**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**WIOA Implementation: Strategies for Effective State Teaming**

**Tuesday, December 15, 2015**

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GARY GONZALEZ: I'm going to turn us over to the PowerPoint now, and I want to introduce today's first speaker, Jen Troke. She is ETA division chief of youth services here at ETA's Department of Labor. Jen, take it away.

JENNIFER TROKE: Thanks, Gary, and welcome, everyone. We're so glad that you can be with us this afternoon. I'm thrilled to be here today, and one of the reasons I'm here is because we are currently gearing up for an exciting and hopefully very rich Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act national convening here in D.C. in about six weeks. So come January 26 through 28 we'll have a variety of state teams here with us in D.C., and we're very excited about that.

The theme for the conference is all about one team, one vision, and one conversation. So it fits in really nicely with the conversation we're going to have today that's really sharing best practices from a couple of states about their own state planning process. So when we come together in January for the national convening, we recognize many of you will already be quite down the path on your planning efforts. But we're excited to learn about how you've done the teaming and sort of what has that process looked like for you, and so we're really anxious and excited to hear the stories today.

On today's webinar we're going to do a few things. We'll offer some limited comments on the planning process, but this really, as I said, is about showcasing two states that are planning in very innovative ways. We're going to leave plenty of time for Q&A, and we hope you'll interact with us throughout the chat during this time.

I'm going to do a quick poll just to flip back to the national convening. How many of you are on a team and will be joining us in January at the convening? And I know there's very limited space on the teams, but we were hoping that today's event really is one more additional opportunity to get some hands on technical assistance. So can't wait. People are going to be with bells on.

MR. GONZALEZ: I want to point out if you want to participate in the poll, just mouse over and left click the radio option to the left of the selection either can't wait or unfortunately not this time.

MS. TROKE: Great. And I just want to put a plug in here. If you're not able to join this convening, it really is going to be OK. The idea for the convening is to give the teams that are made up of state and local leaders lots of tools, lots of content that they can then take back to their home state. So we're hoping that, even if you're not able to join us in person, you're going to benefit from the materials. So thank you for that poll. It looks like we're slowing down there. Great.

And then – sorry, Gary. I'm going too slow on my slides. Just to note here that we're going to have plenty of time at the end of today's session for questions and answers, and we'll also sneak peek a few of our upcoming technical assistance events.

Now, it's my pleasure to introduce our presenters on today's webinar. First we have Holly O'Brien who's the regional administrator from our Boston office. We also have Aaron Fichtner who is the deputy commissioner from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Amy Anderson joins us from AWB Institute in Washington where she is the director and also a member of the workforce training and education coordinating board; Beth Thew, who is the secretary-treasurer of the Spokane Regional labor Council and a vice president for the Washington State Labor Council; and then finally Eric Wolf, a workforce policy associate at the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

So I'm thrilled that you all can be here today. I'm really looking forward to your presentations, and now, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Holly O'Brien.

HOLLY O'BRIEN: Good afternoon or good morning, depending on where you're sitting right now. I want to thank you all for participating in today's session on strategies for effective state teams. As Jen said, we're very excited about this, and this gets us into our national convening in January. So we hope you get something out of this session as well.

We know that you all are deep into WIOA planning and development right now, but you still have lots of questions about how key elements of WIOA will get implemented. Today let's take a step back from our plans and our documents and our WIOA compliance checklists, and let's look at who we're bringing to the table during the planning and how we're incorporating the feedback to make a stronger, more aligned system.

As critical as the content is that is in your state plan, it's the process behind the content that can ultimately make or break whether your state will be successful in meeting the WIOA vision. Integration of services and partners is a foundational element of WIOA, as I'm sure you know by now.

It can only happen if you've got all the right partners at the planning table, including the customers, to which the system is aiming to better serve. We're seeing some really structured and collaborative planning and teaming in my region and across the country, and I know where this is happening, we're likely to see not only better plans but true system transformation.

Today we're excited to showcase two states that have implemented a state WIOA team approach to planning and implementation. We'll share how this was structured and what outcomes are expected from it. We'll engage in discussion about how the team approach is addressing common statewide implementation challenges. Even if your planning process is coming to a close, there are some best practices that will be shared today that you can adapt well into WIOA implementation through the whole planning process.

As we transition to Aaron and the state of New Jersey, I want you to know that they're using the implementation of WIOA as a catalyst of a creation of a broad talent development system. As deputy commissioner, Dr. Fichtner directly oversees department's program areas including workforce development, research and information, income security, labor standards and safety enforcement, and information technology.

