**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Tips and Tools for New Project Managers**

**TAACCCT Learning Network**

**Tuesday, July 14, 2015**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Murrieta, CA*

ERIC BELLINO: So I'm going to kick things off to Cheryl Martin, who is the TAACCCT program manager at ETA. Cheryl?

CHERYL MARTIN: Hi. Thank you, and welcome to everybody. We're really delighted that you could join us. I'm guessing that some of you are the round four grantees who were with us in June and said, wait, I didn't get to come to this session earlier because I just started.

Literally some had just started days or the day before that event. And others of you are maybe new in this role for other reasons, but we're glad that all of you are here. And some of you we recognize your names, and we know that you're very experienced already.

Anyway, I just wanted to introduce our two presenters for today. Jenny Freeman is the program director for the TAACCCT Learning Network. She works with Jobs for the Future in that role. The hat underneath that hat is where she was a round one grantee herself with TAACCCT. So she's experienced with this from that perspective.

And then we have Maria Fieth from CHEO, the Pueblo Community College. She is with the Consortium for Healthcare Education Online, and that's one of our round two grants. And Maria is very experienced and has been a mentor to many people already in exactly the topic that we're talking about this morning. So we're delighted to have both of you, and it is afternoon. Sorry. We're delighted to have both of you. Looking forward to hearing what you have to say.

JENNIFER FREEMAN: Thank you, Cheryl. Hi, everyone. This is Jennifer Freeman. I'll start things off, and first wanted to just say quickly that I am with Jobs for the Future the contract that we're managing is we've named the TAACCCT Learning Network, which is a whole – it's a network of all of you and a whole host of providers that we're working with to provide technical assistance to TAACCCT grantees. We're doing that on – in partnership with the Department of Labor and with a number of organizations that you see here on this slide.

Today we're going to be walking through a number of critical elements to your success. We're going to start out with kind of some of the kind of checklists of the basic things that, if you are still very new to your jobs, you'll need to make sure you're paying attention to. And it's just a good reminder for the rest of you to kind of – to – some things that you all should be making sure to be keeping an eye on.

And then we're going to be going through some specific things that come up that are really prominent that we thought warranted some further discussion, some things around work plans data and reporting, around communications and around stakeholder engagement.

And throughout all of this we're going to be offering you some tools to be drawing on. I'll be drawing on some examples from my experience working in Massachusetts on round one, as Cheryl said, and Maria Fieth will be drawing on a lot of experience and examples from CHEO.

So that is what we're going to be doing, and also we are going to be pausing at certain points to be asking – pause to ask questions of you at certain points. And feel free to throw any questions into the chat box as you would like to along the way.

First, we wanted to see – before we get started, wanted to get a sense of who you are. So if you want to – first of all, if you haven't done this yet, let us know if you're from a single college or a consortium. It looked like most of you are with a consortium. And then secondly, if you could let us know what experience – TAACCCT experience you've had, that would also be very helpful. So this is great. So I'm seeing well over 80 percent of you – oops. Dropping a little bit. Around 80 percent of you are managing a TAACCCT grant for the first time.

So that's great. We hope that this is helpful to you and are – and we also hope that for those of you who have experience, hopefully you'll be reminded of some things or if you have any additional suggestions to share, feel free to throw those in the chat box too to share them with your peers.

OK. So Eric, why don't we go back to the PowerPoint, and let's get started for some of the things we really wanted to make sure you were thinking about? So the first thing really is that, if you haven't realized it already, TAACCCT is extremely complex and – which is really what's wonderful about it but also what makes it challenging. One thing that I find really noteworthy about it, it's important to pay attention to is the fact that there are multiple goals going on.

You're really kind of trying to impact multiple realms, and as new project managers what you need to know is that that's not always going to be apparent to the people who are in your staff or to the people across the college, faculty, and other staff in different departments that you're working on. People get focused in one area or another, and it's really your job to kind of keep them focused on the whole picture.

So what I mean by multiple goals is on this slide. Obviously on the one hand you have specific participants you're enrolling. You have student, and you are paying attention to their completion and their job attainment. And those participant outcomes obviously are extremely important, and you have to set up systems to track that. But in addition, you have a whole set of program deliverables. You have really been tasked with building new or redesigned education and training programs that are aligning with industry in new ways.

You're developing new delivery models. You're developing new models for career coaching or student support of what have you, and all of that is equally important. And both of these things will be – there will be people that you work with who will be focused in one place or the other, and you'll always need to make sure that they're kind of looking the other direction.

People, for example, who are focused on redesign of programs will not be paying attention to the fact or mindful of the fact that you also have to get these programs up and running soon so you can start enrolling participants because you have enrollment goals. So we'll get to the kinds of reporting you can do to make people aware of all of these competing goals, but it's something that we really wanted to point out.

And then lastly, all of this is leading ultimately and hopefully to a structural and systemic change within your colleges and in the ways that your colleges relate to their partners, to their employers, to workforce system partners.

