**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Partnerships that Deliver Results:**

**The Workforce System and Registered Apprenticeship –- Part 2**

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GARY GONZALEZ: And I am going to turn things over now to John Ladd, who’s the administrator of the Office of Apprenticeship at the Employment and Training Administration here at the Department of Labor. John, take it away.

JOHN LADD: Thanks, Gary. And welcome, everybody. Appreciate you joining us this afternoon for our part two of our webinar, “Partnerships that Deliver Results: The Workforce System and Registered Apprenticeship.” We’re really excited about today’s PowerPoint. We had a great turnout on our part one session and believe that this is going to be an important part of our ongoing efforts to create system alignment between the workforce system and registered apprenticeship.

I’m thrilled that I’m going to be joined today by Gerry Ghazi, president of Vermont HITEC, as well as Rose Lucenti from the Workforce – the workforce development director at Vermont’s Department of Labor. They’re going to be coming on here in just a little bit. But thrilled that we’ve got such great experts with us today. So thank you again for joining us.

Before we get started here, again, I just want to highlight that this is part two of a two-part series. If you want to go back and listen to part one, we have the link up there. Gary mentioned that these webinars are recorded, so you can go back at any time and view that webinar. We had a great turnout for that session. Lots of great information. And we’ll be doing a little bit of a(n) overlap between those two sessions here today.

But we really want to focus today on drilling down a little bit more on understanding the apprenticeship model. We tried to make it as simple as possible for people to understand what makes apprenticeship unique and how you can innovate and use the apprenticeship model for your workforce development needs. But more importantly, you’re going to hear about people that have already figured this out and are doing it, and so we’ve got Gerry and Rose here this afternoon talk about their great models and their successful partnerships. And from that, we’ve got a toolkit that we are sharing for the very first time with you all, so bonus for you joining us here today is you get to walk away with a brand new apprenticeship workforce toolkit.

So just before we get started here, we have a quick poll. We’d love to know who’s in the audience with us today. So if you could fill out the poll, let us you if you’re with the workforce system at the state of local level, you’re at the – working in an American job center, are part of a state apprenticeship agency, an educational institution, or hopefully we’ve got some employers and people from business and industry or labor out there as well that are joining us today. So if folks could take just a moment here to fill out our poll.

Looks like we’ve got a good mix of folks. We’ve got a lot of folks from educational institutions, lots of local workforce boards, state folks – a good mix of folks here. We got some of our state apprenticeship partners on board as well. So that’s fabulous. If folks can keep filling that in, (now ?) would be great. It’s always good to know who our audience is.

So let me get started here. We wanted to talk a little bit here at the beginning about what a tremendously exciting year it has been for those of us working in registered apprenticeship. It’s probably one of the most significant, one of the most important years in our 75-year history.

It all began back when the president lifted up apprenticeship in the State of the Union address back in January of this year. Couple of very important reports came out this year, one from the Center for American Progress, really one of the first policy reports focused exclusively on the role that apprenticeship can play and help meeting the skills gaps and workforce development needs. I really encourage folks to read that report. It gathered – it garnered a lot of attention here in D.C. It continues to have a lot of influence in the policy discussions that are happening.

Simultaneous to all this happening, the president had asked the vice president to do a review of federal job training programs, and from that came a framework for job-driven job training. And in the vice president’s report and companion evidence reports, apprenticeship was repeatedly lifted up as a model of job-driven training and cited numerous examples and evidence of the value of apprenticeship as a job-driven strategy. So it was thrilling for us to see that kind of validation in that report.

We had the vice president himself tick off an important initiative for us, which is the apprenticeship college consortium, which is – seek – which helps to provide college credit for those in apprenticeship programs. So we think that’s incredibly important to provide those career pathways and make sure that individuals understand that apprenticeship is a pathway to post-secondary education. And so the vice president launched us back in – back in the spring. And we’re thrilled to announce that we have over 50 community colleges now participating in the RACC. So we’re very excited about that effort.

The secretary has been our chief spokesperson. Just came back from Germany and England looking at what they have done with apprenticeship. We could go on and on. A White House summit, the first apprenticeship – White House summit on apprenticeship, happened this year. And we’re just thrilled to have the attention that we’ve had in this past year.

And then of course, those of you that are in the workforce system know that while all those great and exciting things were happening around apprenticeship, the Congress finally passed a reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, and now we have WIOA the department is very busy implementing. But incredibly important piece of legislation, one of the rare example of such overwhelmingly bipartisan support on these workforce issues. But for the purposes of this webinar, what’s really telling is that there is a significant focus on registered apprenticeship throughout WIOA. WIOA had a number of provisions, and we went over those in the first part of this series where apprenticeship was really lifted up as a proven workforce strategy. So we encourage you to go back and take a look at that first webinar if you missed it. But we’re excited about the opportunities that WIOA gives us to, again, move forward on goals that we’ve long had here at the department, which is to try to connect apprenticeship and the workforce system more closely.

As I mentioned, the president (reviewing ?) the vice president report laid out a framework for job-driven training. And as I mentioned before, the reports identifies apprenticeship as a leading example of job-driven training. And that’s because they can check off all of the boxes that they identified as elements that should be included in all job-driven training. You can see them all here. And I think those first three are incredibly important: the role that employers play in driving the design of training programs – we’ll talk a little bit more about that around apprenticeship, but that’s core to apprenticeship; work-based learning is obviously core to apprenticeship; and the strong outcomes and impacts that apprenticeship has is also a critical piece of any apprenticeship program. So we check up all those boxes, and we’re very proud of that, that apprenticeship was held up as that example.

And of course, as I’ve mentioned before, that’s really been codified in WIOA in a number of ways. And we’ve highlighted then here. Again, if you want more information, please go back to part one. But it’s important to highlight that now under WIOA, a representative of apprenticeship will be partner on workforce boards and is part of the workforce planning requirements at the state and local level. It’s a key element in the business and industry engagement pieces. It’s a proven work-based learning model. And obviously, it has strong impacts on performance measure. So we believe, again, that there is tremendous opportunity as we move forward on implementing WIOA to embed apprenticeship within your workforce strategies.

So, you know, we often get asked to explain, you know, what is apprenticeship, what is – how is it different, what makes it unique. And today we just want to try to cover elements or answer to those questions and try to do it in very straightforward ways and give you some examples to make it real. So what we’re going to talk about are we want to identify what are the five core – five core components of any registered apprenticeship program. and we’ll get into these a little bit more detail. We’re going to talk about four keys roles that need to be played. They can be played by different parties, but we want to make clear what those roles are. We also want to let people know and be sure that they understand that there are three ways to complete an apprenticeship program, not just one way, and we’ll talk again more about that. The registration function, kind of the quality assurance piece of that – of apprenticeship programs – we’ll talk about two different ways to register your apprenticeship program, either at the federal or state level. And we want to talk about how regardless of how you register or how you design your program, this is one system that leads to nationally recognized credentials.