Prior to assuming this position in January 2012, Dr. Fichtner served as the department's assistant commissioner for labor, planning, and analysis. Prior to joining the department in 2010, Dr. Fichtner was a director of research and evaluation at the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. Dr. Fichtner earned his PhD in planning and public policy at Rutgers University, his master's degree in city planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and a BA in history from Vassar College. With that, I'd like to say welcome, Aaron, and thank you for participating today.

AARON FICHTNER: Holly, thank you so much for the very kind introduction, and thank you to you and all of your colleagues at ETA and U.S. DOL for really living this idea of one team. The federal-state partnership is critical, as is the partnership within states. So thank you to all of our friends and colleagues at U.S. DOL and for putting together this terrific webinar and giving us an opportunity to talk about New Jersey.

So as Holly mentioned, we've really embraced this opportunity in New Jersey. Not every day does federal legislation get passed in the workforce arena, and we realize this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to set a strong direction for workforce development in New Jersey and really embrace the vision and the mission behind WIOA.

So a couple of key elements that I wanted to talk about in terms of our planning area – so next slide, please. We really felt that it was critical that our WIOA planning and implementation efforts were really driven by a shared vision and mission between key state departments. So we are fortunate in some ways in New Jersey in that our department, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, is responsible for all four titles of WIOA.

But we also realize that we have many critical state partners, and so for the last few years we've been working very hard to most importantly build strong relationships and partnerships with our state board, our state Employment and training commission, but also with our Department of Education, our office of secretary of higher education, and our Department of Human Services and have been working in a variety of conversations to develop and to – to develop a shared vision and a mission. And WIOA put some added pressure to continue those conversations.

We also designed a planning process that had extensive opportunities for local partner participation, knowing that the real work of implementing WIOA in many ways happens at the local workforce development board level. But we also recognize that we have a variety of other key stakeholders, community colleges, community organizations, labor unions, employers and all needed to be able to have a seat at the table to help us frame where we are going.

While we were focused certainly on the details of WIOA, we also knew that we needed to focus on a broader set of policies to make sure that WIOA implementation was aligned with our state talent development goals. And I'll talk about that throughout the presentation. So next slide.

So in December of 2014, as part of our early planning stages, we convened six different working groups focused on WIOA implementation. At the lead of our entire effort is our state Employment and training commission, our state workforce board, and the many important committees that they have already in place, including a governance committee, a performance committee, a state council on adult learning and education, a state youth vision council, and also our stat rehabilitation council, which is independent of our state employment and training commission but also a very important partner in our efforts around vocational rehabilitation services.

So the six work groups had a strong relationship with our existing standing committees of our state employment and training commission, but they were meant to be a broader opportunity to engage a significant number of stakeholders.

So we had six work groups, governance and planning, performance, career pathways, One-Stop operations, services for youth, and services for individuals with disabilities. Those work groups included staff of the variety of state departments and the state employment and training commission, representatives of local workforce development boards, key stakeholders from a variety of areas including community colleges, community organizations, others that are heavily involved.

These groups met every two weeks through the period from December to June to go through the details of WIOA to help us frame a broad vision for moving forward around talent development. And so these six working groups really were the focus of many of our discussions and our outreach efforts, but those were not the only things that we did. So next slide, please.

To be able to get more broad stakeholder engagement, we launched a WIOA website where we posted information on WIOA and other resources and solicited input from all of our stakeholders. We held a series of webinars on each of the work group topics where we were able to introduce the key provisions of WIOA and to open up for discussion to get additional feedback from all of our stakeholders participating in those webinars.

And then in March and April, March 31st and April 1st of 2015 we convened an extensive statewide conference at a community college in central New Jersey with 300 stakeholders from across the state to talk about the vision of WIOA, to talk about the vision that New Jersey was developing around a broader talent development strategy, and to get input from a variety – a wide variety of stakeholders about the direction that we were taking.

We had overview presentations from national experts about WIOA and critical trends in workforce development. We had presentations from the U.S. DOL regional office and from the Department of Health and Human Services. We had extensive breakout sessions on each of the six work group topics so participants at the session were able to participate in more than just one work group but to rotate through work group sessions.

We had a panel of national experts from a variety of national organizations including NASWA, NGA, the National Skills Coalition, NCSAVR, and we had a panel of promising employer-driven partnerships in New Jersey. We had an incredibly rich and robust discussion those two days with opportunity for feedback from stakeholders from a variety of perspectives. Next slide, please.