And that kind of structural change really comes about by thinking through sustainability early on. How are the program designs and new things that you're doing in these programs going to be applied to programs across the college? What's really going to be the impact of this that lasts well beyond the grant? And that's very exciting.

It's a very exciting thing to think about. It's exciting challenge to put before your grant teams, and so we really wanted to make a point of that now because, without paying attention to it now, it's hard to get there later. Got to pay attention to it first.

OK. So these are the elements of success that I was talking about. These are – we're not going to go through these one by one. It's a dense document, we realize, for a PowerPoint slide, but it is all the – as we thought about all those elements that you really need to be getting started on from the beginning, these are those. This is also – you can use this as a checklist. It actually is a checklist on Workforce3One. And so it's really just here for your reference and – but we are going to go through some major components of this – of these elements of success for you today.

So the first major component has to do with data and reporting, and I'm going to turn it over to Maria Fieth who's going to start giving you some perspective on that. Maria, you want to take it away?

MARIA FIETH: You bet. Thank you, Jenny. I appreciate that. And thank you to Cheryl and the DOL TAACCCT team for including us. We're honored to be here today. CHEO is a round two project compromised – I'm sorry – comprised of eight colleges across five states, and our focus is healthcare. The lead, Pueblo Community College, and two of the sister colleges are located in Colorado, and we're partnered with colleges in Wyoming, South Dakota, Alaska, and two in Montana.

So let's go forward, Jenny, if you can, and let's talk a little bit about wage data collection. And if you would take a look at this next poll, Jenny, next slide. So we want to take a moment to check in on your status regarding wage data agreements at the state level. This can be kind of a sticking point for projects, and so here's the question.

We'd like to know if you have a wage data agreement in place with your state or your states, if you're a multi-state consortium. Mark your answer in the poll, and let's take a look at who's here in the room.

MS. FREEMAN: And I think, Maria, given the number of people who said that they're really brand new, maybe it would be worth just explaining briefly what we mean in case there are people out there who don't know this phrase.

MS. FIETH: Sure. So each state holds the key to wage data, and some – each state handles it a little bit differently. And even though the wage data really is federal information, federal data, the states have that controlling oversight. And so it behooves us as project directors to know early on what the agreement is at the state level, and if there are obstacles, what can we do to overcome those pretty early in your project?

MS. FREEMAN: And what people try to do in the rounds that proceeded you is to make sure to set up these agreements so that you can get information on the job placements of your students because without these wage record data agreements, it just is much more difficult. Then you need to verify it through student reports and some other ways that we'll get into in more detail in other webinars. So this is really kind of the premier way to go about doing this.

For those of you who have said no, I would say let us – this is an area where we really want to provide some technical assistance, if at all possible. It can be challenging too. In some states it has been a challenge to have the unemployment insurance agency that holds this data to – willing to share it.

But anyway, we can put you in touch – there are ways that we can help. There's ways that we can talk to your FPO who may be able to help you and ways we can put you in touch with other grantees who have been able to be successful with that too. If you want to put in the – if you actually would like some help with this particular thing, if you are having trouble, why don't you put that in your – in the main chat box and we can send some e-mail information out later, those 25 percent of you who have not done this?

So OK. So –

MS. FIETH: Or, Jenny, would you rather have them send an e-mail to TAACCCT so that then you've got it that way?

MS. FREEMAN: Yeah. Either way. That would be fine to. So TAACCCT@dol.gov is the main TAACCCT website that you can always send any question to. And if you have some trouble with wage record matching, if you – if this has not been your focus or something that you're aware of yet and if you go back to your staff and find out that there is – there have been challenges in trying to connect, then definitely send an e-mail to that. Or, like I said, you can put it in the chat box, and we'll make note of that also.

All right. So that's good to get a sense of where folks are. And so, Maria, where –

MS. FIETH: Sure.

MS. FREEMAN: Where are we now?

MS. FIETH: So we know that data can get convoluted super quick. So it's really important that you frontload the discussions, and we use project dictionaries, making sure agreements are in place not only at the state level but between colleges. Data sharing – so I run a multi-state consortium, and sharing data across state lines creates another set of challenges that knowing up front how to address those will save you a lot of headache and time later on.

Make sure too that everybody involved in the project has a comprehensive understanding of the performance expectations. The definitions seem pretty simplistic on the surface, but it's – some of them may not be understood in the same way by everyone. And so that conversation should be going on super early. And since some of us have run into this state wage data issue, remember too that, although that can be a problem, it cannot impede progress.

So there are times when you have to get creative and think about the other options that you have, and we are having to triangulate data. And we use – we do that using exit surveys, third-party evaluator data, and our case management files. So being able to cross-reference those data points and extract the data that we need, it's not as – it may not be necessarily as strong as the wage data, and we worry about that because it's not coming from the same sources.

