced Manufacturing, both people that you may have heard of or heard from before because we find what they have to say so helpful.

So thank you, Mark and Stephanie and Christian, for being with us today, and I'm going to turn it over to you, Christian.

MR. LAGARDE: Thanks, Cheryl. As you described that picture in action, that actually is four days after we got announced from Department of Labor that we got our grant. I'm – you can't see who I'm talking to, but I was actually talking to Secretary Solis who came to visit our campus on the first couple days of our round two grant. So the very, very exciting time. I can say probably changed my professional life forever and for the better from that day three – well, now four years ago.

I do want to welcome everyone to our round two virtual conference, the job placement, hitting your number session. This is the first of a four-part series. We volunteered to go first. So thanks, Mark and Stephanie, and thanks, Cheryl, for providing this session for us. Before we do get started, we're going to be discussing a couple things, and I'm going to share the agenda in a bit. I do want you attendees to participate in this poll, and it's about what do you need most with help in your job placement strategies, career centers, One-Stop placement, providing job search assistance, strengthening in WIB connections, additional employer outreach strategies.

With about four or five months left in the performance period, we're going to address a couple things, and I'm going to share that a little bit in the agenda. But I just want to take a second for everyone to have our presenters sort of look at what's in your mind on what you would like to hear and see and get help on for job placement strategies moving forward.

We'll just give it another couple seconds as you guys click through. And I see the additional employer outreach strategies are coming up as the top choice, which is great because the two presenters that we have are going to talk in detail about what that out – what their outreach strategies are and how they're so successful at doing that. So I see it's coming in at a very, very high margin. Thanks, Eric. You can take that down.

Thanks. So we did some welcome and introductions, and as I was stating, this is the job placement strategies. And what we're going to discuss in detail is how South Carolina SC ACCELERATE and the I-AM grants, round two grants, did their job placement strategies not just from the beginning but what can you do now? Like I said, with the extension that DOL gave us for the grant-funded program activities that are happening between now and March 31st, we wanted to really stress upon what can a round two grantee do right now to the end to boost up their numbers?

We know and DOL knows that this has been a pain point for all grantees to hit that metric, to hit that B-7, 8, 9, if I'm not mistaken, on the APR. I know every grantee right now has – either have finished their APR or working on it. So we wanted to make sure and spend some time through this TAACCCT Learning Network and through this round two virtual conference to talk about those topics, and this is going to be a great one.

So I'm going to hand it off in a second to Mark Stewart from South Carolina. We'll have Stephanie Oppel from Iowa discuss her strategy and sort of get some tips on what can you be doing now between now and March 31st, open it up for a bit discussion, and have some deeper questions for our presenters from you.

And with that I am going to hand it off to Mark. Mark, the floor is yours.

MARK STEWART: Okay. Thank you very much, Christian. I hope I've unmuted and everybody can hear me okay. Just as an introduction, you can see there on the screen the colleges that SC ACCELERATE involves. There are 6 of the 16 two-year colleges in South Carolina, and you see there that CUCWD is Clemson University Center for Workforce Development, and we actually contracted with them to help us with the curriculum redesign portion, which has been invaluable to say the least. And the catchphrase, if you will, "the education to career success," that's one of the things that we really stress from early on with each of our colleges, and I think that's what's really helped us in regard to the focus on what we're talking about today as far as job placement.

So with that said, just a brief overview of what our strategies were, and many of yours probably parallel or mirror these. Our adult postsecondary transition centers is actually – the APTCs are actually our wrap-around student services effort, if you will, from the beginning to the end, from the time that we outreach and recruit and do the marketing and let folks know who we are all the way to the follow-up after they've completed and are employed. Those services, as outlined in our SGA, they involve assessments.

Whether it be ACT work keys or prior learning assessments, case management team coordination was involved of course, career planning as far as discussing pathway options, interest assessments, career trends, online orientations, etc., program options like apprenticeships and co-ops and internships, offering of soft skills, job search, resume writing, mock interviews, interviewing, and those were done in collaboration with career One-Stops across the state. And then tracking, the regular contact with case managers.

So I wanted to go into some of that detail with that first strategy because that's really – I'm going to put my old military hat on for a second. That's really the front lines of what we did to ensure that we were doing the most we could with the job placement effort. So we really put a lot of emphasis on the staff and those APTCs.

So the other strategies there were actually in support of that. The outreach and recruiting, the prior learning assessment process, spinning that kind of stuff up actually helped us to accelerate

the credentialing, obviously, so to along with everybody else and everybody doing the redesign curricula.

The entrepreneurship training, we did that via the APTCs, and then Clemson University, they're actually doing something a little different with us. I've had several sessions with them from the beginning. We're actually developing a (muke ?) entrepreneurship course that people can drop into their curriculum by module, no matter what that curriculum might be.

And just an example of how that plays into the job placement strategy, I've had come to mind one of the department heads at one of our colleges oversees automotive program, and he told me, – in the first year I was here and it seems like forever ago – yeah, it was almost three years ago.

He said, most of my students on a regular basis, they tell me that the reason they're in my class is because they want to start their own business. And I asked him. I said, well, wouldn't it be nice to be able to have something to give them for information on entrepreneurship? And he said, that would be fantastic.