So all of those discussions, the hard work of the work groups, the conference all resulted in a blueprint for talent development, which was adopted by our state employment and training commission in June of this year. It has a common vision to work across all stakeholders to accelerate the pace of competitiveness in New Jersey by focusing on all that we can do to build a global talent marketplace, to build a skilled workforce to drive economic growth.

And it included a shared commitment to a new mission, which is to increase the number of residents in New Jersey that have an industry-valued credential or degree by building more high quality partnerships and integrating our investments. This is a mission that has really been developed across multiple departments and has been the cornerstone of how we're approaching WIOA implementation.

There are seven key policy frameworks in our blueprint. There's a focus on regional planning and service delivery. We have 18 workforce development boards in a fairly small state and have three regions and are really emphasizing the need to work together across regions between our workforce development boards to ensure that planning and service delivery is well-coordinated.

There is a commitment to building more employer-driven high quality partnerships, knowing that we've had some success in bringing together groups of employers with similar needs, working with stakeholders, including community colleges, educational institutions and training providers and workforce partners to build solid career pathways to jobs that we know are currently open and that employers are having a difficult time filing.

The third commitment is a commitment to a common definition for career pathways, knowing that we want to build a career pathway system that allows individuals to move up the career ladder to continue to get education and training to be able to have family-sustaining income and jobs.

The fourth is a commitment to industry-valued credentials. Very consistent with WIOA but wanting to make sure that all of our customers in the workforce development system and all New Jersians have the ability to pursue the education and training they need to get an industry-valued credential or degree that has value in the labor market.

Number five, a commitment to a locally driven One-Stop career center system, giving us the opportunity to reconsider and restructure roles and responsibilities between state and local staff but with a strong workforce development board oversight responsibility.

The sixth is the building of a career guidance network, working between libraries, community-based organizations, community colleges, and our One-Stop career centers to make sure that we're reaching as many job seekers, students, adults, youth who are making important career decisions or going through the job search process.

And the seventh commitment is to data-inform decision making a strong eligible training provider list and strong metrics to drive performance throughout all four titles of WIOA. Next slide, please.

So while the blueprint is the foundation for a number of things, the first is it's a foundation for ongoing planning and the development of our state plan, which I'll talk about in a moment. But it also has been the foundation for a series of investments that we're making in New Jersey in advance of the development of the plan and in advance of the complete implementation of all aspects of WIOA.

As I said before, a major focus in the blueprint is to develop high quality employer-driven partnerships, and so we are refocusing our sector initiative, which we call our talent networks, on building industry partnerships in seven industries that form the basis of our state's economy.

The talent networks, which are run by higher education institutions, industry associations, and non-profits selected on a competitive basis, are doing two important things for us going forward. The first is that they're going to work hand in glove with our labor market information staff to produce and disseminate intelligence about workforce trends in our key industries and help us develop a list of industry valued credentials that will drive our future investments.

But secondly, they are helping to build employer-driven high quality partnerships working closely with workforce development boards and other stakeholders throughout our state to really focus on the critical skills and credentials that we need to build the career pathways for our job seekers and students. Next slide, please.

We've also announced a number of training investments that are in line with our blueprint, including the establishment of talent development centers, which are industry-focused centers of excellence at higher education institutions that will provide incumbent worker and dislocated worker trainer focused on three of our key industries, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, transportation logistics and distribution.

We also announced grants around incumbent worker training and employer-driven training for dislocated workers very much in keeping with our focus on industry-driven, employer-driven high quality partnerships. Next slide.

So following the work of the blueprint and our early efforts to make new investments, our staff has been working between the state employment and training commission and the labor department with input from a variety of stakeholders to develop key policy statements based on all the feedback that we gathered through the development of the blueprint.

So we have drafted 16 key policy statements that we have distributed to individuals who attended a stakeholder feedback session last Thursday and Friday. We had about 100 people from a variety of all of our stakeholders come to Trenton to spend two full days with us to discuss a variety of policy statements that we have developed to help us put the meat on the bones to implement WIOA.

These policy statements focus on a stronger role for local boards, strong requirements for regional planning, the development of an industry valued credential list, a redefinition of roles in our One-Stop career centers to ensure that all partners know what is expected of them and can work closely together, guidance and provisions around the competitive selection of the One-Stop operator, a focus on employment first and career pathways for our services to individuals with disabilities, again a strong commitment to our eligible training provider list which is enshrined not only obviously in WIOA but also in a very strong and ambitious state law, and also the recommendation of new performance metrics in addition to those required by WIOA that will allow us to reinforce to our local workforce boards the importance of regional planning, high quality partnerships, and the strong role that boards play.