However, if you cannot get it from the state, you're going to have to get it from someplace else. So you've got to put that plan in place. And as Jenny said, a lot of you are representing round four projects, and the TAACCCT projects that came before you have probably done a lot of work around this with the state, and you may or may not be aware of it at this point. So those of you that said no, it would be worth your time to go back to the folks who ran the other rounds and ask what worked for them and start from there.

Remember too that it's always a good idea to work backwards. So thinking about the APR 91-60 report that will due in November and the quarterlies, you build your data tools from there, and then you'll have all the information you need when it comes time to do your reporting. Next slide.

MS. FREEMAN: So one thing that, if you are managing consortia, to be aware of is that, as Maria said, if you're working backward from the data that will be expected in your quarterly and annual reports, that will control how the data collection system should be put together.

If you're leading a consortium, it is also important that you make sure that your colleges put together work plans that align with your consortium scope of work and that you also put together a reporting system for the colleges in your consortium that mirror what you are then going to be submitting to the Department of Labor in quarterly and annual reports because that will allow you a way to sort of easily aggregate what's going on across your consortium and report it up to Department of Labor.

MS. FIETH: So it looks like there's a question in the chat about university records being sufficient proof of enrollment and completion. The difference here is that we're looking for wage data. How much are they earning? When did they go to work, etcetera? And so university records, unless they're asking those specific questions, you may not have those. The exit surveys, they may not be asking those specific questions.

So that's something to really pay attention to. There's so many moving parts in these projects, and effective communication requires that we are responsive to this wide audience in ways that are specifically suited for all these different populations. It is not always easy to know those up front either and so we're looking at communicating with DOL, college presidents, faculty, community and all of these stakeholders have varying interests. So in order to meet those needs we've had to build a collection of communication tools and deploy those, remembering that one size just doesn't fit all, and that's just the nature of the beast. Next slide, Jenny.

And so – go ahead.

MS. FREEMAN: OK. Sorry.

MS. FIETH: So the same holds true for the single grants and – single-site grants. Thinking about – since many of you are consortium leads, think about it in this way. Although you are overseeing a collection of colleges working toward an end, each college is its own site and as such needs to be able to use the tool that you're developing in ways that are best for their particular populations.

So we make sure that communication tools are customizable. Considering the geographical span between the CHEO colleges – we counted it up one day, and I think the count was 3750 miles between the two furthest distant colleges. So that's – that can create some pretty tough communication issues. But making sure that we're responsive to the needs of not only the group but to the individual college has made a significant difference in our being able to work together as tightly as we have.

If something is not working, we flat out put ego aside and we name that concern and we start making adjustments, whether it's to the communication tool or the timing or the pacing. Whatever the issue is, we're not married to the process. What we have ownership in is the end result. And so it's proven to be a strong approach for us in meeting those complex communication needs, and the result is increased performance for us.

MS. FREEMAN: And one thing that we wanted to point out before going on to some of the other communication tools is that these kinds – this is sort of a simple version. The bar charts that we have here are a just sort of one tool that you might be able to put together. Something like this, as simple as this is a very, very useful tool to make everyone in your college aware.

And if you're a consortium, going back to that slide, anyone in your consortium aware of where their college stands in relation to the consortium and also you could have another bar here in relation to the consortium's goals. And Maria and I both discussed that using these tools not only with the staff who are involved in those charts on the ground level but even with the leadership, with the presidents is extremely important and useful and makes sure that everyone pays attention to how the grant is going and that you get the kind of necessary support from leadership to overcome roadblocks as you encounter them.

Maria, I see that someone is asking a question about wage documents. Let's – we are going to pause after this whole – after our next collection of slides here related to – after we finish our slides here related to data collection. Then let's take that up and then we can also talk about the LinkedIn question that someone has.

Maria, do you want to talk this through?

MS. FIETH: Sure. Yeah. So this is the CHEO project dashboard, and it's taken from a piece done by Campbell & Campbell. It's entitled one page project manager, and they've got a downloadable file that you can use. We actually rebuilt it in an Excel file, and we add or delete the items as the project evolves and dictates. And the colors – let's see if I can figure out how to do this.

The colors in the center section of the dashboard serve as an at-a-glance look at performance. Or if the reader is interested in more detail, you can come over to the major tasks and things are listed by specific steps that are needed to take place.

In the very left column of this particular tool primary and secondary owners are listed, A being the primary and B being the secondary owner. And that really helps put accountability front and center. These are the people that report specifically on these particular items, the major tasks and the risks, and they are the ones that are held accountable for that as well. So my philosophy around project management is I don't want any surprises, and this helps me to get us there.

So the fiscal data, current fiscal data is also displayed on our particular piece, and we break it down by budget line item as well as by expenditure versus time.

And both issues are critical and everybody needs to be aware of exactly where they are at any given time and folks need to be able to message this to other stakeholders. Not all stakeholders are going to have that fiscal inclination. They may not be numbers people. So we had to find ways in which we can message the fiscal information as well as the program information quickly and easily because they just don't have time to be able to learn a new tool.

