**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**ETA 2016 SECTOR STRATEGIES VIRTUAL INSTITUTE**

**Opening Plenary**

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OPERATOR: Good morning, and welcome to today's opening call. I would now like to turn the call over to Mr. Brian Keating with Maher & Maher. You may begin.

BRIAN KEATING: Thanks so much, Benita. And thanks to those of you giving us feedback in the welcome chat there. I know many of you have already introduced yourselves in that welcome chat. If you haven't already done so, please take the opportunity now to type in who you are, your name, your organization, where you're located, and how many, if any, are joining you today, if you happen to be joining us in a group.

And then once you've introduced yourself, you can let us know what you expect to get out of today's event and/or the virtual institute in general. And you can certainly type in questions or comments at any point using that presenter chat that will be on your screen throughout today's opening plenary and actually throughout all the workshops that we'll be doing this week. So more about that later, but you can let us know if you have a technical question or anything that you need using that chat window on your screen. So just a heads-up about that.

We're going to go ahead and jump right in here. I'm going to move us over to today's content. So welcome, everyone, to today's opening plenary for the Sector Strategies Virtual Institute. We do welcome you. Again, this is the opening plenary for a series of workshops and sessions this week. So want to welcome everyone. Again, please feel free to introduce yourself in that welcome chat, and then you can ask questions or make comments at any point using the chat window on your screen.

Before we get started here, I just want to introduce the polling question that you may have seen on your screen. So want to invite you to vote now. You'll notice that just popped up on screen. It was available before we began as well. So go ahead and type in how your sector work is going. Your choices are hot, heating up nicely, in the process, or cold. And I'm sure we'll be paying attention to those comments that we can go ahead and use that to inform both today's session as well as the workshops throughout this week.

So thanks, everybody, for voting. If you haven't already voted, click the radio button on your screen now and once you do that we'll see that come in and we can comment on that – those results shortly. So definitely make sure you vote and interact with us throughout today's opening plenary and throughout the week.

All right. Well, welcome. Thanks again, everyone, for joining us. We're going to move back to our slides, and I'm going to turn things over. Again, want to thank you for introduce yourself into that chat window. Again, you can type questions or comments, if you have them, throughout today's opening plenary and throughout the week.

To kick things off I'm going to turn it over to Todd Cohen from Maher & Maher to set some context. Todd?

TODD COHEN: Thanks, Brian. Good morning, everyone. Appreciate this opportunity. My name is Todd Cohen. I'm director of strategic initiatives at Maher & Maher. We are a workforce strategy firm and we support U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's sector strategies technical assistance initiative.

I suspect many of you have been a part of some of our convenings in the last couple years, but the initiative is really aimed at helping the workforce system and your partners create real systems change. So being more responsive to industry need, more strategic in how you deliver training and education all using a sector strategies approach as the foundation for that change. So we'll say a lot more about that, but let me just say this.

We're really excited about this event this week, this 2016 Sector Strategies Virtual Institute. We did this last year, and the feedback was really positive. And I hope many of you were part of that and you're coming back but we listened to you. You seemed to like not only the content that we delivered last year but really the vehicle, this vehicle through which we delivered it. So this series of virtual workshops where you get a chance to listen, engage, in some workshops really roll up your sleeves and work on real problems all from the comfort of your own desks, your own offices.

So we're repeating that this year. We've got some new sort of bells and whistles that we want to add we think will make this even more valuable and certainly new content. I think the content this year reflects where we think most of you are at, certainly within the context of WIOA. Most of you are in very different places with your sector strategy work than you were a year ago, and we hope that the issues that we're going to attach really reflect that. And these are them in terms of themes for this week. This is what you will hear a lot about.

Things that we think are particularly sticky issues, and look. There's been in the last several years – pre-WIOA, post-WIOA there's been a lot of sector strategy-related conferences, webinars, calls, things like that, and I know you all have been a part of many of those. Our promise to you this week is this will be different. The content will be different. The issues we tackle will be different.