So we are well-positioned to submit our state plan in March but only because of a tremendous amount of hard work of our staff and our partners to have the discussions about the vision that we're headed in New Jersey around talent development but also how we're going to use the different policy levers and programmatic levers of WIOA to help us achieve that broader mission and vision.

And so in that spirit of WIOA being a real catalyst for building a high quality, high skill workforce is how we engage in this process with extensive commitments to employer stakeholder, local workforce development board engagement throughout the process. So happy to have had a chance to share at a high level the work that we're doing in New Jersey and look forward to Washington's presentation as well as some questions and comments from the audience. So thank you.

MS. O'BRIEN: Thank you, Aaron. At this point we're going to transition over to the folks in Washington State, but I do want to thank you again. And we really appreciate the adoption of the vision of WIOA that New Jersey has taken on and really focus on partnership development in your process to implement WIOA.

So for the state of Washington they have developed an intricate WIOA implementation committee structure with business and labor as the champions of each committee. Business members are actually leading the implementation of the law, and we're going to learn how this works and what they expect to see as a result of this process and structure. I would like to introduce our three presenters from Washington State.

First, we have Beth Thew who is a long-time labor member of the Washington State Education and Education Coordinating Board for the WIOA transition. Beth served as a co-chair for the Washington Pathways Committee. This committee dealt with education and career pathways through integrated service delivery models. She has been a member of her local board for 15 years. She is the secretary-treasurer of the Spokane Regional Labor Council. Beth is also a trustee for the Community College of Spokane and sits on numerous community boards and commissions.

Next, we're going to hear from Amy Anderson. Amy is AWB's director of government affairs for education, workforce development, and federal issues. She also oversees the work of the AWB Institute, AWB's research, workforce, and economic development arm. Amy holds a law degree from Gonzaga University School of Law, a graduate degree in health policy and administration from Washington State University, and a BA in philosophy from the University of Colorado and government and history from California State University in Sacramento.

And finally, we have Eric Wolf who is a workforce policy associate at the Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board where he coordinates implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Washington's career and technical education programs under the Perkins Act. Prior to joining the board, he served as policy counsel to the Washington State Senate's committee on early learning and K through 12 education and higher education. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to Beth.

BETH THEW: Good morning from the West Coast, and I want to thank you for asking Washington to be part of this webinar.

I'm just going to start off agree with New Jersey. Lots and lots of preplanning with all of our partners. Our first slide – (inaudible) – our governor gave us three charges to help people find and keep jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency. And that brings – we have always had a tri-party team in Washington State, and that brings – (inaudible) – representing the employees.

So our first customer is the employee. The second – and this is in no priority order. The second charge was to close the skill gaps for employers with focus on in-demand industry sectors and occupations. And our second customer is the employers, and the – (inaudible) – have represented the employers along with a local chamber representative and the – (inaudible) – and people from different industries. And then the last charge is to work together as a single, seamless team to make this happen.

And as all of you know, this couldn't – the two customers we serve are the employees or the job seekers and employers, but none of this could happen without the expertise of the agencies, and that's why you have three of us on the one, one agency, one business, and one labor. The agencies involved and are too many to – (inaudible) – but we had K-12, community colleges, employment security, economic development, social and health services, and those were our subject matter experts as far as how the state – (inaudible) – just to work. So the governor gave his charge to the workforce board, and, Amy, will you go to the next slide?

Thanks. And the workforce board has – (inaudible) – the workforce board took this on and began at the very, very beginning determined that we needed this to be customer-driven. So each one of our committees was co-chaired by a representative from labor and a representative from business from the steering committee down to the various other committees that you see in this slide, the – yet again, it's – if you think two heads are better than one, three heads were we think brilliant. No. Really it came out with outstanding ideas, but again, it was customer-focused. And, Amy, did you want to talk a little bit about the different committees?

AMY ANDERSON: Sure. And as you can see from the chart there and on our next couple of slides when we get to those, they'll give more descriptors of what each of the subcommittees and taskforces did – the work that they did and then any technical questions, as Beth said, we have a phenomenal staff at our state workforce board. And that's why we have Eric on the phone with us can answer a lot of those.

But just to recap a little bit, as Beth mentioned, we do have a tripartite board, state workforce board, three members of business, three members from labor, and three members from our key state agencies Association of Washington Businesses, the state's chamber of commerce. So we are representing business from across the state in several different industry sectors, and then we have two other business members just like labor has two other labor members from other areas in the state.