So the program that we've – that will be completed now, we've got three of the seven modules done, but anyone at any of the colleges and anywhere, since it's going to be in an open format, can take any one of the seven modules and drop it into their curriculum. And as an example in his case, drop it into the curriculum and be able to show their students, his automotive students, what it really takes to be an entrepreneur, and it can be fine-tuned to that particular curriculum.

And we've had excellent feedback on the ability to do that and how that's going to help as far as those individuals again for job placement. So you can see how each one of those strategies really led to and supported that APTC effort to help our participants.

So as far as the job placement strategies, kind of broke this up into two areas, if you will, the who – and that's not a band that we're all familiar with. I'm going to date myself there I guess – and then we're going to cover the what in the next couple of slides. But the who was just up front educating, informing the community, if you will.

The community being the internal and external stakeholders, internal of course to the colleges and external in the community, the employers, the businesses, and informing those collaborations and partnerships early on and then following up on a regular basis and not just with the participants but with those partners that we had that we've now brought on board to help us in this effort.

At the colleges obviously that meant career services departments, academic advisors, the experiential learning teams because they already had an excellent apprenticeship programs at several businesses and employers across the state, even as far as getting in the same – what's – how do I want to say this – getting the academic deans and department chairs on board to be able to share with them the importance of what we were doing and then having them talk with their students and us talk with their students about how we could help them take that next step after they completed their programs of study.

The community advisory boards, being a part of those meetings and making that connection between the college and the local community. And then off campus it was a matter of going out into the community and making those connections with the businesses, the chambers. On my quarterly reports I was just reviewing those this past weekend and seeing how all the colleges and the program managers are still going out and having those meetings with the chambers of commerce and each of their employers, and they're workforce ready SC and their workforce investment board individuals.

And then that last bullet you'll see there, which by the way I've got to say I tend to, in a format like this, put a lot of words on the slides, and I have to apologize. But I know if you go back in and you download the slides later, a lot of the notes will be there and a lot of the ideas. Hopefully you won't have to add too much to it.

But that last bullet you can see where it says common and unique, common ones may be some of the things that we had – that I just talked about, but the unique things like Goodwill Industries, voc rehab, DSS job developers. Women in Tech is one group that some of our folks got involved with. But reaching out to some of those and forming partnerships, and it was amazing how some of those individuals would know people who needed to come into the college and participate and sign up for the program and be partners with us. So it really worked out well, some of those unique outreaches.

So for the what, we needed to think in the box, if you will, and use resources available to us. I saw something a long time ago that said, unfortunately, we can – we've gotten into the mode of thinking outside the box, sometimes so far that we don't remember what's actually in the box that may be available to us.

And with that said, there were several things that were in the box, those readily available resources that we tried to take advantage of, and you see each one of those there. And there were many more, but these were just the ones that kind of – I thought I wanted to highlight today, and I'm not going to insult anyone's intelligence and read through those word for word.

But there were a lot of things that we said we can latch onto and take advantage of that are already available at the colleges, and that includes some of the third bullet there, the previously established relationships because some of the colleges – in fact, most of them already had strong ties in the community and with the employers.

And we would go out and say, in lieu of reinventing something here, this is who we are and what we now offer that is a bit different than what you've seen in the past possibly. And it actually strengthened those relationships that were already established with the colleges and the community.

And then as far as outside the box, we decided that – I really started pushing last year when I had – I meet with everybody on a regular basis monthly. In fact we have monthly webinars internally, and then we also have spring and fall summits across the state for the consortium. And one of the things that I really stressed to everybody at the tail end of the second year was that we needed to start thinking sustainability and scalability even in some of the things that we

were doing. So with that being said, let's take a look at some of those unique outside the box things.

And you can see some of those there. As far as the follow up and the connection with the four-year institutions, and then I really want to spend just a couple of seconds talking about those last two bullets, the entrepreneurship workshops and one-on-one sessions.

We actually contracted with someone to offer a service to the colleges and to our participants from an entrepreneurship standpoint, just group workshops. She's had anywhere from 20 to 100 – I think 160-some-odd participants in workshop settings at each of our member colleges and as well as one-on-one sessions, folks who might be thinking or might be interested in entrepreneurship. And that has actually morphed into some folks advancing their job placement opportunities, if you will.

And then the second or that last bullet there, the use of applicable assessment tools to match students with best fit careers. One of the things – and I was talking with Christian and Stephanie about this last week. One of the things that we did, we got approval to be able to contract with a company that offers the product CareerChoiceGPS.

And we're using that after I got a nod from Cale (ph) on our PLA assessments that this CareerChoiceGPS is actually an excellent first step in the PLA process. And knowing that assessments and career assessments and assistance were part of and career planning part of our APTCs, I bounced that off of our FPO and actually I met with Sharon Leu in D.C. and showed her the product earlier last year. And long story short, after a lot of vetting, we brought this company on board to offer the CareerChoiceGPS to our participants.

And then we're also doing it with our community, our business partners of our participants so we can have a data feel established out in the community as to what a successful employee looks like of a welding – a welder, a CNC operator, etc. for Company XYZ. It could be in this area GE, BMW, Lockheed, whomever. So we're able to now come back to the colleges and say, this is the type of student that is a success in this field with this business. And then the students take the same assessment, and they're able to see if they're a best fit for that field.