So on the five core components, you know, as with anything, you know, there is obviously more detail and requirements behind each of these, but to try to outline what makes apprenticeship unique, what makes apprenticeship apprenticeship, it really boils down to these five core components.

And the first is probably the most important. You cannot have apprenticeship without employers. Employer involvement is integral to any apprenticeship program. They’re the foundation of the program. They must be the drivers of the program, providing OJT and supervision and oversight. But you can’t have apprenticeship if you don’t have employers. It’s not pure education. It’s not pure training in the classroom. That employee engagement has to be there, or you really have apprenticeship.

The second element is there has to be structured on-the-job training with mentoring. It’s structured, it’s supervised OJT. And for us, OJT does not mean – you know, there’s lots of different federal agencies that do OJT. WIOA has an OJT definition. Department of Transportation has their own OJT definition. For us, OJT is structured. There is a – there is an outline of what individuals need to know and what they will learn on the job. It doesn’t mean you go on the job and you figure it out; it means that there is a plan for how you – how you are going to learn to become proficient on the job. And so that structured OJT. You have to have it.

And there needs to be a minimum of 2,000 hours generally. When we talk about competency-based, you know, we can say that there is some flexibility there, but generally, we’re talking about a minimum of one year apprenticeship programs. We’re not in the business of three- and six-month or even four-week job training programs. These are jobs that lead to good-paying careers, sustainable careers, and they’re generally going to take a minimum of one year to complete. Many are significantly longer. And most people know that apprenticeship programs can last as long as three, four, even five years.

There is also classroom-related instruction. So you have the practice, which is the OJT, and the theory, which is the classroom training and instruction. It’s very important that those two elements are combined. In any apprenticeship program, people need to practice what they are learning. They need contextual learning. And that is the power of the apprenticeship model to combine both OJT and classroom instruction. We do have a recommended amount of 144 hours. We do have some flexibility there as it’s a recommended level, but we’re generally looking for a significant amount of classroom time to complement time on the job. But we will talk about some other options of how that training could be provided. It could be parallel to the OJT. It could be front-loaded. It could be segmented. We’ll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

A fourth key element is there needs to be rewards for skill gains. We tend to call this a wage progression in the apprenticeship world. But remember, apprenticeship is essentially a bargain between the apprentice and their – and their employer or their sponsor. There is a bargain there of I’m going to accept lesser wages, lower wages than you would pay someone normally to do the job in return for training me how to do the job. And as my skills increase, as my productivities increase, that should be reflected in the earnings that I’m able to make leading to the – to the point that when you complete an apprenticeship program, you’re able to earn a hundred percent of what you would be able to earn if you were fully proficient. So it’s important that we see that rewards for skill gains reflected in an apprenticeship program. But we don’t dictate what that level needs to be. That’s driven by the industry. It’s driven by the employer. There needs to be some appropriate level of wage progression, but again, we don’t dictate that.

And then finally, all apprenticeship programs should lead to the ability for that individual to earn a national occupational credential. And what I think is unique and distinguishing about apprenticeship here is that this is not a credential that says you know one part of a job or you – you know, you completed your computer security awareness training, right? It’s not – it’s not a segmented or a component part of your job. When you complete an apprenticeship program, you earn a credential that says you are fully proficient to do the job. You know, we often use the word journey worker, but that’s what that term means. It means you’re able, you’re fully proficient to do the job for which you’ve been trained. And it’s the employer that certifies that you have completed that mastery and that you are at that level. So in some ways, it’s even a guarantee to the employer that the people that are trained are fully trained to their standards because it’s the employer that says, yes, you’re ready, yes, you’ve completed. So it’s very important that people understand that apprenticeship leads to being fully proficient in a particular occupation. And that’s the credential that we award. It’s an important credential. It’s signed by the secretary of labor himself. And that’s something that’s an important occupational credential in the workplace.

So what does this mean for the workforce system? So we have a bit of a translation here. So that employer involvement that we talked about is a key part of the business engagement strategy or sector strategy that WIOA calls for. And so if you’re doing apprenticeship, you’re doing sector strategies, you’re doing employer engagement. So you can check that box.

The OJT components – a great opportunity to align with the workforce system is the use of OJT contracts to think about how you could support employers in your communities and your state through the use of OJT contracts to support at least some portion of that on-the-job training that must be provided as part of an apprenticeship program.

We heard from the folks in Detroit in our first session. They’re using ITAs and others to provide supportive services and other support to the participants as they’re moving through their apprenticeship program. So ITAs are another option for how you could support related instruction or other customized services – sorry, other supportive services.

The rewards for skill gains parallels very neatly with how you can count the apprentice wages and your earnings, performance measure, and the national credential, obviously, can count now in the performance measure for credential attainment. So as you can see, there is some great alignment there between the court components of an apprenticeship program, and some of the service strategies, the allowable services and the performance outcomes under WIA and WIOA.

So what I’d like to do now is talk to you a little bit about some options that are available for designing and thinking about apprenticeship program as you’re thinking about sector strategies and employer engagement and how apprenticeship might work.

What most people have in mind is the traditional apprenticeship model that has been used extensively in the construction industry and has been a very powerful model, has worked very well, but one in which it’s a multiyear program – you see in the bottom, you know, as many as four years. The related instruction and the OJT are parallel to each other. So often you have an apprentice working during the day, going to school at night. And, you know, that’s a – that’s a heavy commitment that people have to make to be able to manage that time and to manage the work that’s demanded of them. But – and as you’ll see also, you know, the dollar signs, you know, the wages go up as they move through the program, ultimately leading to, you know, when they complete the program, become credentialed, get their credential and are able to move in the workforce and to be paid at the fully proficient level. So, you know, that is the traditional model. And probably, you know, if you ask most people to describe an apprenticeship program, that’s probably what they would say.

But we want to make sure that people understand that depending on the industry’s needs, depending on the occupations that are being considered, you know, a one-year apprenticeship model also fits the definition, has all the core elements of an apprenticeship program. It’s just in a shorter period of time. So there are numerous occupations for which to get to that fully proficient level. Industry has said, you know, it will only take a year to get that. That’s a perfectly acceptable apprenticeship model. Maybe those wage increases happen at that six-month mark, or maybe it’s not until the end that they get that wage credential, but – that wage boost. But they have all the elements, and that’s also a possible apprenticeship model.

Another option is one in which a certain amount of classroom instruction needs to happen first. And so there is no reason why you can’t front-load some apprenticeship – front-load some of the classroom instruction. So we hear this in health care, some IT occupations, others where there is a certain amount of theoretical knowledge that needs to happen first – it’s perfectly acceptable to front-load a bulk of that classroom instruction on the front end and then start to phase that out through an interim period, and then you could end up with all OJT at the end, again with the wage progression in there, the credential at the end. But that also works as a potential apprenticeship model.