So if we did section out these different taskforces and subcommittees, it was really important that we keep that structure in place. So we had co-leads from business and labor, as Beth mentioned. Our other workforce board members, business workforce board members, did co-chair these different taskforces, and then the co-chair that Beth had came from one of our regional chamber of commerces in eastern Washington.

So it was really key not only at the beginning of this planning process but also as we're now getting into the community input across the state that we really engage our local chambers of commerce, economic development councils, as well as our labor councils to provide that specific impact or input into whether or not this plan that we're putting together is meeting the needs of our customers.

So again, as you see, we have that steering committee that was really looking at what all of the work that was being done from the other three subcommittees, the education career pathways, local governance/sector strategies, and accountability and eligible training provider list. If we go to the next slide – and I'm not going to go through each of these. This is something you can take a look at. There were short-term and long-term goals.

Again, we relied on our state workforce board staff to go through the implementation process and put together a timeframe for it so that we actually were able to look at what is it that we need to do in this timeframe? What is it that we need to do in the long term, and then coordinating that between the four subcommittees as well as up into the state workforce board.

So everything that was discussed or suggested at the subcommittee level or the taskforce committee level was then put up to the steering committee, which was then passed to the state workforce board with the intent that we would put this plan in place as a suggestion to the governor's office, which the governor's office has been involved throughout the entire process as well.

One of the key pieces to the process that we put in place was that the state workforce board is the policy board, the policy convener for a policy advisor to the state legislature and the governor's office. So that's why we have, again, that structure in place. Keeping that together has been key to the implementation.

Let's see. Going on to this next slide, again, task force charges under One-Stop certification, professional development, unified/combined plan. So I do see one question saying, "What is happening with regard to regional planning versus local area planning?" That's something that, as we got into that in the state of Washington, the way our structure works, in addition to our state workforce board, is we have 12 workforce development councils across the state.

Each of those areas are – depending on the population size or the geographic size, we have put into place those regions. The discussion was had should we be doing regional planning based on those 12 regions, or should we put each of those regions into larger regions so that we have fewer regions to do actual regional planning? We did have several proposed plans. For example, we had one plan that said we should have six regions that combine some of our six workforce development regions for purposes of regional planning only.

That did not mean we were going to do away with some of our current regions. What it meant was that we were asking those regions, because of shared commuter – for commuter patterns. So basically, regions that were sharing the workforce, we were asking them to do regional planning. And then if you have a geography of state of Washington at all, a primary example was our Puget Sound region. So you have the Seattle region from north of Seattle to south of Seattle where they are sharing a workforce. So we're asking them to do regional planning in one of the suggestions.

We also have border communities. So in the southwest of Washington where Vancouver, Washington where 45 percent of the population actually commutes across the river to the state or Oregon to work. And then in eastern Washington in Spokane, where Beth is, you actually are sharing a workforce with the state of Idaho. So having regional collaboration, regional planning with other states made sense as well.

And while this does go on currently, the decision was made that we would submit our plan with the original 12 workforce development councils as our regions, with the intent that regional planning has gone on already with partners as well as with other workforce development areas, whether it's within the state or in other states, that the intent was that that type of regional planning would continue going forward.

So as we also looked at our regional plan, obviously looking at the combined plans and the taskforce did decide that we would pursue a combined WIOA plan within the state of Washington with the intent that after two years each of the partners would assess whether that participation would have been a benefit. So going back to the combined plan as well as the regionalization, Beth, did you have some comments on that?

MS. THEW: Yes. Thank you, Amy. Yeah. The one thing about the regionalization and the local input, I think, again, as Amy said, knowingly the makeup and how big the state is compared to a New Jersey or some just geographically, when we developed the original structure, we had people on all the committees from all over the state. As she mentioned, many of them – our state capital is on the west side. The committee I was co-chair with was from far eastern Washington.

So that helped at the very beginning, and on the regionalization and the local plan what we have done is have that regionalization part of their ongoing strategic plan so that it is more of an organic regionalization rather than a mandated regionalization.

MS. ANDERSON: Great. Thank you. Looking through this, we've gone through and each of the taskforces and subcommittee has completed their work. At our state workforce board retreat this fall we looked at, OK. What were the key strategic priorities that we have for WIOA?

And as you can see, integrated and streamlined customer service, what that meant was we want to see if we can, just at the very basic level – how can we make sure that if we have somebody who's receiving services from department for social and health services but they also want to take classes at our state community colleges, how can we make sure that the services that they're receiving from both of those state agencies are better aligned with each other so that they're not bouncing around and that they can receive their services in a more timely, more effective, and efficient manner?