And in the early stages we're already seeing that the possibility of increasing job placement numbers, if not in our lifetime, if you will, definitely beyond the life of the grant. It has a huge potential to be able to expand the possibility of effective employment of local college graduates into specific fields in the community. And that's exciting. That's something that we're all excited about, and we're trying to implement that across the consortium and possibly even across the state.

So anyway, that's as far as a best fit assessment tool, and if anyone is interested in hearing or knowing more about that, I can always talk more about that later or send you some information as would be helpful. So I think that's my last slide, and let me see. Let me back up here.

MR. LAGARDE: Mark, so that –

MR. STEWART: Go ahead. I'm sorry.

MR. LAGARDE: This is Christian. Yeah. So that is your last slide, Mark.

MR. STEWART: Okay.

MR. LAGARDE: I know you have so much more to say, and you will have a chance to talk again. So once – we're going to go ahead and hand it off to Iowa and Stephanie Oppel, and we'll do some Q&A after this. What I didn't mention in the beginning was, if you do have questions, just like Gail and Tina did, as the presenter's talking please feel free to throw it into the main chat as it hits your brain and you want to ask it, and we'll address it at the end. With that I hand it off to Stephanie.

STEPHANIE OPPEL: Thank you, Christian. Thanks, Mark, for that information. I always appreciate, even as a presenter, to hear what other colleges are doing and learn about that and how we can kind of take some of those pieces away to inform our work. I really want to thank Cheryl and the whole team for this conference opportunity as well, the virtual institute, and I'm really excited about the convening early next year. So I just have to say that too.

Let me tell you a little bit about who we are and what we are doing. Thanks for advancing that slide. We are 15 community college districts in Iowa. That's all the community college districts. We are independent districts all working together for the first time on this TAACCCT grant. We have a focus on advanced manufacturing, as you can see from the slide, welding, tool and dye, industrial maintenance, robotics, automation, logistics. We are a round two grantee, and we received \$13 million to do this work.

A little background on Iowa, I think this is important when you're talking about job placement. Job placement isn't one aspect of the work that we do. It is the purpose of the work that we do; right? So in Iowa we have a historically low unemployment rate, which can present its own issues when employers are looking for qualified candidates. Our unemployment rate was 3.6 this past September. So very low.

Manufacturing is about 20 percent of our economic output of the state, about \$29 billion. So it's a really big, big part of our state's economy and employs about 14 percent of the workforce. So about 215,000 people in Iowa are employed in manufacturing. Our top two areas are food and machinery. We're an agricultural state, and the manufacturing kind of follows right in with that agriculture.

But the mean hourly wage in our area – this is coming from some of our workforce data a few years back – was about \$19 an hour for an individual with some college to an associate's degree. It goes obviously up from there as you go along the pathway towards education. So I wanted to share that and then let you know that we have about 4,000 or so manufacturing firms in our state that range from just a few employees to over 1,000. So again, nothing is ever a one-size-fits-all; right? We have lots of opportunities with the employers in our area and within the colleges and the workforce that we are trying to help improve their skills and get placed.

So let me tell you again this is a little bit about what we are doing. I put this slide up. I know it has a bunch of text on it, but this is the slide that I use every time I pull my group together because this is our mission. This is – and like I say there, why do we do it? It's not because we're crazy. It's because we know that it's going to make a difference for our students and our communities. So our APR, coming next week will show that we have served over 3200 participants. We have exceeded our grant goal there, and we're really excited about that.

Over 1500 of those folks have completed to date and earned over 2200 credentials, again working on those stacked career pathways, and we have a really good number that are still retained. About half of our students come in to us with – come in to us employed, and that can be a challenge too. Students are already working and they may not be working in the industry that they are training for but they still need to work to make ends meet as they're going through. So that's one of those things that we'll talk about later too about kind of knowing your population.

Just some other things that we are doing, along the lines of curriculum development and alignment and those sorts of pieces, we are making sure that we are doing whatever we can to align to third-party national certifications. We think that's really important for our students to have the opportunity to earn those certifications as they go through their training and be able to take them with them after graduation into employment.

To that end, we have established eight American Welding Society accredited testing facilities. We had zero in Iowa at the start of the grant. So employers in our state had to send folks out to other states to earn AWS certification, and none of our students were earning certifications. They were earning qualifications but not those certifications. So we are really excited about that and that all of the colleges, through partnerships with those accredited testing facilities – I should say located at our colleges – have relationships so students can earn those credentials.

We're working in other areas as well. And I talked about those pathways, focusing on non-credit to credit, what we can do to make sure that we're articulating our non-credit training programs into our credit programs and also then that those credit programs at our colleges are articulated into the four-year institutions. That's all really important.

One of the great successes of our initiative has been our partnership with the Iowa Association of Business and Industry, and they are the largest business association in the state. They have membership in all 99 of our counties, and they started out as a manufacturer's association. So they are deeply rooted in manufacturing, and they have been strong supporters of the community colleges and vice versa for a good number of years.

So we partnered with them from the outset, before I even knew what TAACCCT was and anybody even knew who I was. The people who were smartly writing this grant application said, we need to partner around this idea because we know that manufacturing is critical to our economy in Iowa. We know that a great number of our communities depend on it.

A third of our counties are manufacturing-dependent in the state, but we also know that the perception is out there that these are not good jobs, that there's potential for layoff; things are

dark, dirty, dangerous. It's this kind of something that our grandfathers did, but it's not what we want our kids to do.