And then lastly, we want to talk about a model that we think also has a lot of potential for workforce system alignment and integration, one in which there is a pathway, a career pathway from pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeship. And Gerry Ghazi is going to talk a little bit more about this model as well, but again, where maybe some of that classroom instruction is going to happen during the pre-apprenticeship piece, but that that pre-apprenticeship program’s been – is working in close collaboration with the apprenticeship program, and as a result, that apprenticeship program could offer some advanced credit and standing and accelerate that apprentice’s progression through the apprenticeship program, so they start in pre-apprenticeship and maybe they get three, six months, maybe as much as a year credit. And they’re into – they’re moving further along through their apprenticeship program, and they’ve been able to accelerate completion and getting to the ultimate goal, which is that credential. So Gerry is going to talk a little bit more about that model as well.

Now I want to turn to, you know, if that’s how you could – can organize the various components of apprenticeship program. I want to spend a little bit of time thinking about how you might design the partnership structure for an apprenticeship program.

Apprenticeship programs don’t happen by themselves. Obviously, employers needs to be there. But there are a lot of other roles that are important to play. And there is at least four. We could probably identify more, but the four that are critical that need to be covered at a minimum is they obviously have to be employers. You cannot have apprenticeship without employers. They drive the program. They provide OJT, work-based learning. They’re really at the center.

But then there is a role in the apprenticeship world that we call the sponsors who are essentially the administrators of the program. The most kind of well-known version of this is the joint labor management organization that service the administrators for most of the joint programs in the construction industry. They serve as the administers – administrators of the program. But other entities can play that role, CBOs, education, workforce intermediaries. There is a large number of entities that can play that convening role, can aggregate the demand of employers, that can – that can reduce the burden of the administration of the program for the employers. So this is an important role that we want to highlight. Particularly as we’re trying to move forward to meet the president’s goal to double the number of apprenticeship in this country, we really believe that the role of intermediaries here will be incredibly important to help support small- and medium-size employers and others that are going to need assistance in helping to set up these programs.

There needs to be an educational provider. It can be the intermediary. It can be the employer. It can be a community college. It can be a lot of different entities that can play that role. But there needs to be a provider of the classroom instruction.

And then finally, we believe – and, you know, obviously, we’d like to see more of this happening, but we believe the public workforce system has a critical role to play in helping to be a convener and a catalyst to support the expansion of apprenticeship in the United States. Whether it’s through the provision of basic skills and pre-apprenticeship, supporting funds through OJT, ITAs and customized training, being able to provide supportive services, there is a significant role that the workforce system can help play to help lead this charge to meet the president’s goal.

So let’s write that down a little bit and just – make it really concrete in terms of how these various roles could play out. The first slide you see here is kind of the single employer model. So think of the really big companies that can do this. It could be Siemens Corporation. It could be, you know, lots of large organizations, Volkswagen, some of the larger companies that have the resources kind of do it all, right? They can provide the OJT. They have the HRs, resources to administer the program. They can provide classroom instruction on-site. And if they choose, they’re also providing supportive service and all those things to support their employees. So it’s a model that works, works in really big organizations primarily but can work and does work really well.

The more common model is one where either one employer or multiple employers works with an intermediary to help do a couple things, right? The intermediary serves as the sponsor, administers the program on behalf of the employers, takes that burden off of them, aggregates their demand. Maybe one employer only can take one or two apprentices, another one can only take one or two – you know, that’s maybe not enough capacity or critical demand to justify setting up an apprenticeship program. But like in Apprenticeship 2000 down in North Carolina, it brought a bunch of companies together. They formed a consortia. And together, they had enough capacity to be able to do this. But an intermediary helps to bring people together, can provide the classroom instruction and also can provide any supportive services.

So this is a model that is very common in the construction industry. That’s the role that joint labor management organizations play. Industry associations could play that role. Community-based organizations could play that role. A lot of different organizations could play that role. And we think this is going to be important as we try to expand a partnership with new industries. They don’t have the infrastructure that exists in the construction industry – you know, there is a well-established structure there, but there isn’t the structure in IT and health care and other places. So we’re really looking for where intermediaries can help play this role.

Another example is that there is an intermediary as the sponsor and providing supportive services, but they’re working with another entity like a community college to provide the classroom instruction. That’s perfectly acceptable.

And then lastly, you could have four different entities all playing these different roles with a workforce intermediary as the sponsor, a community college as the classroom provider, a CBO providing specialized services, maybe around specific target populations, and obviously with employers helping or being the critical element there. Again, we see the workforce system playing a critical role here in convening and aligning all these different pieces.

I want to move on now quickly to – just to remind people that again, most people think of apprenticeship as primarily a time-based program, that you are in apprenticeship program for three of four years much of the way you’re in a – in a college program for three or four years, you graduate and you’re done. We also have the ability to establish competency-based programs, where people can move through our program at their own pace, at their own – based on their own ability to demonstrate competency. So we’re really excited about that approach. We hear from employers all the time: I need workers, you know – you know, today. I can’t wait three or four years. So competency-based programs are a way to help accelerate that learning.

And then there’s also hybrid approaches, which it – which are a blend of the two.

We also want to point out that unlike the workforce system, the apprenticeship system’s more bifurcated and less of a federal system. What we have is 25 states that are actually managed directly by my office, the Office of Apprenticeship. The other 25 states and the District of Columbia have their own state apprenticeship agency, which has been recognized by my office for apprenticeship for federal purposes, that you would go through in terms of the registration process. They’re our partners in the system. But if you go to our website, you can find out which is the right contact, depending on which state you’re in, and either way there are staff, either federal or state staff, to move you through the – move you through the system.

And then finally, of course, all of this leads to a nationally recognized credential, again, with the key being that completing an apprenticeship program means you are fully proficient to perform the occupation, the job for which you’ve been trained. It’s an incredibly powerful way for employers to be – to have that guarantee that they’re training workers exactly the way that they need workers to be trained, and it gives the apprentices that complete the program a national industry-recognized and portable credential.

So now before I turn it over to Gerry and Rose, I do want to highlight that we have developed an exciting toolkit. You know, we – we’re being challenged to come up with easier ways and more accessible ways for people to understand how they move through the registration process, how they set up an apprenticeship program. So we’ve created a very easy to read – lots of additional resources and tools embedded within this toolkit. We’ve got kind of a road map of explore, partner, build, register and launch provided as part of that road map.

So we hope you have some time after the webinar to go through that, but please download it, give us feedback. We hope that this becomes a valuable tool for employers, for intermediaries, for all of the range of partners that can be involved in apprenticeship program to easily and quickly understand how they can move through this process. So please see the link above there at the top, and again we’d welcome your feedback.

So with that, I’m going to turn it over now to my colleagues Gerry Ghazi and Rose Lucenti. Please, take it over.

GERRY GHAZI: Thank you, John.

Myself and Rose are pleased to be here with everyone today and to be able to talk about apprenticeships from both a national level but also from a local level. And the partnership that you’re going to hear about today is based on a 14-year track record, and so really want to begin by saying who we are. Vermont HITEC – and John kind of talked about this earlier – acts as an intermediary between the employer who is actually having ready-to-fill jobs and those employees – potential employees or job seekers who really want to fill those but don’t have the right qualifications and competencies.