Strengthened business engagement, as we talked about – again, as I mentioned, we're the state's chamber of commerce, which is something that has been a huge benefit to business and having the labor council sit on the state workforce board as well as at the local level. Making sure that the businesses are engaged through these organizations so that we do have that customer input, how are the services being shot to or portrayed to, made sure that they are aware – that our businesses are aware and our employers and employees are aware that these services are available to them.

Accessible, technologically savvy systems, really making sure that, particularly if we have folks who have challenges with technology, that we are able to provide the services to them. On a back note to that as well, one of the things that we're working on is how do we better collect data to make sure in going into that next generation performance accountability – how do we make sure that we are collecting the data that is up to date, timely so that we are providing the services that are needed, that we're providing the training that is needed so that we make sure that the jobs that our folks are being trained for are often available to them when they are finished with their training. Anything to add to that, Beth?

MS. THEW: Thank you. Yeah. Accessibility and using technology, some of our agency partners mentioned the fact that many people that have physical challenges have implemented their own way of dealing with whether it be using Wi-Fi at our One-Stops or whatever. So they brought a really rich transition of using technology for the entire population to the table, and that's part of the technology savvy – (inaudible) – that we've started to try and implement across the state.

MS. ANDERSON: Great. So we'll wrap this up here so that we can get to – don't want to take too much of our time. So as you can see here, this has been our timeline. We do – we are on track to submit our plan to the Department of Labor in March. We have had our – January we'll finalize our operational plan, present it then to the state legislature and to the governor again to move that on to Department of Labor.

If you take a look at our public forums – and Eric can talk to this maybe a little bit as he participated in these – we had a very rich discussion across the state making sure that we did include folks from every geographic region. And that's the thing. We have a nice big mountain range down the middle of the state that tends to separate the state on a lot of matters.

So making sure that we did receive that input from across the state was key, and really we had some good feedback which told us we were on track, that what we are putting in place hopefully will be benefiting our customers. So I'll go ahead and give that to Eric, if you have any questions on how that input process came into play.

ERIC WOLF: Sure. Good morning, everybody. My name is Eric Wolf. I'm a workforce policy associate with the state board in Washington. I think the public forums are incredibly valuable for us in Washington because we're so naturally regionalized by our geography. So it was a great opportunity to get away from our state capital, get out into the community, run by the strategy that we were working on in – (inaudible) – with the people on the ground and get some feedback.

That really informed the development and ultimately the drafting of our plan. It was also a great opportunity to form one-on-one partnerships with our local area boards, and we worked really intensely with the local boards in each one of the different areas across the state to put on these forums, really relied on them to drive turnout. We ended up having well over 500 attendees across the state at these eight public forums, ranging from anywhere from 40 people at a forum to well over 150.

We took the feedback that we got on the strategies that we were putting forward in the state plan from the participants at those public forums, and that really did inform the second draft of our plan. We were also able to take a lot of the success stories and also opportunities for new things to work on in the context of this plan from those forums and use them to highlight things throughout our plan that we can work on and set new goals for in the future.

It was a great way of getting out into the community, especially working with the local area boards in partnership and just making sure that what we were developing in the state capital was responsive to the people and the facts on the ground.

MS. ANDERSON: Great. Thanks, Eric. All right. I think we're at Q&A period.

MS. O'BRIEN: OK. I want to thank Beth, Amy, and Eric. It's obvious that one key component for effective state teaming is a development of strong and inclusionary partnerships. So in order to really move WIOA forward, we hope states and locals are listening to that and take some of these learnings from both New Jersey and Washington State and apply them as you move forward.

So with that I'm going to turn it back over to Jen so we can address some of the questions that have come up. Jen?

MS. TROKE: Yes. Thank you so much. Very excellent presentations, New Jersey and Washington. So, Washington, it looks like we have a couple of questions for you guys. One of the first ones is, "If the community college programs and the programs in other core partners are aligned, does this mean the partners go to where the customer is, or how do you avoid that?"

MS. ANDERSON: So in the state of Washington we have our One-Stop centers that do serve our folks who are receiving services through our statewide workforce system. So we definitely hope to have access through those. Right now, we have a couple of different agencies that do have representation within those centers. We also have a couple of models where we have representatives at our state community and technical colleges that can help align those services.