So just knowing the climate of what things look like and what students were hearing in high school and as they came into college not really having an idea of what they could do and perhaps our unemployed population coming from manufacturing, maybe being put off by that, we had a lot of perception issues. So we wanted to partner together, and we created this campaign called Elevate Iowa and Elevate advanced manufacturing. And the entire purpose is to change the perception of advanced manufacturing in Iowa to showcase those opportunities.

I should say that enrollment was down at almost every college in the state this past year. Enrollment in our manufacturing and skills trade programs is up at almost every college. So we feel really good about this, and we are just expanding and growing what we're doing.

We're partnering with our state workforce agency, the Department of Education which obviously the community colleges fall under, but economic development as well. Our governor has several initiatives that align very, very well to the work that we are doing in TAACCCT, and we are making sure that we can leverage every dollar we are spending at the community colleges to be able to further all of those kind of common missions.

So let me share with you two kind of models of what folks are doing and I selected these because I think that these are really good examples and I think that they would be able to be replicated fairly easily. If you can get one employer to work with you on something like this, you'd be in good shape. If you can get 25 like our Opportunity Dubuque team at Northeast Iowa Community College did, you'll be in really good shape.

But both of these models that I'm going to talk about focus on non-credit short-term training programs. Certainly we have all sorts of work going on in placement of our credit students, but sometimes those short-term training programs can have a little bit more of a challenge to make sure that they are geared appropriately to the skills that are needed by your employers and that the students are ready to go out into workforce.

So let me talk to you a little bit about NICC – that's Northeast Iowa Community College – and what they're doing with Opportunity Dubuque and their five-step program over there. They walk students through five steps. Their marketing materials have arrows that indicate each one of those five steps that a student needs to go through.

The first thing that they do is they put together an orientation. I'm looking at one of their marketing materials, and they held an orientation that was in the evening at their business center. You could register online and come in and learn about what the programs have to offer.

The second step of that is this pre-enrollment, and a big aspect of that is the NCRC, the National Career Readiness Certificate. As those of us who have been working with this know, the NCRC is aligned to certain occupations as far as those levels, whether you're earning bronze, silver, gold, and can be a really good predictor of someone's success in a program and then ability to gain employment.

So as part of the pre-enrollment NICC has students come in, complete the application for the program, and they will also complete the NCRC, which shows their commitment right up front too because that's a three-hour test and it's not the easiest thing for them. So they're learning about what it takes to kind of have that grit to be able to come in just right away.

The next step in this is their interviews, and this is something that they do in partnership with employers in the area. They call them their employer sponsors but these are employers who have open positions in the community who are looking to hire folks and they sit down and they go through and they do a pre-enrollment kind of screening and interview. And then they select students who would be good candidates for some of these programs to come in. They want people because some of this can be employer-sponsored.

So they're working on getting those people into the right place. Based on their National Career Readiness Certificate level, they go into a certain area. They want people to be able to have at least a silver to go into some of these programs, the CNC operator and welding and certified production technician. If folks don't meet that level, there are interventions that they can do. We have opportunities for them to come in and work on their skills so that they can come back at it and see what they can do.

Then they go through their education, very similar to what you would have in your non-credit short-term programming, making sure that they're getting a good breadth and depth of knowledge to be able to be employable. And then at the very end of it they're looking at employment, and they have career coaches that are helping with student success the whole way through. And then at the end that employment piece is just so much easier because they've been working with employers all the way through this process. So that's kind of one model of things that they're doing.

The other one I wanted to talk to you about is the Storm Lake model, and I think this is a really interesting topic because it's something that kind of – it wasn't intentional and laid out from the team up there at Iowa Central Community College.

They had been looking at offering some training opportunities for students in their kind of main community, and they realized that there were some barriers to folks coming to training there, transportation, employers in the area, and who was hiring. They went out into the community to talk to employers about needs and kind of expanded the area that they were really working with and focusing on and found there was some great need in this area. Storm Lake is the area. So they started offering and advertising non-credit training opportunities.

Well, what they realized was that there were a lot of people who were excited about the training, but they had some barriers. And one of those big barriers was English language skills. So the team at Iowa Central partnered with their ESL folks at the college, and they created a bridge program.

And it was a bridge that came just before they went into the non-credit either production welding or industrial maintenance, and it started with key terms and jargon in the manufacturing area,

working on translation, and other English language skills. They also then took them through that bridge program into kind of an orientation that talked about – I shouldn't say they do this in the past. They're still doing this right now. They have strategies for access.

They take the NCRC to know where they are placing. They have math workshops, kind of some pre-interviewing skills, team building exercises to get people into that kind of idea of what it looks like and that's we talk about the soft skills and those sorts of pieces. Those students that are – that go through that bridge then are moved into the non-credit certificate programs.

At the end of the program – and I think this is something that you could adopt too – they work with the employers in the area to find out who's hiring at that time. They gather the applications for those employers or they have a general application that they also have students fill out, if employers are willing to use that general application, and then they conduct speed interviews at the college facility. So different employers set up in different rooms, and the students are able to go around and interview, and some right there are getting job offers right there or shortly thereafter.