We are a nonprofit focused on workforce development. And the model that you’re going to hear about today is a model which embraces apprenticeship as part of an intensive outreach, education and apprenticeship model.

If you notice, as I go through the slides, there are key aspects in red. This is really our linkage with the Vermont Department of Labor and the state workforce system linkage that we rely on to utilize this model throughout the many industries and professions that we actually brought apprenticeships to. We actually customized curriculum to match job and career openings that are immediately ready to be filled, and that’s a key aspect of it. As John pointed out, you have to start with an employer. So we actually get employers who guarantee employment up front before we actually launch any of our apprenticeship programs.

And John talked a little bit about the types of models for apprenticeships, some pre-apprenticeship programs, some that actually front-load the education, some that actually have the education happen throughout the apprenticeship. We actually incorporate all three models through different programs, depending on the employer’s needs. And we really go back to that employer’s driving this for us.

We’re kind of excited about being able to present, because, as a partnership with the Vermont Department of Labor, we’ve been doing this for 14-plus years. The model you’re going to hear about has been so finely honed between our two organizations, and the country now is looking apprenticeships as a way of really creating back and giving that middle class back and bringing back – that middle class back to those livable-wage jobs. And our model, as being seen as innovative – we appreciate it, but for myself and for Rose – I believe I’m speaking on her behalf – we have been doing this for so many years, it’s almost second nature to us.

So as we go through this presentation, I’m going to be pairing off with Rose and particularly turning it over to her when you see things that are in red.

So we talk about our partners, and we begin and we end with the two key partners. The beginning is employer partners who are providing the jobs and at the end are the job seekers, who are those that want to fill those jobs but they just don’t have the competencies.

And between there, we’re relying heavily on the departments of labor, the departments of economic development, the federal and state apprenticeship divisions and other government and nonprofit agencies, all part of the workforce investment system.

We also rely on postsecondary and secondary school systems for actually accreditation for our programs and actually having those that go through our apprenticeship programs receive postsecondary college credit. And we’ll talk a little bit about that.

One – again, I’m going to turn this over to Rose at this point, but one of the key partners is the Vermont Department of Labor as a statewide workforce system.

Rose.

ROSE LUCENTI: OK.

So the statewide workforce system activities are all under one commissioner of labor, which is Commissioner Annie Noonan. And the divisions within that are the Labor Market Information, Unemployment Insurance and Benefits, state and local – Vermont is a single state, so we have the SWIB, which is the State Workforce Investment Board – Workforce – the Workforce Investment Act currently that will be transitioning to WIOA – the American job centers, which are our career resource centers; Veterans Services Outreach and the State Apprenticeship Council all are under one division, one commissioner. And we work very closely with all of these partners in recognizing the need, working with the employer, identifying the labor markets that we would – that we – that need the training. Unemployment – we work very closely with our unemployment insurance partners in identifying those individuals that are underemployed or long-term unemployed and focus on them and actual – and work. Just – we’re just very well-connected with all of these individuals, and then we work very closely of course with Vermont HITEC every step of the way so that we start right from the very beginning. As soon as an employer identifies the need of what the training is that’s necessary, then Gerry and my staff are working together.

MR. GHAZI: So the model itself that we have is three phases, and I should have started with that. The first phase is the outreach phase, the second phase is the education phase, and the third phase is the apprenticeship phase. And the apprenticeship phase is a cornerstone.

So some really guiding principles that we operate under – we always start with jobs. So key for apprenticeship is you have to have an employer, and there has to be employment. And we always end with jobs. So we not only see the individual into beginning their jobs; with that apprenticeship, we develop those individuals over the one- or two-year apprenticeship that they’re in.

The subject matter doesn’t matter. We actually – and you’ll see that we have three different industries that we approach, all considered now nontraditional, and those are advanced manufacturing, information technology and health care.

We have a passion for education and apprenticeships, apprenticeship, again, being the cornerstone of our model.

We’re looking at those job seekers who don’t have the competencies, and we believe in this unlimited human potential; that we can take an individual and through that apprenticeship model transform that person not only technically to meet the competencies of the job but also personally, to create all the behavioral characteristics that the person needs to have in order to have an organizational fit with that employer.

Everything is apprentice-centered in terms of the education and mentoring. It’s all competency-based apprenticeships and metrics. Even though we register them as hourly – and John talked about three types. You have your hourly apprenticeship, you have your competency-based apprenticeship, and then you have this hybrid. We do register our apprenticeships as hourly apprenticeships and hybrids, but we always have a competency-based apprenticeship because we put metrics in place each month to measure that. An employer can sign off early on an apprentice if they’re meeting all the competencies by proven metrics.

In all our programs there’s no previous expense required by apprentices. They usually use – need a high school diploma or a GED. And we also expect that our apprentices will pay it forward and continue that apprenticeship for others and be the mentors and masters for those individuals coming behind them.

So really quickly to go through, I said three industries. The first is health care. We’ve actually had apprenticeships for certified medical transcriptionists, certified medical coders, certified phlebotomists, certified medical assistants, certified pharmacy techs, licensed nurses’ assistants, practice support specialists, registration representatives. And then on the electronic health care side and the health records side we have Go-Live support analysts and data abstractors. So you can see a wealth of different allied health and technical in the health arena.

Then we go onto information technology apprenticeships. We’ve created these for software developers, Web developers, programmers, support programmers, software installation consultants, EDI – which is electronic data interchange analysts – and again, some of the support side of IT, the IT support analysts and IT account managers, both of these being in the information technology, all happening over the past 14 years.

And then finally, in the advanced manufacturing area, one of our largest programs, which we’ve been successful with, is the CNC, computer numerically controlled machine operators. And there is a huge deficit of those individuals that employers are dying for throughout this country. And we’re bringing a lot of those jobs back from other countries and having a product being made in the United States. And to make those products, many times they utilize machines that are computer and numerically controlled, and we actually have a program for that.

And then finally, we actually stretched ourselves as far as doing an apprenticeship for structural steel welders and fitters for a large bridge manufacturer.

So those kind of give you the three areas. John alluded to, at the beginning, there is a handout that you can download. If you look at the fileshare, it’s called the Vermont HITECH apprenticeship model. And basically it is a three-phased model, the first phase being a curriculum component, the second phase being education, and the third phase being apprenticeship. And as I walk you through this model, we’ll point out the linkages to the workforce system.

So first of all, project development. This is key. How do you actually begin a project? So what we actually do is we identify immediately – immediate ready-to-fill job openings using labor market information. So that’s our first place that we’re turning to the Department of Labor. We actually work closely with them because they also have contact with local employers. They have what we call – Rose, I believe they’re employer resource consultants?

MS. LUCENTI: Yes.

MR. GHAZI: And they work closely with us to identify which employers are hiring. Where are those immediately – are those immediate needs happening? So we work closely with Rose’s staff to actually make those outreaches to the employer.