This dashboard is organic, and so it's going to change as the project changes. And I use it consistently with the team and the project leads at the colleges. So I have one for the overall college, and we have customized forms for the colleges at their request. So if they find this to be helpful for their site level projects, we build that for them. OK, Jenny.

MS. FREEMAN: OK. All right. So, Eric, I guess we need help getting rid of this, and OK. There we go.

All right. So a couple other things on tracking now with spending, and then we can take up some of the questions. As you can see, Maria likes pie charts, and I like bar charts. So I'm going to talk about how this bar chart was used. So with regard to expenditures that Maria was just talking about, I just want to underscore it's extremely important to be making sure that everyone is keeping an eye on spending and that spending is also – that the leadership is also made aware of how spending is going.

And you can use a pie chart like the one Maria showed or a chart of this kind, any way that you can visually show the people in your consortium or in your individual college where things stand because what you – just to use an example, in the consortium I was leading it was really becoming apparent halfway through the grant – we were perhaps halfway through the grant but only a third had been spent or a quarter had been spent or at certain colleges spending was way down.

And so we provided this kind of a snapshot to the presidents at each of those colleges and to the fiscal leads and made them aware that they – it was critical that they spend because otherwise – just to make them aware that worst case scenario they would be giving some money back, which of course no one wants to do.

And it also had them then going back to their campus to determine why it was that spending was not – had not occurred. In some cases it's something as simple as the equipment is being purchased next month, and once it is then all that money that is sitting there looking like it hasn't been spent is going to go down. So that's an easy explanation.

In other cases it might be a situation like the project manager is having a hard time getting approval from the budget manager because I think as Maria – as I heard Maria say once, colleges tend to be conservative places. And the budget manager you may be working with are not always necessarily – are not necessarily completely familiar with TAACCCT fiscal rules and with allowable expenses. And so you need to be paying attention to the – how spending is going.

And if you're getting people saying, well, they can't spend their money because the budget manager isn't allowing it for some reason, that doesn't – that does – that sounds like they're not well informed about TAACCCT rules. And it's important that you bring that to the leadership's attention so that that roadblock can be overcome.

And this is just a slide we put together because we know that you're not all from consortia. You're all sometimes single site, but it's – you are in the same situation. It's important that people across your college are paying attention to spending the dollars.

MS. FIETH: So let me just add one more thing, Jenny –

MS. FREEMAN: Sure.

MS. FIETH: – before you go on, if that's OK.

MS. FREEMAN: Yeah.

MS. FIETH: We've developed an invoice reporting that shows budgeted versus actual current spending as well as overall spending. And my fiscal team is finding that that really clearly lays out where people are currently and overall and what is the target, and it helps keep it right in the line of sight. They built an Excel spreadsheet for that, and they transfer the data to the pie charts for the dashboard so that that's a quick and easy visual for those non-fiscally oriented folks. I just want to say that the key to this messaging is that it has to be quick and it has to be accurate and timely.

And you need to be able to deliver it to the right people at the right time in the right way, and that can be a trick. So thinking about those different kinds of learning styles and the ability to absorb information and providing the opportunity avenue to absorb information in a way that's best for them, that I think is big.

MS. FREEMAN: Maria, why don't we pause for a second before we talk about our communication – other communication methods and address this question about acceptable documentation? And then there was also the question that Rieve Esti (ph) has about enrollment.

Rieve, I see what you're saying about the enrollment. Yes. Enrollments and completions are typically tracked by your college, and so getting data from them is oftentime – is the way people – what people do in order to submit their reports to Department of Labor. The issue really is around job placement and wage records. Those are things that are not typically tracked by colleges, and it's incumbent on us as TAACCCT managers to figure out a way to be able to verify that. And that's where the wage record data comes in.

But someone here had a question about what else are allowable forms of documentation, if wage record data is not available? And I want to say that, Maria, you may know specifically. Cheryl, maybe you want to jump in, but I think what we are going to do is just double check this question with folks at Department of Labor and get a follow-up answer back out to you folks because, yes, state records, employer verification, and pay stubs are all acceptable documentation.

But, Maria, I don't know if you have been told that others are or if, Cheryl, you are able to offer a clarification on that or if that's something we should get out to people later.

MS. FIETH: Well, my FPO guided me in the idea that we may have to go to other forms of data collection, for example, the case management notes. And the preference is the state level wage data, but there are times when it just doesn't work. And, Cheryl, maybe you can elaborate.

MS. MARTIN: Well, yes. And that's true and that's unfortunate. So when that doesn't happen, then it's like you've been saying. You have to find other – when you cannot get access to the state wage records. And I actually think it's a great idea to go back and talk to people who have had earlier grants from your state and see what they did because why reinvent that wheel; right?