So things like transforming your partnerships into regional models, many of you spent the last 5 years, 10 years developing really valuable sector partnerships locally, and WIOA's pushing us now to do this on a more regional scale, which means new partners, new core partners, new challenges, new opportunities. You'll hear a lot about how models around the country are dealing with that, making that transition.

We'll talk a lot about businesses as the lead, so moving away – I don't think you'll hear a lot about engaging businesses. I think you'll hear this week a lot about businesses really setting the agenda within these partnerships and really pushing the system to solve skill gap needs. We'll talk a lot about career pathways, apprenticeships in particular but doing it at an industry level scale, bringing together companies with similar HR needs and working it from that scale level.

We'll talk a lot about that, and we'll talk about sectors as a foundation for systems change. So you won't hear a lot of discussion necessarily about designing a single sector partnership in healthcare or IT necessarily. There will be a lot more talk about how we're using this approach, putting employers at the middle, aligning partners around to solve their needs that can really lead to stronger outcomes for jobseekers and for businesses.

And then we'll talk a lot about operationalizing sectors. So it's not enough that we're putting together industry sector partnerships in healthcare or IT, but what do you do with that information, with those skill needs as credential requirements? What do you do with that information to actually change the way you deliver services, ongoing services even through the career center?

Actually, the model that you'll hear about today and I think we will talk about how that really builds into that more systemic change on the ground. And I'll promise to you I think for not only today but this week is we'll be delivering – these will be best practices, but we'll also be delivering the how to's, the way that you can adapt what you're hearing into your own model and what works for you in your own region.

Before I go on, let me introduce – so I'm going to sort of be partly the MC for this week, and then Diane Walton, who you all know – she is the project officer lead for this project – will also be the MC. Diane, are you there?

DIANE WALTON: Absolutely.

MR. COHEN: All right. So Diane's going to jump in soon, and then we'll both at the end kind of circle back and talk to the institute. The way this session will go, I'm going to turn it over to Virginia Hamilton in just a minute. We'll talk about sector strategies and strategic visionary things, and then Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric Seleznow will talk a lot about what he's seen in this space, the vision from ETA, and really the urgency around this.

And then we'll have a fantastic panel with some state folks and some regional folks who have been doing this work for quite a long time and had a lot to say about how to do this well. And then Diane and I will come back at the end to talk about the week itself and how to get the most from the institute.

Just a couple last things on this. What this is, for those of you who are new to this, it is a week-long series of discussions. They take part in different points of the day. You can pick and choose where you want to spend your time. We this year are going to spotlight leading sector experts, those who have been doing this work, who have been doing some innovative things on the ground. But we also are bringing in some up-and-comers, some folks maybe that you haven't heard from yet from places around the country where they actually have had some great successes but yet are still working through some of the big challenge areas.

And I think that was an important perspective we wanted to bring to this, since that's the place where many of you are at and so an opportunity to really engage on that end. And then finally, I can't stress this enough. This is not a week-long – and this includes today, frankly – of just standard webinars that you may be used to. This is really a peer exchange, and you will see that in all these sessions.

We have built this in where we spotlight a particular model that works, but it's really up to you to drive the discussion, the content. And many of you on the phone have things to share yourself, and we want to hear that.

So without further ado, let me turn it over to Virginia Hamilton. You all know her, regional administrator out of region six in ETA. And she's the official champion of this particular sector strategies TA initiative, but she's obviously been a leader in the sector strategies space for a really long time. Virginia, we're thrilled to have you. So please take it away.

VIRGINIA HAMILTON: Thank you, Todd. Good morning or afternoon or wherever everybody is. I'm delighted to be here today to sort of kick this off, and I wanted to start first by just talking about just some terms so that we all sort of know what we're talking about as we move through the week.

First, clearly, good sector partnerships put business at the center. This is not let's come up with a sector strategy on our own and then go out and sell it to the business community. This is starting with business at the beginning. Sector strategies are working with industry as partners. These are not individual transactions. We're not going out to try to sell employers anything. We are sitting down at the table sort of as equals working to solve problems together and ask the important questions that we need to ask.