And then the next step in our model is that we get an employer to secure a commitment upfront for guaranteed jobs to every successful graduate. And that’s a real crucial part of our apprenticeship model. So we know that if we frontload the education, that these individuals will all, in the class, be guaranteed employment in an apprenticeship by the time that education is completed and they successfully graduate.

And then finally, a very key aspect in the whole project development is that we need to secure commitment of state and federal funding. And this is where we turn heavily to Rose’s organization, the workforce development, for WIOA funds. And you can talk about the different types of pools of those funds.

MS. LUCENTI: Oh, and what we look at are – and again, we are starting right from the beginning when these people are recruited, so we are doing – we’re participating in the outreach, the recruitment, the assessment, and determining if these individuals – what funding sources they may be eligible for that are coming into the state of Vermont, whether they be federal, WIA, adult or dislocated worker; whether they be individuals that are affected through TAA. So that funding may be available. And we also have the state Workforce Education and Training Fund, which a state-funded program.

So we look at what services is this individual eligible for should they be selected to participate in this model.

MR. GHAZI: Great. So Phase 1 continues with a dual track. The first track is Track A, which is the curriculum development, and the second track is B, is the outreach.

So in the curriculum development, one of the uniquenesses of our programs is that we actually take one of our staff and – who are instructors, and they become an employee of that employer partner or multiple employer partners, because we may have one session which is being sponsored by, you know, up to eight different employers for a class of 16 individuals.

And that individual rotates amongst the employers or within that one employer and performs all the essential job functions of the position. As they’re doing that, they’re actually reverse-engineering an academic curriculum that’s going to meet not only the standards and rigor of college credit but also meet the employers’ needs in terms of what are they looking for, for a competent individual.

They also identify process improvements that need to happen actually, or suggest process improvements at the employer, because they’re seeing the processes and the competencies of an individual position for the first time with a fresh set of eyes. So we’re all validating and creating the apprenticeship competencies that will make up that one-year apprenticeship.

At the same time as they finish developing the curriculum, we submit it for academic accreditation through the Vermont state college system. And that kind of concludes the curriculum development process. And that happens in parallel to our outreach process, which is described here – lots of red on here, which means that the workforce system is heavily involved.

And we start with TV and newspaper articles and we do a press release. And in the press release we have the commissioners quoted, or the governor is quoted talking about bringing jobs to Vermont or creating new jobs in Vermont based on the workforce investment system and funding from the workforce investment system as well as the Apprenticeship Division within the Department of Labor.

We also run radio ads and newspaper ads and social media ads. And then we actually go way beyond that to do direct mailings through the Department of Labor’s JobLink system. We work closely with Rose’s organization to get a list of all individuals who go to the DOL website and register as an individual looking for services from DOL. And we do direct mailings to them.

We also do direct outreach through the American Job Centers or the OneStops. And WIOA case managers on Rose’s staff help us closely identify those clients that we should reach out directly to and get them involved and recruited into our programs. And they could be vets, at-risk youths, dislocated workers, trade-eligible workers, et cetera. So we rely heavily on this system of case managers and the centers to actually recruit from.

Then we turn to the Vermont Department of Labor UI Division, and we say, OK, tell us who your long-term unemployed are and we’ll do direct mailings to them as well. And we go one step beyond again by saying, OK, UI Division, help us put on the back of your stubs, your UI checks – let’s market our programs. Let’s do outreach for our programs through that. And again, when we do an outreach for any one of our programs, it’s always an outreach based on guaranteed jobs that an employer has committed before we get – be doing any of this outreach.

Sure, Rose.

MS. LUCENTI: I just want to interject here just for a second.

As well, when we have online UI filing, so we have a message that comes up. When a person signs in to file their UI claim for that week, we will also put a message on there to them so that they can see that this program – that we’re doing outreach for a particular project.

MR. GHAZI: So another great way of really integrating our programs and our, really, outreach of our programs – because we have these guaranteed jobs, we have an apprenticeship lined up, but we don’t have the actual applicants for that, and we rely heavily on the workforce investment system for that.

So we go to the next slide. This really is about – we actually hold an orientation session. So people apply online. They learn all about the positions. They learn all about the apprenticeship. They learn all about the related instruction. And if they’re interested, they will actually apply online and come to a mandatory orientation session.

And there in red you can see that there is involvement of the workforce system. The Apprenticeship Division is there, talking about what the apprenticeship is going to be. Rose may be there talking about what resources will be available from a WIOA standpoint through the process. UI is there talking about, do you get training waivers, because if you enter this program and you’re going to be in a pre-apprenticeship program that immediately leads to employment, can there be a waiver involved so they don’t have to continue to look for work while they’re going through our program?

And then, after people attend an orientation session, we invite them back for aptitude assessments, another key aspect, where we hold the aptitude assessments at the Department of Labor. So we actually work closely with their staffs in administering these aptitude assessments. These are not competency assessments, these are aptitude: Do they have the right aptitude to fit within the field of – or the position or the career line, career pathway?

Then after they take the aptitude assessment we look at a bunch of data – their résumé, their online application, their scores for the aptitude – and we bring them back for programmatic interviews. So those programmatic interviews are interviews with both Vermont HITECH staff and Vermont Department of Labor staff. And there’s really a crucial linkage here because they’re going to help us select who is going to wind up in this program.

After we have programmatic interviews, instructors will actually have a set of interviews. And then we finally bring back a sub-pool – and I’ll explain later on; I’ll show you kind of what the funnel looks like, but we bring back a sub-pool of those individuals and we present them to the employer and say: We are confident that although these individuals contain – or have – possess none of the competencies you’re looking for, we will get them to a point where they will be successful in the program. The employee then makes a selection, but also part of that selection is the Vermont Department of Labor participates in that.

The education phase, a fully immersion education phase – (inaudible) – have weeks of academics. It’s eight to nine hours in class every day, five days a week, and then eight hours of homework on the weekend. It’s a mixed-blended approach of online lectures, clinical lab work. The classroom itself is held onsite at the employer. So when we did our phlebotomy – I’m sorry, when we did our pharmacy technician class we were right outside the pharmacy in a classroom and they were able to rotate back in. When we did our medical assistant program they were actually in the clinic itself in a classroom and they were able to rotate into the clinic.

We monitor both behavioral and technical competencies. We have a rigorous graduation requirement, which really sets them up to be successful in the apprenticeship because it’s such an immersion process that they are able to take on the apprenticeship in an accelerated way because they have all the basically theory and the content and now they’re ready to apply it through mentoring of a master. And then they’ll get national certification exams.

And then finally, throughout the entire education phase, just like the outreach phase, support services are provided by Vermont’s Department of Labor through case managers and WIA allocations for daycare, for transportation, for clothing allowances, et cetera. So very, again, integrated in the outreach, integrated in the education.