And there's also some things that are in the process of shifting and changing around state wage records with WIOA, that legislation, although I don't think that will be fast enough for you for what you need right now. But if you can't get it that way, then, like folks have been saying, talk to your FPO. Put in a question to the TAACCCT mailbox, and any time you send – I would be remiss if I didn't say any time you send a question to the TAACCCT mailbox, please copy your FPO, and we can see if we can help you specifically.

MS. FREEMAN: And Cheryl, I'm seeing a couple other questions related to the same topic. Are you able to respond to them or should we move on and just suggest that people send those questions to the TAACCCT mailbox?

MS. MARTIN: I think we should send them to the mailbox.

MS. FREEMAN: OK. OK. All right. And the budgeting questions also, this is something that we're not going to get into in detail on this call. There is a financial webinar actually coming up, though, with Maggie Yule who some of you probably saw on the round – at the round four convening.

So she's going to be doing an upcoming webinar, and also at the end of this webinar we'll be able to show you some resources that will get you to some links on Workforce3One to get you to some written information about all this. It goes into all of this in more detail and also that shows you ways to connect with other project managers because someone else is asking about connecting with each other on LinkedIn.

So anyway – so let's – so returning now to the issue of communications across a consortium, there are a variety of methods that Maria was going to share with us. Should we turn to those, Maria?

MS. FIETH: Yeah. That's great. Anthony asked whether or not I use the dashboard – display them publicly for the partner colleges or privately. Those dashboards, the project dashboard I share with all of the colleges. The ones that we customize for them, that's their tool. If they choose to share it, then that's up to them. I hope that's helpful.

So we're incorporating performance benchmark dashboards in the – that are similar to the graphs that you've seen Jenny use, and my data analyst formally updates one of them for the project and one for each college three times annually using validated data. In fact, he's working on that right now for a pool. I have a communication matrix that indicates where the varying conversations are taking place and when so that if attrition occurs – and attrition can cause a problem – this tool can help people know when to beware and how to access information and from whom.

It starts to get pretty complicated pretty quickly, and so I've found that this was helpful for us. My team and I also publish a monthly executive summary that is shared with DOL, senior staff at all the colleges, faculty, community, and project contractors. The quarterly newsletter includes lots of on-site photos and other visuals that help tell the story of the project's evolution, and people seem to enjoy that. It's real what's happening right now, and we distribute those newsletters widely.

If a college's performance – and I just want to speak to this briefly.

MS. FREEMAN: Sure.

MS. FIETH: If a college's performance is behind the power curve for whatever reason, I work with them directly to mitigate and problem solve. And we approach each risk with the assumption that people are working hard to get these jobs done. These are complicated projects, as Jenny mentioned earlier. The colleges may just need additional support, but if the issue is greater than that, then we work through it together.

And I know some may choose to use that proverbial hammer when it comes to project management, and undoubtedly there are times for mandates and for deadlines. But I find that these colleges hammer themselves enough in their pursuit for excellence, and I personally have more success incorporating a collective impact approach from start to finish. We as a consortium agree that failure is not an option but we're a team and we're in this together and that's the message that they receive from me consistently.

MS. FREEMAN: Absolutely. And so I think of this as momentum building in the kinds of – we also use the kinds of communication tools that Maria was talking about. We built systems for sharing grant information through in-person and virtual events and newsletters and e-mail blasts and also a whole bunch of presentations, and etcetera.

And it is really – as Maria said, if you were building a sense of excitement around the progress that's being made, it really builds momentum, and really, if you are showing colleges what other colleges across the consortium have done or departments within your college what other departments have done with TAACCCT, it really builds a sense of momentum and everyone sort of gets enthused about what can be accomplished. And that's really the best way to propel everyone toward their goal.

The other one thing I wanted to say is that, in terms of actually getting the work done, another way to have – get sufficient buy-in from across the many departments within your college that are going to need to be involved in this and also to continue to communicate well and build that momentum, it's important to involve teams of people from throughout your college in the – both in sharing but also planning what they're going to be doing. I know that we – many – we in Massachusetts but of course many consortium put together college-wide and consortia-wide teams around a variety of topics.

Oftentimes in industry areas, all the faculty across the consortium who are working with a particular industry worked together to build – to work with industry leaders to understand what industry needs were and to build curriculum. We had faculty working groups working on (dav ed ?).

We had working groups – we had navigators from across the consortium working together with their staff counter parts with – from the – their local One-Stop career centers. So all these sort of teams and pulling people in together from across the state was really built a lot of enthusiasm and really had people kind of accomplish far more than they initially thought they could, looking at their individual college work plan.

Is there anything else, Maria, you want to say about that before we move on to another topic?

MS. FIETH: Well, I just think it's important to give yourselves permission to change your methods too. If you find that a communication method is dying, then get rid of it and do something else. We like to call it responsive communication because it's not about what works best for my end. It's about what works best on the receiver end, and those needs will change as your project evolves.