Sector partnerships always have aligned community partners. This is not a sort of single sport. This is a collaborative in which everyone in the community is working together to solve businesses' problems, and the workforce system, we think, can often be a central player, a convener. Certainly the new law put sector strategies right there in there as a role for the WIB and the American Job Centers to be actively engaged in, although sometimes we're actually not the convener, but many times we are.

And last, we're talking about a set of strategies that's really regionally focused. This is – as Todd was saying earlier, this is moving from the kind of work that many of you have been doing for the last 5, 10, 15 years and now looking at how this can become part of a larger regional strategy in a local economy.

So we're also really talking about systems change. Again, as Todd said, this is less – this particular week is less about the nuts and bolts of a particular sector strategy in an industry but rather thinking more globally about the system of looking at supply and demand in a regional economy and trying to figure out what to do about it in a way that will work for the business community.

And last, it's also really about moving sort of from a WIB says, OK, we've got five industry sectors. This is what we're going to focus on, and then that's kind of the end of it to strategy that turns into practice. So what does it mean to have a WIB take a sector approach, and then what does that mean in terms of the practice of people who work in American Job Centers, people who work in community colleges, the service providers in a particular community? How do we move this from just kind of a good idea on a piece of paper to real, actual practice in the field? So both support to the business community but also support to jobseekers so that they have – they're being a benefit from the work that we're doing with our employers.

So that's really the kind of framework that we're starting with. This is – we're moving from kind of a standing collaborative to doing business every day. You're going to hear some fantastic speakers over the course of the next week, and I would like to take this time to actually introduce Eric Seleznow. Eric has been working on sector strategies since 1843 (sic) I believe, and he, both at the local level, the regional level, the state level, and now with – we're lucky to have Eric at the U.S. Department of Labor with us.

When he first came on board, we all noted that he was an author of a paper along with some other smart thinkers about sector strategies at the state level. We're delighted that he's really a champion for the work, and I think he still knows as much as he did a while ago.

So without further ado, I'd like to turn this over to Eric.

ERIC SELEZNOW: 1843. I heard that, Virginia, and you were right there with me.

MS. HAMILTON: I was. I was.

MR. SELEZNOW: Good morning, everyone. And, Virginia, thanks very much for the introduction, and thanks to our Office of Workforce Investment here at the Department of Labor for organizing this and pulling this together yet again. So we've been doing this – these sector conversation, the sector work for several years now here at the Department of Labor, certainly since I've been here and Secretary Perez has been here. But when are you going to find a better time to do this work?

And I'll want to spend some of my time with you sort of building upon some of the themes that Virginia so perfectly laid out, and then we'll sort of move into some very specific sort of work that we're talking about. But mostly, thanks to the Office of Workforce Investment, thanks to Maher & Maher, thanks to Virginia and all the speakers who are going to be on there today, this is an important week. And sorry it's so early on the west coast, but there – I understand these times move around during the week. So thanks for joining.

So we're going to talk a little bit about sector strategies today and all week long. And what – I want to manage expectations here a little bit as to what you're expecting to do. Some of you probably have done sector strategies work for a couple years. Some of you may be new to it. Some of you maybe think you're doing it, and you're really not. And so there – we're all in a lot of different places.

So we ought to have sort of a common understanding about what this is going to do and what this is going to be for folks. And just I was a local WIB director, now called workforce development boards not WIBS. I was a local WIB director for many years, and people say sector strategy work and are you doing that, Eric? And I say, of course I'm doing sector work. I was doing sectoral work. I was training people in healthcare. I was training people in bio. I was training people in the high-growth sectors that we identified at the local workforce level. Thought I was doing sector strategies work.

I was not doing sector strategies work, and I think that's what a lot of folks – it's a common misunderstanding, totally understandable, that people are doing work in an industry sector but they may not be doing a sector strategy or sector partnership, also known as an industry partnership. And let me sort of talk about a couple of differences there.