When these individuals graduate – and the program is eight to 10 weeks, so this is not a – it’s not like a six-month program. It’s not a year program. It’s eight to 10 weeks. When they graduate, they will actually go into the apprenticeship.

And here’s another – (audio break). There is technical behaviors and competencies that we are measuring throughout the apprenticeship; on-the-job training contracts, as John mentioned, crucial to the support of having the employers invest their mentors into the actual apprenticeship itself.

There are dedicated measures for the apprenticeship. There are monthly apprenticeship evaluations, and these are metric-based. And you have performance-based increases. So every six months we actually have an increase based on their performance of those monthly evaluations, which are based on the actual competencies.

And finally, student support services are provided by the workforce investment system, similar to those that happened during the education but they’re continued into the apprenticeship. And they actually get industry-recognized credentials, academic credit, a U.S. Department of Labor certificate of apprenticeship, and they become a fully titled individual.

The support services, they are extensive. And we rely, again, on Vermont’s Department of Labor. And these are some touch points of the American Job Center’s Office, the UI Re-employment Services and case managers, WIOA services and case managers, and of course the Vermont Department of Labor’s apprenticeship field representatives.

We also get living expenses because the tuition – there’s no tuition cost for students who are involved. We actually seek grants to do that, but they can’t survive that eight-to-10 weeks so we actually give them living stipends from our VSAC, which is a state-sponsored student loan, or student academic services. And then finally, all of this is wrapped up with a centralized approach – apprenticeship-centralized approach that ensures success.

Let me give you a quick example of this kind of funnel for outreach, education and apprenticeship. This is an example of our IT apprenticeships. We had an employer. We approached them. They were outsourcing to India. They had 30 positions that they were relying on India to do. These were software interface analysts. We convinced them to bring those back because the quality wasn’t there and the turnaround time wasn’t there, and their customer satisfaction was dropping at a steady rate.

We said, we can build these for you from scratch: 30 positions. It would be a one-year apprenticeship, 35,000 (dollars) to start, 45,000 (dollars) in six months, 55,000 (dollars) in a year. We actually did the recruitment and we had over – and this is Vermont, which is only 635,000, you know, individuals for the entire state. So I know a lot of you are from states where it’s much – the city that you’re sitting in is a much larger population.

But we had, you know, 4,300 visit the website, 706 applications filled out completely. Four-hundred-plus attended our orientation session. Three-hundred-and-four participated in aptitude assessments. A hundred-and-forty of those were selected to come in and interview with the Vermont Department of Labor and Vermont HITECH for first-round interviews. We brought back 65 for the second-round interviews – (inaudible). Thirty were selected and completed their eight-week education program. And 29 graduated, entered and completed their apprenticeship. Twenty-nine became fully titled after that one-year apprenticeship.

This company would not have done this particular apprenticeship – I’m sorry, wouldn’t have done this particular program if there wasn’t that one-year apprenticeship as a cornerstone for them being able to mentor these individuals and be supportive throughout that one year with OJ (ph) key contracts and with the support of the caseworkers working on the individuals.

And then finally, this is a snapshot of our scorecard. It highlights all the different positions: number of employers, numbers of jobs created. And we really talk about created because we are an economic development engine. Although we work very closely with Vermont’s Department of Labor, they too help us create jobs that didn’t exist.

Three days ago – or, I’m sorry, five days ago we just announced a medical coding program, a certified medical coding program where we convinced an out-of-state organization that typically hired experienced, certified medical coders with three-to-five years’ experience to work on their client set, or they would contract overseas – we convinced them with our model to build them all here in Vermont.

So we’re about to kick that program off. We’re going to start with 15. They’re anticipating 45 in 2015. And then we’ll continue that – building that workforce from scratch for them. And you can see it’s health care, advanced manufacturing and IT have all similar success stories that we’ve had using this model. And I believe there’s contact information for both myself and Rose. We’re very open to sharing the model and letting – and answering questions at this time.

So I’d like to turn it back over.

MR. LADD: Great. Thanks, Gerry and Rose. That was amazing. That was really fabulous. You’ve got an incredible model there and we thank you for sharing it.

So what we’re going to do now is take some of your questions that have been coming in. We appreciate those of you that have already sent in quite a number of questions in the chat room there. So we’re going to use the time that we have available here the next 20, 25 minutes and try to answer as many questions as we can. So as you’re listening in, feel free to continue to send in more questions.

It’s always helpful – even the ones that we can’t get to answer here on the phone, it’s helpful to know the kinds of questions that are out there, and we can be thinking about what other technical assistance needs we need to think about. So please feel free to keep sending in your questions, even if we can’t get to them all today.

So the first question, a great question people want to know and have heard about, that there will be an RFP, a funding announcement coming out. This is a $100 million investment in apprenticeship. It will be the single-largest federal investment in Registered Apprenticeship. And so we are excited. The president announced this back in April. And we are anticipating that that RFP will be out in the next couple of weeks. So please stay tuned to our website, the DOL website. And we’ll be pushing out information about that RFP as soon as that’s available. But it’s a great opportunity for apprenticeship and for thinking about some of the models that you heard today.

Another question we had is people want to know how they can find out about what apprenticeships are available. How do you access them? And this is something that has come up quite a lot as we’ve been thinking about how we are going to be rolling out our expansion. And we realize that that is something that’s been missing. And so we’re thrilled to announce, if you go to doleta.gov/oa, the Office of Apprenticeship website, we now have an apprenticeship finder up on our website. We were able to partner with a company that was able to do some really innovative things.

It’s a beta and a Phase 1 release of this tool. It identifies a broad range of apprenticeship opportunities across the country. It currently does not yet indicate which of those are registered apprenticeship programs. That will be a future release and we’re going to be able to indicate which of those apprenticeships are registered either with the Department of Labor or for – with state apprenticeship agencies. But this is something that we’re really excited about, to have this technology, to be able to scour all the various job boards and be able to identify apprenticeship opportunities across the country.

All right. Our next question is for you, Gerry. People want to know is the high-tech model used exclusively in health care, manufacturing and IT?

MR. GHAZI: And the answer to that is no. When we began each one of these programs, we sometimes had no experience in the industry or the field. And why we actually have that focus is simply because these same employers would come back to us over and over and over again. (Inaudible) – out of New Hampshire, they originally wanted medical coders. Once we were successful in that, they said, OK, now do registration representatives. We have never done that before. They said, OK, now do pharmacy technicians. Well, we’ve never done that before. Well, now do medical assistants. Well, we’ve never done that before. So the model really in a short nutshell could be used in any industry and for any profession, and really it’s not creating – it’s not creating a job training program as much as it’s creating a career pathway for professions that individuals go into. So the model could be used in any industry, I believe, and on any particular job position.

MR. LADD: Great. Thanks, Gerry. We have a question asking about the role of labor management in apprenticeship programs, and obviously labor management have an incredibly strong role and it played a very important role in the apprenticeship system over the past 75 years. You’ll see them reference on both slides 17 and 19 talking about the role that joint labor management programs can play. That has been such a cornerstone of the apprenticeship system. But one of the things we were wanting to highlight for people today is other options for apprenticeship models, both including those joint labor management programs as well as other options.