Both of these programs have had tremendous success in placement. I should say that NICC, of the completers that went through the program through informally working with their career coach, they were able to connect with about 86 percent of those completers to find out where they stood.

And about 94 percent of those folks were either employed or they were continuing education, and I should note too that saying that combined number historically for their region, graduates from those program areas, about three-quarters of them go into employment and only one-quarter go to continue their education. So that's a big number, and we know anecdotally that these things are working. The employers are happy. They're finding the employees that they need to fill the positions, and it's working.

So I wanted to talk just a little bit about these effective models and the common elements that they share. So here's just – these are six things that I think are really key to what you're doing. As I said before, employment is not something you do at the end of training. Employment is something that you're thinking of as you're identifying the programs, as you're developing the curriculum, as you are working on when you're going to offer the trainings, and all of those sorts of things. It's threaded throughout everything that we do.

So you'll see some little images on the right side of this slide. All of those are just pieces that are pulled from our Elevate website, which is Elevate – (inaudible). Go check it out. We also have Facebook and Twitter, and you can like us and follow us and do all those great things. We would love that. But I think that what we represent on our website is what you need to be able to do to have sort of a successful comprehensive job placement strategy.

You need to know your region. Which – who are the employers in their area? What do they do? What do they make? Who do they hire? What kind of jobs do they have? If you're going in to talk to an employer, you need to be able to do your homework and know about them before you go in and sit and talk to them. And if you guys are doing all these things, that is awesome, and it

makes me really happy. But either way, hopefully you'll learn a little bit of something or maybe after this somebody can share something with me that would help our colleges. But I just think it's really important to do your homework before you go in and have those conversations.

The second piece is creating employer value, giving them access to students. They want to know who those students are. They want to know who the potential candidates are. They want to get to know them. Bring them in, and then when they do work with you, whether it's pre-interviews or tours or any of those sorts of things, thank them publicly. Make opportunities to thank them. In your outreach materials, thank them, and you can do acknowledgments of their contributions.

On a statewide level, our Elevate campaign has really tried to do that, as well through our Business Association. The Business Association every year has an annual manufacturing conference. It's a one-day conference, and so what they did to really be able to kind of boost up what we're doing in Elevate was the night before they held a big fancy dinner.

And it was not paid for by the grant, but it was in partnership with the work that we're doing. It came from the Business Association. And it was legends in manufacturing, and they were able to kind of identify those employers who are really getting it done and being leaders in the area and helping. And they also thanked the community colleges for all the collaboration and work that we do to support employers.

But all those sorts of things, it doesn't have to be that fancy. It could be something very simple, but publicly thank them and collaborate with them, curriculum development, all those pieces. Even when we were working on – we worked on statewide curriculum development, and we made sure that we not only had those local conversations but from a statewide level we invited everybody in for a one-day meeting to come to the table and tell us what their concerns are and what their needs are so they could just feel part of the process throughout.

My third piece is design to align. Align your training to their needs. Now, contracted training is one thing and specialized training is one thing, but that can be part of what you're doing as you're designing your programs. When we worked on developing welding curriculum, we said, how are we going to teach tig welding? We've got three different materials that we want to make sure we're teaching students to tig weld on.

We could teach one class but we could also break that down into three one-credit classes and then people could take it out into industry and do contracted training with it later down the road and then maybe those students would come into our program. They could get a little bit of credit and kind of be a pathway in. So it's really important to make sure that you are aligning the training to their needs and align that pathway as well to what it will look like as they advance individuals within their organization.

The next piece is know your population. Learn about the prospective students. What are their barriers? What are their needs? I think that goes back to the Storm Lake model. They could have gone out into that area and advertised these training opportunities and found out that nobody really fit the bill to come in and was able to train. And they could have said, okay. That's fine. We'll try this again later or try a different tactic. But they didn't. They said, okay.

What are the barriers? What are the needs, and how can we help to create a bridge that gets people into these programs? So that's really important too.

Again, supporting student success. We know that the career coaches, pathway navigators, whatever you're calling them have been such a critical piece of these TAACCCT grants, and in some cases we'll be able to sustain those people after the grant.

In some cases we won't, but the work that they're doing in this kind of wheel at the bottom that you see that you can't read anything but I'm just put it in there as a reference, we say that our pathway navigator is that bigger blue dot, and the dots all the way around it are our services both internal and external.

So how are you collaborating to support students? If they need a job, can you help them get a job before the program is over with an employer that you know is going to support their completion? There's all sorts of things that you can do, but it's all about collaboration and making those calls.

And the last thing is organize for employment. We do a lot of job fairs and hiring fairs and those sorts of things, but that's just kind of one aspect of it. It's how can you put placement into your program. It's not an after we train you. So create events at the right time but also take those events that you have throughout the year as an opportunity to talk about employment and what it's going to look like in the coming months or after the end of the term or the end of your training.

There's a lot of opportunity there. Being in manufacturing, we really use National Manufacturing Day to be a springboard to expand kind of those conversations with our employers, to ask of them. I've always found that people love to help other people, and so if you ask for support, you're going to find it.

We have had tremendous numbers of employers that have opened their doors, that have come to our colleges that hadn't done that before simply because people hadn't asked them. And you can't ask them, do you want to support us? You need to ask them in very specific strategic ways. So organize around that kind of employment.