So are you convening multiple employers from an industry sector? Four or five hospitals from your region? 10 or 20 manufacturers? 20 or 30 hotels? 10 or 12 bio companies? 20 manufacturers? Are you convening multiple stakeholders? First of all, you're looking at the data to see where the data is taking you. That's only half the story. Then are you convening multiple employers from the same industry? Are you going through a process with them to validate the labor market information?

One of my big a-ha moments when I did this work – and some of you have heard me say this before – is I convened a bunch of hospitals and I thought, oh, I got this figured out; they're going to want NCA to LPN to RN. Well, guess what? That's not what they needed. After I convened with the four CEOs from the hospitals and their HR folks, really they said they needed unit clerks that only needed a Microsoft certification and some medical technology background. And they needed 60 in the next year, and that was something we were able to work with the college to do. But the point being is I had to have industry validate it.

So the industry data gets you some of the way. Convening multiple employers from the same industry will help validate or change that information, and then of course finding the right training providers to meet the needs of the employers telling us. So part of that convening process is not coffee and donuts once or twice a year. It is convening a work group of employers where we listen to employers, where they carve out what their skills and credentials are going to be – what they're going to need in terms of skills or credentials. And then our job is to sort of meet that need with our training providers and others.

One of the valuable lessons I learned about sector partnerships or sector strategies is as a work – as a local workforce leader is I didn't need to lead them. I could be a partner and be very successful as a partner, get good performance outcomes. I didn't need to lead them. It's great if you do want to lead them. Certainly WIOA gives you the opportunity to do that.

So I think the first important thing is to figure out whether you're doing sectoral work right now or you're actually doing a sector strategy moving into sector partnership. So that's really important. But if you're not going to do it now, when are you going to do it; right?

So let me just review a couple of things for the last couple years. Most of you know this. The president did a job-driven assessment of the entire range of government programs and workforce development. The vice president assessed all this, commissioned a report on basic principles of the way the workforce system should be administered and working in this administration. At the center of that is employer engagement that employers should be leading some of the work that we do or certainly driving the work that we do.

And the second principle in a long list of seven different principles on the job-driven training is regional partnerships, how people come together in your local area or a region to put these programs together and to really work with industry at the local level. So now is the time to do it. WIOA was passed almost two years ago now. Also talks about sector strategies and career pathways, sort of similar sort of work, and that becomes an important aspect of this too.

So the foundation of what this administration has driven, certainly Secretary Perez has been out there talking about this, as we all have. DOL has moved to a sectors approach. WIOA now gives you permission and direction in which to do a sectoral strategy sort of work. And again, it's an organized, purposeful way where you're meeting with a key group of employers regularly, making sure you understand what their needs are and that you're able to deliver it to them.

Now, we're all still going to be doing the same work we've always done; right? We're operating job centers. We're operating all these programs. We got huge numbers of people walking in our job centers across the country. So we're still going to have that day-to-day work that we do, which is sort of the triage work and the assessment and solving problems and crises. But within that can we target in the high-growth areas where there are opportunities within our region and drive some of that?

Does that mean every single thing we do has to be a sector strategy? No. And we got to train thousands of people now in an industry-specific sector strategy? Not necessarily. Does it mean we have to work with our local employers to develop a strategy that meets their needs so we're getting people trained and skilled to where they want to go? Absolutely. So there's lots of opportunities here. It's a big can of worms. We got a lot of work to do.

I just want to talk about a couple of things today, and let's not forget all the strategies that we use all the time or think about. We've done on-the-job training. We've done work-based learning. We have a range and continuum of strategies to incorporate into the sectors process. We should be thinking about how do we include work-based learning and OJT. More importantly, we should be thinking about how we organize and integrate registered apprenticeship in this process. Registered apprenticeship is a logical extension of sector strategies.

Actually, it is the ultimate in sector strategies. It's a group of employers who are organized around an industry sector that have come together to identify what your skills and credential needs are, and many times now more and more people are talking about their soft skill needs as well. But it's organizing industry, developing a training program, and making sure you got a pipeline of workers.