So yes. The intent is to be able to better align those services, whether it's having a representative within an institution that somebody is at or just through our advanced technology, as we were talking about, that they're able to access if they are at one agency or one location where an agency is helping them. But the technology allows those services to be better aligned through that aspect as well.

MS. TROKE: Oh, that's great. And that fits in with another question that came in asking, "Could you elaborate on the use of technology for the communication with the customers?"

MS. ANDERSON: Sure. Beth, are you back on?

MS. THEW: Yes. I am. Thank you. We had the Department of the Blind and the Disabilities Administration help us with – in the whole planning process in the use of technology for access. So do you want to elaborate on that, Eric?

MR. WOLF: Yeah. Well, in terms of using technology to connect the people not only those with accessibility issues but we see that WIOA really does present a great opportunity either right before it's on the horizon to do some virtual service delivery.

And to that end, I'll highlight for people rural populations of Washington State, there are some people in Washington State that are living a few hours' drive away from the nearest One-Stop center, sometimes well over 100 miles away. So we think our technology in the future really could be a powerful way to deliver education training directly to those folks. We started a conversation with our state library system in Washington about creating remote connection sites statewide, and our state libraries have a much closer location for people to visit.

Technology, we've also recognized that we want to have universal secure wireless internet access at all of our One-Stop locations, public areas for a variety of reasons. But one main reason that we explored is because it does allow people who use accessibility devices that they're already used to, well-attuned to, have set to their own preferences, they can bring them into the center, and so long as they can connect to the internet there, we can digitize our training materials in an accessible format so that they can access it on their device on their terms.

Some of our One-Stops are already beginning to pilot what we're calling a paperless One-Stop experience, which is going to help facilitate that and is a great example of how we think technology could really improve service for individuals with barriers and really anybody who comes into the system.

MS. THEW: Great. This is Beth again. The only thing I would add that came out of this entire discussion was a long-term development is there's not just physical challenges but there's also cognitive disabilities and so many other challenges that people have that we have developed a ongoing committee just to address those issues. So it's not just physical, and technology doesn't answer all the questions. So to try and address all aspects of different challenges our clients – (inaudible).

MS. TROKE: That's awesome. And then it looks like we've gotten another question around technology that I'll pitch out to you guys around, "How are you funding integration of technology across the talent development system?" And that's a big question. I don't know who wants to tackle that one.

MS. THEW: Well, I think it's – in Washington we have – it's made a priority within budgets basically is how it's being funded. I know, Eric, maybe you could speak to this. I know employment security has made that a priority. Some of our workforce development councils have made that a priority. Eric, were there others that have built into that?

MR. WOLF: Well, I think that's right. The one thing that we've really loved about WIOA is that WIOA did recognize the fact that this is the first time that these laws have been picked up and renewed since the new millennium. And WIOA really does present an opportunity for us to make technology a really powerful tool to improve service for all and also to remove some barriers in the system.

So it's been actually a really good communication tool for us to go to our legislature with too which begun the discussion about budgets because we've been able to say, hey, we do want to have – we want to take a great step forward in the way we use technology throughout our system. And people have been really receptive to that message.

And then Amy did highlight in particular our state's labor department and the employment security department for some time now has been well underway in redesigning their whole internet portal for labor exchange and education training programs. So we're excited about that, and WIOA has really been an excellent opportunity to get the entire system behind that effort and make sure that that portal is going to be a good access portal for the entire system.

MS. TROKE: That's great. Thank you, Washington. And, New Jersey, do you want to weigh in on the technology piece from your perspective?

AARON FICHTNER: Sure. I mean, I would agree with what was said in Washington. Technology is critically important to all that we're trying to accomplish, particularly as we all try to reach so many more job seekers, students, and others who are trying to make critical career decisions or search for jobs.

And so we really see technology as being a state responsibility because we believe that only we here at the state level have the combined resources to be able to make the investments in the online tools, the case management system, those types of things.

And so we have embarked, largely because of WIOA, on a very ambitious effort to build a unified approach to career counseling with a common website web tools that will then be used by our libraries, by our community colleges, by our One-Stops, and by our community and faith-based partners to be able to provide a unified approach to career counseling. So technology is very critical to our efforts, and we believe the state has a very unique and important role to play in funding and in developing the new systems and approaches.

MS. TROKE: Excellent. Thank you. And keep the questions coming in. They're really, really good. We have a couple of questions that have come in around partnerships, one around your work with Development Disabilities Administration and then another around working with Indian and Native American programs. So let me flip to Washington to talk about those two areas.