I want you to also think about using a thing called social math to help message. Social math kind of sounds like this. This consortium graduated 50 students in emergency medical services last semester, which led to 48 certifications. Now, that's data. That's important, but to people that are not directly connected to your project, it may not mean a lot to them.

However, if I said that those 48 certifications led to our being able to staff two dozen ambulances across our five states that have remote healthcare needs, now, you're talking about something that people really care about. And so give that some consideration when you're creating those messages, remembering that what's good for one may be completely unusable for somebody else, and you are probably already running into that.

Using those conversation pits like BaseCamp, online webinars, newsletters, dashboards, all that complement the face-to-face. We don't have the opportunity to meet face to face except for annually and face to face is valuable and lovely but it's expensive. And so we have to figure out a way to do it as well outside of that. And so just help people see firsthand what they're doing is working well and being able to celebrate early and often. Super important.

MS. FREEMAN: Absolutely. All right. So shifting gears, we also – we want to spend – I see that we've got 20 more minutes. We want to spend a little bit of time on stakeholder engagement and then take some questions there. And so when we talk about stakeholders, we are talking about kind of two primary categories of organization, but there are of course more. But what we especially want to be pointing to first are employers.

You all know that a big part of TAACCCT is to help community colleges better connect with industry and to really build employer engagement into your programming. Through the TAACCCT Learning Network earlier in the spring we had some really excellent webinars from looking at a particular employer engagement model and heard some employers who were involved with the national IT consortium.

Lots of different TAACCCT projects involve employers in different ways, and some of those ways are described here. But it's very, very important for you all as relatively new project managers to realize is that engaging employers early and deeply in your programs are ultimately what leads to the best job outcomes in your programs, people who are in internships with employers, employers who have been involved in developing – identifying what skill needs are and developing curriculum that fits the bill are then much more likely to want to hire your graduates when they're done with training.

So there's a lot of information on the Workforce3One website about employer engagement, and among your peers there's been a lot of great models.

Maria, is there anything else you wanted to – anything you want to jump in and say about employers?

MS. FIETH: Exactly right, Jenny. That employer engagement piece is crucial to the success of these TAACCCT projects, and without it we would be dead in the water. We created a career hub for CHEO, and you can find it at planyourhealthcareer.org. It's an active student employer and workforce engagement tool.

So our objective was to be able to create an engagement strategy for all three of those populations that would intersect. Students can post resumes and cover letters here. They build their own professional website pages, and can be linked directly to employers' HR sites. And employers can highlight occupations, the benefits of working for that particular company, post jobs or internships.

And workforce centers are able to post job fair announcements, funding, and training opportunities here too. So it's a nice little blend of being able to engage those three very different populations, and we will be sharing a direct link to a pathway site on the career hub you may find interesting. At some point stop in and wander through that site. We'd love to have your feedback and your – and just anything you'd like to share with us about what you see there.

MS. FREEMAN: I typed the address down in the main chat.

MS. FIETH: Thank you.

MS. FREEMAN: And you can grab it there.

All right. The next set of collaborators we wanted to talk about, Maria, do you want to take it away?

MS. FIETH: Yep. Yep. And while we're on the subject of workforce, it plays such a key role here with the TAACCCT. We have really seen that the TAACCCT projects allow us to build the relationships between the colleges and the workforce centers. It's a good reason for these two groups to come together. In addition to that, some states like Colorado are doing a nice job of developing sector partnerships and some super impressive work is occurring within these groups.

For example, the southern Colorado healthcare sector partnership created an educational work group within the organizational structure, and it includes stakeholders from four-year and two-year institutions, K-12, workforce, and decision makers from the healthcare industry like hospital CEOs. This group gets the opportunity to identify training and design plans to close the gaps in education in order to meet the needs of the workforce.

If you are not sure if your state is organizing sector partnerships at the time, it might be worth taking the time to talk to your state workforce representative being able to leverage the work that's gone on before this time period. So I'm hoping that you're hearing a theme, a definite theme here, leveraging your resources. So much good work has happened with these TAACCCT projects.

I'm really proud of what I've seen across the country. I'm proud of this country for the work that we've done in order to help boost the economy, and I think it's super cool that you as a round four project get to tap into the work that's already taken place. Remember too that leveraging in all areas is important, and continue to check in on that Skills Common repository regarding entrepreneurial skill building and job readiness.

And there are other recruitment and coaching tools there too. That collection is building by the day, and it is all CC BY license, which means it is ready for you to use at any time.

MS. FREEMAN: So we want to pause for a second and have a little bit of discussion around your relationships with your workforce partners because we have this – and One-Stop career centers because not only, as Maria said, can you leverage their resources, but it's also a primary agenda item for TAACCCT that colleges do better work that are aligned and work closely with their workforce system partners. And it's to the benefit of both systems that they do so.

So it sounds like – so we put up a question. "What's the status of your working relationship?" They had to, as you know, sign onto the grant and – but signing onto a grant is only step number one and doesn't necessarily mean it is actually a relationship that actually moves beyond the paper one.