All right. Next question for Gerry. What’s the upside of an apprenticeship program – example, CAN (ph) to take a year to be completed, when it can be completed in eight weeks and the student can go to work.

MR. GHAZI: What is the upside of having it done in a shorter period of time as they’re gaining – they’re learning why they’re earning? Is that the question? It is. I mean, for us we truly believe in this accelerated model with the academic (rigor ?). People are actually in class nine hours a day and they’re actually doing four to five hours of homework each night for five days a week. That, if you spread it out over an academic semesters, would equate to, like, that one-year certificate program. We believe that because apprenticeship is the cornerstone, you’re getting all that knowledge up front and then they can start earning while they are in that apprenticeship. Not only are they earning dollars but they can also be earning additional college credits as we lay out classes, either related – further related instruction or just the actual competency-based using measureable metrics that they get credit for for proving that competency in the employer. So I mean, we advocate strongly this accelerated approach. We always have. It is a (definite ?) paradigm shift from your traditional education. It doesn’t fit everyone. Individuals who want to go through a traditional education model, you know, they may not fit within this. But we’re looking for those unemployed and underemployed Vermonters who are hungry to get into a profession where they know there will be a job waiting for them and they can do it in an accelerated fashion.

MR. LADD: Great. Thanks.

There’s a question about, you know, as new apprenticeships are built, will there be incentives for programs like Crosswalk (ph). I believe it’s their classroom instruction with fully credited courses in addition to the nationally recognized credential. I mean, this is a trend that we’re seeing across apprenticeship programs already. Many, many apprenticeship programs are articulating completion of an apprenticeship program with college credit. As I mentioned at the beginning, we are – we have developed the register apprenticeship college consortia to try to accelerate that process and provide a national clearinghouse for that to happen. And we are encouraging more and more apprenticeship programs to be creative and think of innovative ways to align apprenticeship with other post-secondary credit and opportunities, and so I think that’s going to be a continuing trend throughout the apprenticeship system.

Gerry, other folks want to know, you guarantee a job. You said a hundred percent guarantee. What happens if there’s a downturn in the industry, layoffs, slowdowns? How does that impact your model?

MR. GHAZI: So in the 14 years that we have been doing, that has never occurred. We’ve never had an employer who made a commitment, held those jobs open and didn’t fulfill that commitment to us. Again, it’s because of the duration. We’re asking to hold those jobs open for a three-month period because we will outreach and educate and recruit those individuals and place them in those jobs within a matter, I should say, three to five months.

In cases where there is a general downturn, like in 2009, we won’t embark on doing a program, but we will help the employers get ready for when there’s an upturn again. So we may take an existing apprenticeship program and then say, what is the career pathway for those apprentices to go to the next level and work with that employer to develop that? But in the past 14 years, even in 2009, we were consistently running programs because some industry felt where it was actually growing at some rate where they needed these new workers. And you constantly hear there is a skills gap between what I’m looking for as an employer, both behaviorally and technically, and what am I seeing as candidates walking through my door? And we fill both those gaps. We’ve guaranteed the employers they’ll have the technical competencies through an apprenticeship model, and we’ve also guaranteed – because we’re actually acting as the mentors that they’ll have the behavioral competencies that when they graduate our program and enter that employment – we’ll monitor and mentor those on both sets of competency, behavior and technical.

MR. LADD: Great. Thanks. Thank you.

One person’s asking, are the 2,000 hours of OJT – is that – is that in addition to the 144 hours of classroom instruction? And the short answer is, yes, those are separate. Those are not – there’s – one’s not a subset of the other. The 2,000 hours refers to the minimum number of hours of on-the-job training, and the 144 hours are the recommended minimum number of hours of classroom instruction. So those are separate categories of those – of those modalities that we’re asking people to provide.

Another quick question is, can you have more than one role, for instance, both a sponsor and an education provider? And absolutely. And again, we go back to, you know, some of the strongest examples of apprenticeship that have been in operation for decades. The Joint Labor Management Programs do exactly that. They are the sponsors of the programs. They are the providers of the classroom instruction. They have world-class training facilities. They do it all, and they work with their participating employers as part of their apprenticeship program. So, absolutely. Those roles can be played by one entity or by many entities.

Another person asked, is there additional funding for apprenticeships independent of the money currently received in our WIOA grants or training in supportive services? It’s a great question. And one of the things that we will be putting out when we release the grants is we will be providing a playbook on accessing federal resources for apprenticeship. So we will be looking across federal government, looking at a variety of sources of funding to support apprenticeship programs. So please be on the lookout. It will be kind of a companion to the toolkit that we provided today. The toolkit is an apprenticeships get started guide. The playbook will be more of a cookbook on how you unlock federal resources to support apprenticeship.

Another quick question is around if a CBO is an apprenticeship sponsor, who signs the apprenticeship agreement? Is it the employer, the sponsor or the apprentice? We’re probably mixing up a couple of different things here. Whoever is the sponsor, the sponsor is signing the standards of apprenticeship. But in those settings where you have employers that are participating with an intermediary, whether it be a CBO, a Joint Labor Management organization, or another entity, they sign what we – what are called employer acceptance agreements, they agree – it’s on a one-page form in most cases – they are signing a form that says that they accept to work by the standards and use the standards. But it’s a very efficient and effective way to bring multiple employers into a single apprenticeship program.

So the sponsor is always the one that is signing the standards of apprenticeship. The employers in that model will sign an Employer Acceptance Agreement. And the individual apprentices are also signing an apprenticeship agreement that’s also signed by them and the employer, and in that case, that is kind of the contract that’s being made between those two – between the apprentice and the individual employer with regards their training.

So there are a couple different pieces that are getting mixed up here, but the sponsor is the signatory of the apprenticeship standards.

MR. LADD: Gerry, a question for you. Is HITEC an arm of the WIB?

MR. GHAZI: That’s a great question. As president and also co-founder of the model that you are actually talking about today, our dream, our vision has always been to invent this not only within state government but within the academic community. And so although we appear to be an arm of the WIB, we are separate, nonprofit, 501(c)(3), but our vision and mission is for us to really go out of business and have the state of Vermont absorb HITEC in its model, have the community college system absorb HITEC in its model, so that either of those two that they’re serving, a subset of those individuals could be guaranteed employment by going through a similar model of education and apprenticeship.

MR. LADD: Wow, that’s powerful. Can you also address – people want to know, are the certificates that are received for those participants that go through your program – do they receive academic credit or are those non-academic credits?

MR. GHAZI: So this has always been the greatest challenge. Folks say, what’s your greatest challenge for the model? It’s actually getting an education institution that’s a higher – you know, a higher institution of education to adopt the model and reward credit. Now, the Vermont State College has a system whereby you can take an entire program and they will evaluate your instructors, they will evaluate your curriculum, they will meet with your students, and then on a class-by-class basis, they will award academic credit.