So I wanted to talk just about one more thing that we're kind of doing in Iowa that I think is really important. We have had some really good opportunity between our state agencies where we are working to marry educational outcome data with employment data here in Iowa. So I think that's really important. Not everybody is going to be able to have those sorts of relationships. I know that can be a challenge for the TAACCCT grants even getting that wage data.

So we're lucky here that we have a relationship and we can get that wage data and that's how we're tracking our employment. I really hoped that I would have that for you guys today, but I won't get it until the end of the week because of the national data that they're pulling from too. But it's really important, and we're not only able to see who's getting employed, but we're able to see what sectors they're being employed in and the impact. Manufacturing, it's usually a pretty

straight shot over from training into manufacturing, but it just helps us kind of hone what we are doing.

Another thing, Mark talked about a tool that they have. Our round four grant contracted with a group. It's EMSI or EMSI, and they provide two services which our round two students are able to use as well, one of which is a career coach. It works with assessment and helps people kind of find the right skills.

It also shows them what jobs are available in my area and what are they paying and how many openings are there, those sorts of things. So it's got a really good kind of consumer interface. But on the back side of it, it also has an analyst component that we can use as community colleges to find out what is going on, what the trends are in employment, what – how many people we are putting out in the system or from our system, from our colleges regionally or statewide, and how many job opportunities there are.

So there are organizations and consultants that can help you with some of this information as well. So again, it's all about thinking employment from the outset and being flexible as well as strategic. So that's kind of what I had. I think there's some questions. So, Christian, I will turn it back over to you.

MR. LAGARDE: Thank you. Thank you. Great presentations by both of you. Thanks, Stephanie, and thanks, Mark, for sharing today exciting stuff. High success rate on placement. So I appreciate your sharing of strategies.

So for the first question – and I'll go ahead and move that here – I'm going to ask Mark. There's a question from Tina about post – the post-employment effort. And she's asking, "Was it part of the college already? Is it grant-funded, and what about sustaining that after the grant's over?" Can you address that, Mark?

MR. STEWART: Yeah. I think, Tina, looking at your question, I think you're probably talking about the follow up that I mentioned as far as getting back with the businesses and with the participants to see if – how things were going. That's actually something that was not done at the member colleges prior to our TAACCCT grant, and when you say, "Is it grant funded?" it is grant funded in that we are doing that through our APTC.

So our APTC directors and the counselors are actually following up with the participants. Of course they're following up with the employers to see who's employed and everything, but they're also following up the employers on the success rate. Are we giving you the folks that you want us to give you? And then following up with the participants. Sometimes – and I'm sure we've all encountered this, but sometimes the mere fact that somebody now has a full-time job that maybe they didn't before and it's created additional problems, if you will, possibly at – whether it be transportation or at home with daycare, whatever.

So sometimes following up with participant to make sure we make those connections in the community to help them now transition effectively into their new lifestyle. So – but no. That's –

it wasn't being done before, and it is grant-funded from the standpoint that we're doing it through our APTCs.

MR. LAGARDE: Mark, another question. There seems to be a lot of interest in this CareerChoiceGPS. This pertains to that virtual career center. "Do you have a VCC? If not, what does it look like?" I know you addressed in the chat box, but you want to discuss that a little bit further?

MR. STEWART: Yeah. We don't have a virtual – we don't have virtual career centers, but what we're doing with the – and I think I posted there that we're working with the member college career centers to implement the CareerChoiceGPS assessments. And the important thing there – and I know we posted the – Christian posted the link there to the CareerChoiceGPS website. If you look at that, there's some videos that they have on there.

I think there's about six or seven videos that kind of walk people through what the assessment does as far as its effectiveness. I think that it – they advertise and can support via research over a 90 or 95 percent success rate with matching the right person with the right job, the right career, which is unheard of obviously.

But not having VCCs, what we did was again work through the member college career centers, and then when we went out with the company that offers this CareerChoiceGPS, we met with those individuals, academic advisors, the student success centers at the member college, that staff, and we kind of brought all those folks together and said, this is what we're getting ready to roll out. What do you guys think? How do you feel about maybe offering this at these locations? And that location may differ per college. It's wherever we can get the most ROI, if you will. And except for a little bit of pushback by one of the colleges, it is rolling out with great success.

When I say pushback, we all know that sometimes – there's an old saying out there that, if it's important to you, you'll find a way, and if not, you'll find an excuse. And I think that that tends to happen time to time. We've got a college that has said, well, we don't really want to offer those assessments.

We've got another one that we use and – but there's other ways that we're approaching offering that assessment in that community and with that college. So – and I think that when it's all said and done, the leadership there will say, oh, wow. How is it that the other colleges in the consortium, their enrollment and retention and placement ratings are improving and ours aren't?

And I think they'll see that it's attributed to work this – or this kind of effort through CareerChoiceGPS. So – but hopefully that answered the question about the VCCs and how we're rolling out the CareerChoiceGPS effort.

MR. LAGARDE: Perfect.

MR. STEWART: And if there's any other questions on that, again, it was we wound up getting – and I did not know this and our signatory didn't either and we did a lot of research on it. But

come to find out there's only one vendor for that CareerChoiceGPS and not just here in the southeast or not just in the U.S. but worldwide. There's just one vendor for it, and then we did a lot of research on it.