So let's see. It looks like half of you have a clearly defined role. That's great. The numbers are still moving. So we'll see where it lands as you all consider – as you all respond to the poll.

One thing here is that there are a number of states that have designed actually formal memorandum of understanding or agreement with their workforce partners. I know we did in Massachusetts for the navigators who were housed in both – to work out of both the One-Stop centers and also the career centers.

I know there are a number of states that have that arrangement. There are other states who have developed MOUs to contract with their workforce system to provide career services that are over and above what's typically available in a career center. So be able – so they're providing specialized career services for the people in TAACCCT grants. That's another thing that you can do.

So OK. So it looks like a little less than half of you have a defined role, and others are not – it might be a defined role, but it's – but their engagement is limited. So I would really, really encourage you to forge ahead and build some partnerships with those career centers. It is really going to help to ensure that your students are able to access additional services. It's going to help ensure that you are able to access relationships with employers.

Eric, why don't we take this poll down and move ahead to a slide that actually lays out some of the ways that you can – or some of the ways – some of the thoughts that will help you to build that relationship.

There's also case studies on Workforce3One specifically about building a relationship with the public workforce system, and this is yet another webinar that we are pulling together for the fall, so – around the specific how-tos, how to build that relationship and will bring some particularly good examples to you. So stay tuned for that webinar too.

Do any of you – let's – I see we have 10 minutes left. So let's pause now to ask – see who has questions about this topic, stakeholder engagement, either public workforce system or employers, or any questions about any of the things that we've talked about today. And like I said, I see that a number of you had put up earlier questions about wage verification, and we will send out – we can actually send out some specific information on that and make sure that you have answers to those specific questions. It's usually easiest in writing to get those particulars out to you. And the same with the budget. We can send something out that relates to your budget question, Rajiv (ph).

Any other questions about the kind of – the sort of how tos that Maria and I have talked about or the approaches that we've described?

MS. FIETH: So, Jenny, I see a few people are typing in, but while they're coming in, if I can just direct your attention to number three on this bulleted list. That is really an important point because the relationship –

MS. FREEMAN: Oh, and you know what. They can't see number three.

MS. FIETH: Well, it's not a number three. It's just the third bullet down.

MS. FREEMAN: Oh, OK. All right. Sorry.

MS. FIETH: Explore how TAACCCT grant can support the outcomes. So here's the thing is that, if there is a win-win on both sides, then the relationship is built much more easily. And so what we've found is that the coaches have been able to – they use that relationship – they build a relationship by going to employers together.

So the workforce representative and the TAACCCT career coach will go into employers together as a team, a united kind of front, and build that circular relationship with the employer. Then everybody gets the benefit of having that strengthened relationship.

MS. FREEMAN: Jose has a good story to share here. He says that they looked at the services of the One-Stop, and they provide those services inside the campus, which includes workshops in interviewing skills and resume building for their students. And that's a great example of the kind of thing that you can access from the One-Stop.

MS. FIETH: Perfect.

MS. FREEMAN: And also they – certain of your students may be eligible for training vouchers, and if so, if you actually have all of your students become members of the career centers, they can be screened for eligibility for particular vouchers. And then that way they can use those funds to pay for your non-credit programs or to pay for – and pay for the for-credit programs, if they're not eligible for financial aid or as a wage to supplement whatever they're receiving through financial aid. So there's multiple ways that you both benefit.

Other questions or –

MS. FIETH: Kevin's asking about navigator working teams, and I'm assuming he is referring to the discussion around the career coach or navigator. I'm using that term interchangeably.

MS. FREEMAN: Yeah. Yeah. So, Kevin, here's what I'm aware of. Different consortia use – a lot of consortia use this term navigator, and they – sometimes they do use those people for employment resources, and other times they are more like student success navigators.

I know that in Massachusetts and also at a presentation that someone from Wisconsin just made at the round four convening the idea was that they originally – the thought was that they could kind of be soup-to-nuts and then they quickly realized that, while the navigators were helping people develop a career plan and support them while they're in college, they couldn't also then be the people who worked on job placement.

It was just too broad a job, and it wasn't a good use of all the resources. And so the success navigators handed off that – the role of helping someone find a job to folks out there at the local career center in the cases I'm – in the examples I'm talking about.

So it real – but different consortia have gone about organizing that role in different ways. There are – and I also – I know you asked about working teams. I'm aware of training programs that different sites have put together – Massachusetts has one. Missouri has one – training programs and then ongoing kind of working teams of navigators in the state. That's a kind of a common model. And in a second we can switch over to show you some links, and those links will go to help you find some resources around the navigator role.

MS. FIETH: So Brenda is asking about how to build relationships at the state level. And, Brenda, I have personally found that they will welcome you with open arms. We have two separate organizations here. One is entitled Colorado Workforce Development Council, and the other one is Colorado Department of Labor and Employment.