So, currently we are using the Vermont State College system to have health care and IT – our health care and IT programs run through for academic credit. For instance, our medical transcription program, they were awarded 32 college credits from Burlington College and Vermont Technical College. Our CNC machinist program is awarded 27 – that’s a nine-week program – 27 college credits from River Valley Community College and the Vermont State College System. And then finally, we ran through our medical coding program, and they were awarded, I believe, 30 credits from the Vermont State College System.

What we are in the process of is – actually two things. We are looking for an academic partner that would really embrace the model, but in addition, we’re going through our own national accreditation so that when an individual goes through one of our education programs and apprenticeships, they get academic credit for both related instruction as well as the hours we’re spending in a competency-based, metric-driven apprenticeship.

MR. : Right. And so probably related to that, can you clarify the instructor status with HITEC? I’m not sure I know exactly what that means. Maybe you do.

MR. GHAZI: Yes, I do. So what happens is we have a staff of instructors – HITEC is only 10 in number, so we only have 10 staff that we have. Of those 10 staff, five of them are instructors, and they are full-time HITEC instructors. Our goal is we take the instructor and they become a pseudo-employee of the organization. So at Dartmouth-Hitchcock, they get fully badged, they go through all the criteria that a normal – they get their immunization shots. They actually sign all the disclosures. They go through HIPAA training, which is the privacy training.

And they are actually treated as any other employee there and fully badged. So they have access to all the systems and processes that are in place so they can perform the actual job itself. They have badges to the building, et cetera. When you walk in there, if you didn’t know it, you would see an individual who looks like a Dartmouth-Hitchcock employee but they’re actually a Vermont HITEC instructor.

MR. : Great. How about – what kinds of aptitude tests do you use?

MR. GHAZI: So we use national – (inaudible) – test. We have the Brainbench, is one set. SHL is another vendor that we use. So for instance, in our CNC machining program, we give four different aptitude tests from SHL, and that is math – so there’s working with numbers; there is visual acuity, which is they’re actually visual checking; and there is one on following instructions; and then there’s the fourth one on mechanical comprehension.

So we have these standardized that we actually give, but we do draw a line with any of our assessments and we do not share the scores with the employer. So we have taken individual who have literally failed the assessment, put them in the program, and they became some of the highest-functioning employees of that organization, without that organization ever knowing the scores on those aptitude – because we’re really looking at the human potential, and the person just may not be a great test taker. So during our other interview processes that we do, we do competency-based interviewing, the instructors set up a mini-classroom, each person comes in and does exercises. And so we actually are (gauging ?) the type of learner that individual is in a very short period of time, and we’ll make an investment in individuals who just may have a disadvantage.

And the neat thing about our class is that if there are 10 guaranteed jobs, there are only 10 students in the class. We do not put more students than we have jobs for. So there’s no competition in the classroom, so everybody helps each other. And it’s a beautiful model for education because no one is competing. Everybody’s guaranteed a job, so all boats rise.

MR. : That’s great. That’s great.

Hey, Gerry, how long does the selection process take?

MR. GHAZI: So the selection process takes – from the time that we actually have the orientation, have it on a Monday night; assessments happen Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday – that’s the aptitude assessments; Friday we decide who’s going to come back for first-round interviews. The following Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday are the first-round interviews, Thursday and Friday are the second-round interviews, and selections are made on that Saturday. So it’s a two-week window from the time they come to an orientation session with 400 people, to the time that we identify what that class is going to be and the employer sponsoring those individuals, and there will be 10 or 15 or 20 in the class, with some alternates.

MR. : Great. And I know I’ve asked you this question. So are the workers paid as apprentices while they’re in the total-immersion learning program? And are your employers willing to pay for this?

MR. GHAZI: That’s a great question. It happens both ways. The standard ROI that we present to an employer – because they’re taking people who have no competencies whatsoever for what they’re looking for. If they say, you guarantee me a graduate, I will guarantee you a job. If they don’t successfully graduate, they won’t have a job. So therefore, they’re not paid during that pre-apprenticeship education. It’s all related instruction. It counts towards the entire year apprenticeship, so there’s no further related instruction needed, but they’re not paid.

Other employers say, I am willing to pay and have them on my payroll during that related instruction, still all front-loaded, but I’m willing to pay for that. And so we have one set of employers willing to do that and make that investment, and other employers who are saying, I need to see the results of that eight-weeks education. Because this is a huge leap of faith from their normal hiring practices, but we have a track record of over – you know, 1,100 individuals who have been through this in all these different types of programs. So we really – employers rely on our track record.

And we give the guarantees. We are that intermediary. I mean, outreach, education and apprenticeship. We guarantee the result. And we are held responsible. And the reason we haven’t branched out to other industries is because the same employers keep coming back to us over and over and over again for additional sessions. We’re just about to announce two more IT sessions for Vermont Information Processing. They’ve just gotten completed. They’re only in the third month of the apprenticeship. We graduated a class of 12, they were in their third month, and they said, look, this is amazing what we’re seeing, we want two more classes in 2015, so put us down for another 20 new positions being created in Vermont.

MR. : Great. And another question would be really valuable for those from the WIA, WIO world. How long, in average, are your OJT – I think they mean OJT contracts, and what percentage reimbursement do you offer? I don’t know if Rose is still with us but I know that’s always a nuts-and-bolts question that people want to know.

MS. LUCENTI: Correct. And I am still here. And, yes, we – the OJTs and typically six months, but we do look at the individual to see what kind of other experience do they have. So it is based on the individual. And so they can be up to six months and up to 50 percent reimbursement to the employer.

MR. LADD: Great. All right, so I think we’re about to wrap up here. Thank you so much for all of your questions. Thank you to Gerry and Rose for their presentation. Just – I know it gets a lot – a lot of thinking about the opportunities that exist. And you guys have really developed an innovative model here that I hope people can look at and then think about how they might design their own unique apprenticeship programs in their local areas.

So we do want to highlight some resources that we have available for you. Again, the new release today is our quick start toolkit. You’ll see the link there. Please, we hope you find that useful. We try to make it a very user-friendly guide for walking people through the process of setting up an apprenticeship program. There’s also our main website at doleta.gov/oa.

We have a growing and thriving community of practice off the 21st century apprenticeship community of practice of Workforce3One. You’ll see the URL there. And if you’re interested in more information about the upcoming grants, there’s some information there as well. But again, I would invite you to turn and come back. Within the next couple weeks we’ll be able to put up a lot more information once that funding announcement is made public.

You’ll see our contact information for Gerry, myself and Rose. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. We’re particularly interested in your feedback on the toolkit. It will be a living document, something we will continue to refine and improve over time. But Gerry and Rose have been very gracious to provide their contact information if you have more questions about their program.

So with that, I will say thank you to everybody for participating today. Thank you, again, to Gerry and Rose for being such great presenters. I hope everybody has a wonderful afternoon. Happy Thanksgiving. And thank you very much.

(END)