And like I said, we vetted them and met with our FPO on it and some others, and come to find out we said, this is a pretty good tool. So in our negotiation we were able to get the price point down to a very, very reasonable level – let's put it that way – so much so that I think it's – we are going to be able to sustain this well beyond the grant years with the contract that we were able to negotiate with them.

MR. LAGARDE: Perfect. Thanks, Mark. At the end – I see, Nicolette, you have a very specific question about pricing and such. At the end of this webinar, we're going to have everybody's contact information.

So if you can, please reach out directly to Mark. He can talk to you about the details of negotiating that contract cost and such, if you don't mind that. Mark, you okay with that, getting direct e-mails about that?

MR. STEWART: Yeah. No. That would be perfect. In fact, that's probably the best way to do it because then in lieu of taking a lot of time there. But yeah. It is – I'd be more than happy to share some of the details with that because there were, as you can imagine – we've all done numerous contracts with all this effort, and this one took about 10 months to get everything ironed out.

But I'd be more than happy to share all that with everybody and put you in touch with the right folks that can help you out. So yeah. That'd be exciting.

MR. LAGARDE: Good deal. Good deal. Thanks, Mark.

MR. STEWART: You bet.

MR. LAGARDE: We're going to move to – this is for Stephanie. This is from Michelle too. "What national data do you have access too?" Stephanie, you want to address that one?

MS. OPPEL: Sure. So I'm not a data person. So just understand that. I can put you in contact with our data person. If you ever have a question, you can send it to me, and I can help answer that. But basically we elected not to get information specifically from individuals that are participating in the grant. We went to the state. So the state is providing us wage data from the unemployment insurance records. They also then are using – so the WRIS, the wage record interchange system, which is a data sharing agreement between the states. And then there's also WRIS II, and not all the states participate in that. I think it's 40 or so states participate in WRIS II and share information. So our data comes to us from our state agency, but they're running both of those numbers. It's really important for us. We have on – different parts of our state, on the eastern side we have the quad cities. So people may be coming – may be living in Iowa and working in Illinois, or on the western side we have the council bus Omaha area. And so we have some of those pieces that we need to be able to address. I hope that answered the question.

MR. LAGARDE: Perfect. Perfect. And if you don't mind, I'm going to go ahead and field the next one to you from Debra. "Did you have strong relationships with employers and staffers dedicated to building them prior to the grant?"

MS. OPPEL: Yeah. The community colleges have always had really strong relationships with employers in their regions. So when the grant was written, there were 35 employers that wrote letters of support ranging from really big companies like John Deere or Tyson to small companies as well or bigger companies that you may never have heard of.

So yeah. That's where you start is with those strong employer partners but again, no employer can take all of your program completers and place them, and they can't provide you everything that you need. So we've done a lot of outreach from our project directors, also using faculty relationships. Our faculty in career and technical education come from industry, and they have strong relationships. And using those is really, really critical and important and valuable because those are real relationships that you can draw upon.

So I will say that through this grant every quarterly report that comes in to me, I am astonished by the number of additional meetings and connections that our colleges have made. Part of it is through the Business Association and our relationship and what's going on with Elevate because that's a statewide very visible initiative. But a lot of it's just conversations that happen between – with economic developers and our program staff.

MR. STEWART: Yeah. Christian, if I may add to – this is Mark – what Stephanie just said, that is about the internal look and getting assistance and support from the programs of study department chairs and deans, etc. That is crucial. It really is because, like she said, those folks, when I mentioned during my portion about the colleges and the relationships that were already there and leveraging some of those internal resources, that's part of what I was talking about because those folks, like Stephanie said, have already got good community relations.

They've built those relationships and so build upon those and have those folks help you make the connection with the employers and the business partner they already work in concert with versus trying to reinvent the wheel. And that worked really well for us. In fact we included some of that.

Like so many of you, we probably – early on the first few months we created the policies and procedures for our overall operations, but we also created a separate policies and procedures for our adult postsecondary transition centers. And as part of that we outlined some of those strategies that they could employ and that was one of them and that's made a huge difference.

MR. LAGARDE: That's a good segue to Day's question, and you might have – you may have kind of just answered it. But do you want to address one other thing, one other thing from your program that you suggest that they all do for the biggest benefit? Mark, you want to start?

MR. STEWART: Oh, gosh. One. Do I have to keep it to one? Let me see. Gosh, there are so many. I really think that early on – in fact I remember when I went through some project

management training years ago, one of the things that really stuck out to me was the importance of communication, and that's – we think about so many times, as what I had in my presentation earlier, about thinking outside the box.

And I think that that's important, the innovations. I mean, we're all pushing that way. We talked about – Stephanie mentioned a lot of the things that they're doing, the innovative things, and I applaud her for helping to implement some of those things. It's fantastic and some of the things that we're doing with the entrepreneurship and the CareerChoiceGPS, etc.

But I think so many times when we get so wrapped around the definition of communication from the standpoint of the outreach that we forget about what's already there in front of us, the things, like I said, in the box.

So just I think that one of the biggest things is just focus on the effectiveness of the communication internally and what those resources internally can do to help you succeed in whatever way and particularly in this job placement because you could really get – it could be overwhelming if you think, oh, my gosh. Now, I've got to really go out there and beat the bushes and see if we can't find how we can tackle this outcome.