And those folks work interchangeably. They are different systems, but they work together. And they are ready to provide me with all kinds of support mechanisms. All I have to do is say, hey, I don't know how to manage this one. Do you have ideas about? And they are just right there. So I would go directly to those departments at the state level and start asking questions. Introduce yourself, and get to know them. They're fantastic.

MS. FREEMAN: Absolutely. I'm also looking back at some of the questions with – jumping around here a little bit – back to the issue of wage verification. So someone asked about self-employed participants. This is, unfortunately, one of the places where wage – the wage data that you would get with an employment system is imperfect. It does not include wages for self-employed individuals.

So TAACCCT grantees that have entrepreneurship programs have found – have had to find other ways of verifying wages. Some have asked for tax receipts from their participants. There are a variety of ways, and what I would suggest is that you discuss with your FPO an acceptable way of verifying employment for your – if you have an entrepreneurship program or if people are coming out and are self-employed. It's a good thing to discuss with your FPO, and also something that might be part of an FAQ related to wage verification that, like I said, we will point out the website – or point out the link and you can find it there and we can also send it out to the people who are on this call.

Other – let's see. Any other questions? Scrolling through to see what else we may not have gotten to. Well, let me show you a couple of the websites that I've been referring to, and if you have other questions, feel free to write them down. Oh, this is really just kind of a summary. We're not going to go through it but sort of the key tips. If you're going through this PowerPoint before, sharing with others, these are those key tips to success that we have been talking about.

These are – this is a sample of today's tools. The CHEO project dashboard is down in the file share section where – and you can download it, as is the CHEO newsletter. The – there's another sample dashboard used by MoWINs, and they actually have done a really, really nice job of on their website putting together a whole host of documents.

And so I highly recommend that you go to their website just because they've just been very, very organized in putting it all together in a way that is publicly available. Some of these – many of these tools and documents are also available on Workforce3One, but it's always useful to sort of see how another grantee does things. And so you may find something useful on that website.

And this, the Health-e Workforce, is another TAACCCT grantee and another newsletter that you might want to take a look at. Oh, and this is the planyourhealthcare.org web address that Maria spoke about earlier. This is a career planning tool. So download the PowerPoint and all these links will be live and you'll be able to track these down.

Then here are some of the other things to be aware of. The – all of the webinars and activity of the TAACCCT Learning Network can be found on a catalog, which you can link – click to here. If you go to this website, etagrantees.workforce3one.org, you will come to the community of practice page for TAACCCT. That's where the calendar is of all upcoming events, and that is where a bunch of resources are in various folders that you can search through to look for the issues that you're – the issues that we've touched on today. There are case studies. There's fact sheets. There's FAQs, a lot of things that will help you. So you should bookmark this and make a habit of going there often.

All right. Well, we have one more minute I see.

MS. FIETH: So Catherine is asking about the self-attestation, self-reporting. We didn't fully answer that question, and I think the suggestion is to submit your question to the TAACCCT mailbox and/or to ask your FPO or both. So that's probably your best bet, and I think that you'll get some good help from that.

MS. FREEMAN: Yeah. The folks at Department of Labor who specifically are – answer questions all – every day about performance reporting questions and compliance and stuff are really great and will respond to you quickly and pick up the phone and talk it through, if you need someone to talk it through with.

So, Catherine, I definitely suggest you do that. Cheryl did say earlier that it's an unfortunate reality of some programs, but it's sort of seen as a last resort. So you could also talk with your FPO about other ways that you could possibly get – verify wages beyond just self-reporting.

Let's see. Oh, and, Kate. Hi, Kate. I'm glad you came even though late. So yes. This is all being recorded. So you can go back later and listen to it. It will be in the TAACCCT Learning Network catalog I mentioned. All the recordings are linked there. They also can be searched on Workforce3One. So you can get to it both ways.

So I see that it's 5:00. Any other last words from any of you, Cheryl or Maria?

MS. MARTIN: This is Cheryl. I just want to say thanks to everybody for joining us here because this is part of what you're doing by leveraging the resources that are already available; right? We didn't have this kind of technical assistance available in the first few rounds of grants.

You can ask Jenny and Maria how that worked. They figured it out, but since you do have it available, we're really glad that you're here and using this. We just really encourage people to reach out to their colleagues and to people who have gone before.

You can be paired up with a mentor, if you want that, and if you do, you just express your desire to the TAACCCT@dol.gov mailbox. Please be sure to copy your FPO. Please be sure to copy your FPO with anything on those things.

MS. FREEMAN: Yep.

MS. MARTIN: And – but anyway, you can be set up with somebody or create your own situation like that. So it's great that you're here today. You're getting the kind of information that there's a lot more of that you can tap into through these kind of resources.

MS. FREEMAN: All right. Well, thank you. Thanks, Cheryl. And thanks, everyone, for being on the call.

(END)