MS. ANDERSON: Well, we did have – we had the Department of Services for the Blind, Department of Social Health Services. We did have our folks from the disability partners who served on some of our subcommittees, our taskforces. They were at all of our steering committee meetings, and they are represented on our state workforce board in a non-voting capacity. So they were definitely – and as Beth mentioned with the technology piece, we definitely have a lot of input for – from that population. And, Eric, you mentioned something about our tribal partners.

MR. GONZALEZ: Eric, you might be muted.

MS. THEW: Well, this is Beth. We had input from our tribal partners, but the mechanism in that and – I would have to defer to Eric, wherever he went.

MR. WOLF: I'm here. Sorry. We have been engaging some of the tribes in Washington State. Washington is home to 28 different tribes. So it's definitely been a priority for us to get out and engage the tribal populations. We've been working with our state's Department of Social and Human Services. They had an Indian policy advisory committee that we've been presenting our WIOA work to periodically and been getting feedback from them.

They've been very receptive. We're also looking forward to organizing some forums in the spring hopefully in some of the tribal communities of Washington to keep the conversation going with them. We've also been encouraging our local area board partners to ensure that they engage the tribal communities in their area, particularly in the context of doing burial removal work and accessibility work in the system.

MS. TROKE: Great. Thank you so much. I want to pitch a question out to both of you just around how will you now move from the planning into implementation? And let me hand that one off to Aaron first.

DR. FICHTNER: So we have already, as I said in my presentation, begun implementation efforts around making a variety of state investments to support what we think is the next level of infrastructure, for want of a better word, around partnership development with our sector strategies with some of our training investments. So we have always believed that planning and implementation needed to go hand in hand and made the commitment to make some state investments before the plan was developed so that we had that momentum going forward.

MS. TROKE: That's great. Washington?

MS. THEW: Well, as we mentioned, we do have a triparty organization, and as Amy mentioned, we are an advisory group to legislature and the governor.

And it doesn't matter which side of the aisle you're on. When business and labor come together to try and implement something, whether it be funding or whatever and you have business and labor standing in front of you, politically speaking, on the same page, that helps with the implementation. And as far as the actual boots on the ground implementation, Eric will probably be the best one to speak to that.

MR. WOLF: Yeah. We have made formal plans to have very regular meetings with all of the different agency partners that implement the programs that are drawn into the combined plan. It's largely an extension of the same work group that we've convened that serves as sort of an editorial board for the plan itself that has been hard at work through the fall and winter. So we will be meeting periodically and continually do a check on the plan and assessing our progress towards our goal.

MS. TROKE: Excellent. That sounds great. Well, I want to pitch one more kind of final question to you all. What would be the one biggest lesson learned that sort of you're walking away with out of at least this planning phase, whoever wants to go first?

DR. FICHTNER: I'll jump in from New Jersey. I think the big lesson that we've learned is, while there are so much hard work into implementing the details of WIOA, that you really have to do it to be successful in the broader sense, be focused on a broader vision and mission.

It is very easy, I think, to get lost in the weeds of all of the requirements of WIOA, and so we found in New Jersey that by engaging stakeholders to set a mission and a vision and some policy frameworks, it was much easier than to get consensus and make decisions on all of the subsequent policies that we had to put in place because we had a mission.

We knew where we were going, and we had some consensus on where we were trying to go. So it made some of the more detailed discussions about WIOA much, much easier to have.

MS. TROKE: Excellent. Thank you, Aaron. Washington?

MS. THEW: I – (inaudible).

MR. WOLF: Beth can answer that.

MS. THEW: Oh, I would say – and I don't know. Something that we all know, it doesn't matter what state you're in, and that is that you strive to be customer-driven, whether it be they're a job seeker or whether it be the employer. And having been in the planning process from the very beginning I think is absolutely key because then as you try to implement it, you already have built in advocates because, as New Jersey said, they were part of the planning process.

So they owned it, whether it be the local chamber of commerce or the economic development or the – (inaudible) – labor council. Hopefully everybody has ownership of the plan as you move forward.

MS. TROKE: Great. Well, thank you, guys. Those are excellent words of wisdom. So I'm giving you guys a round of applause, and I hope all of our – and I know all of our audience is doing the same. So thank you. Thank you so much.

I want to quickly wrap up today by reminding you of a couple events coming up in the near future. There is a WIOA implementation conference call for single area states on January 6, and then for those who are coming to our national convening we will have an open team call on January 8th for everybody who will be joining us here in D.C.

And I think with that I will just say thank you. Thank you again to our excellent presenters, and I will flip it back to Gary.

(END)