There are already so many things in place internally, your internal stakeholders at the colleges, and external in the community that can really help you do that. So like I'd said early on, collaborate, partner, educate. That's kind of a repeat.

I'm going to share one thing that – and I've got to head out the door here in a little bit because unfortunately this is kind of a personal thing. I've coached a cross country team at a local high school for about 15 years, and our state championship's coming up this weekend. So we've got practice again tonight.

But I can tell you one of the things that's on their team tee shirt is a motto that I've had for years, and it applies to this strategy as well, is legs, head, heart. The first thing you got to do is get the legs moving. Go out there and see who your partners are, and in this vein see who your partners are. Communicate with them, and make that collaborative effort. And then think about different ways afterwards that you can help grow that effort and work together.

And then make sure that everybody has the passion for it; the heart. When you feel like you can't do anymore and you're just not sure, you're at your whit's end, look internally at that passion that you have for doing this. And then the last leg or last part of that step or that process, rather, that fourth step is repeat. So you do leg, head, heart, and then repeat. You just do legs, head, heart, and repeat.

So it's got an endless cycle, and I think that if we approach each of these strategies, including the job placement that way, it can be a success.

MR. LAGARDE: Stephanie, your one thing?

MS. OPPEL: My one thing following Mark, so with that eloquent and wonderful sentiment there, I completely agree with him, and I think that's a great way to say it. I'll try to follow up with a little bit of something of value for you guys too. I'm sitting here trying to think of what I would call it and I'm kind of saying visibility and value and I see that in connecting students to employers.

And so we have done that throughout. If we send the message to students in recruitment, "Come to our training program. We know you're going to get a job at the end and this is a really good training and we're really fun and you'll have a lot of support," that is one message. If you have employers saying to students, "Come to your community college because I hire people from these training programs and I know that you can be successful if you go to your community college," that is so important is getting that messaging right and connecting the students to employers.

Whether it's through recruitment messaging, whether it's through career fairs, whether it's through industry tours, whether it's through opportunities for employers to come in and just even visit the lab while students are in there welding, all of those sorts of things that make, that tie that connection, I think that's really important when we talk about placement. So that's my nugget for you.

MR. LAGARDE: That's your nugget. Perfect. Perfect. So the question from Barbara about increasing placement rates when you have lower completion rates, I'm going to go ahead and let Stephanie sort of possibly address that. It's hard to – this could be a very hard question to answer because you can't kind of placement until someone completes. So Stephanie, do you want to address that?

MS. OPPEL: Yeah. So for us, we have an issue with placement and completion where employers or students go to employment before they complete. So that can be an issue, and I don't know that that's exactly what you're talking about.

But I think – oh, man – I would really focus then, if you have lower completion rates, I mean, you've got to take a step back and see what you can do to maybe align a little bit better around support and placement and see what – I would maybe see what you're doing to be able to intervene with those students to talk with them about staying to completion.

And I know it's later in the game for us, but we still do have some time with our non-credit students and with our credit students as well that are coming through right now and completing in May. I would really talk to them about what the opportunities are and how much better things are if you stay to completion and then what placement opportunities look like.

We laugh. We have one great career coach that I just adore. He is one heck of a guy, and it's funny. One of the things that he will do with students, if you've got a student that's kind of having a hard time, depends on the student for who this is going to work for.

But sometimes he's had a younger guy or two, and he'll take them down to the plant and go, okay. So if you leave us now, you could come in and you could probably work here and they'd

hire you and that's probably the truck that you'd be driving and show them a vehicle and say, this is what you'd kind of be earning and translate it into terms that that student would relate to as far as the truck they'd be driving.

He said, if you would stay with us and complete, you want to stay and complete this diploma, they're going to hire you too, but you're going to probably make this much money and that's the truck you would be driving, and show them kind of a better more tangible thing because 20-year-old guys kind of can think like that in our area.

So I think it goes back to that what are you doing to support persistence and completion, but if you don't have the completers, man, you could always kind of focus on those students too that maybe they came in employed and they just needed a little bit and see what you can do. I don't know. That's a really hard one, like you said, Christian. But best of luck to you.

MR. LAGARDE: Excellent. All right. If there aren't any other questions except for questions from Brittany and Gail about some documents that were discussed. And I'm going to address that in a second. For those that are registered on this call, you're going to get an e-mail about when the recording is posted up on Workforce3One. There will also be an announcement from the TAACCCT Learning Network about the repository of those documents.

So if it's the entrepreneurship curriculum and the syllabi that you are asking for or the arrow – I believe – can we get a copy of the document with arrows from Stephanie? That will be in there as well.

MS. OPPEL: Of course.

MR. LAGARDE: So when that announcement goes out, there will be a placeholder for all the documents that will be shared in there. Also you see the contact us slide that should be up now, if you're seeing that. So that's myself, Mark, and Stephanie.

What an amazing group of grantees, these two grantees that presented. Thank you both so much for that. You have their e-mail addresses. If you want to ask them a specific question, if it's about the Career GPS or if it's about some other documentation that they have, there's their contact information. You can send it to them.

If there isn't any other questions – I see Steven says, it's been extremely beneficial. Thank you so much. We appreciate that. If there isn't anything else, we will go ahead and close this up, and I'll hand it back off to Eric for our closing statements.

MR. BELLINO: Yeah. Thanks, everyone.

(END)