So apprenticeship is a reasonable outcome across a continuum of things that you might want to think about as you're putting your strategy together. Understanding what the employer wants is one thing. Developing deliverables with that employer is another, and you can be as creative as you want, as long as your outcome meets the employer needs. Training is part of that, but more and more employers want to grow their own.

More and more employers don't want to wait until somebody finishes a program and then decide whether they want to hire them. They might want to bring their own along with you at the same time. So apprenticeship becomes a very reasonable outcome as part of a sector strategy.

So just a couple of things I want to hit real quick because my time is short before we go into a larger conversation. Now, there's a lot of intermediaries out there who can do the sector work. Many of you know that it could be a business or industry association. Could be already an established workforce intermediary in your community. Many of you know them and may be already working with them.

Partnering up in an existing sector partnership in your region is totally OK, and like I say, you usually end up getting pretty decent performance outcomes out of that. I said you can just be a partner and then certainly the way you work with employers and the way you convene them and what you do with them in that process – so I began to talk about this earlier and got sidetracked. Coffee and donuts once a quarter may do it for you. I don't think that will.

I think you're going to want some substantive time as you're organizing a sector to really drill down and convene and get to the answers that you want. You may be able to take your foot off the gas as time continues, but there's a lot of organizing and convening work and there's a lot of discovery and going through a process with employers to find out exactly – (inaudible).

So again, it's just in your minds thinking about what is sectoral work and what is sector strategy work. So we had a lot of things – and the other observation I make is employers come into sector strategies and sector partnerships for a lot of different reasons. Some come in because they have an immediate hiring need, although it may take you some time to organize the training scheme and get people enrolled and get them to complete coursework and ready to go. Some come because they want to strengthen their pipelines between K to 12 and the community colleges.

Some come to sector strategies because they're just not getting the people they hire – they want to hire right off the street. Some come because they care about their community. Some participate because they care about their industry. Some want to persuade the college to deliver – to develop other courses more specific to their companies. We see examples of that all around the country where they come together. So employers are coming for different reasons to a partnership, and so it's really important to get that established once you convene and understand who they are.

So you've got lots of people. We have lots of people over the course of this week who are going to give you information. We've got a lot going on across the country and a lot in your local areas. I know probably in the audience we've got workforce directors and community college folks and community-based organizations and a host of others. Figure out the right partnerships in your community.

It's not always going to be the same scheme everywhere. Sometimes the college may be able to lead it. Sometimes the workforce board may be the best leader. Sometimes it might be a foundation, community-based organization or foundation, and I think it's up to us in our communities to figure out who's going to be the best leader of that and how we can partner and give employers what they want.

So lots of different options out there. I hope during the course of this week we can explain some of those to you in greater detail. I think there's a wealth of information on our WorkforceGPS site that you can find easily here at the Department of Labor. Some of you may know it by its former name of whatever it was, but it's now WorkforceGPS. And there's just lots of options.

So the sector strategies is not a panacea for all the workforce problems we have out there either. So we talk about a lot it's in the law. It's in the legislation. It's another tool in the toolbox, and our career pathways work and our sector strategies work really are sort of forged together because our career pathways work should be informed about what the industry sector wants in your area. So lots to explore. Lots to get into.

I see I got about a minute left. So I'm going to wrap up before I go back to Diane, but I just want to say it's thoughtful and difficult work. I think if you're a local workforce board, you want to engage your board into leading some of these activities or partnering with these activities. There are great partners within your community, as I outlined previously with colleges and community-based organizations and foundation-funded projects or community agencies. So a lot of options out there.

You just have to figure out what works with your community. The key is – and we're going to say it over and over again – is convening those employers and going through a logical process with multiple employers from that industry sector to get to the outcomes that they're interested in in terms of skills, credentials, basic work skills, and long-term successful employment. So I've rambled on probably long enough. I know I'm all over the place. We'll try to refine that in this next session.

So thanks a lot, and I'm going to turn it back to Diane for a couple of minutes as we move into our next session. Diane?

MS. WALTON: Thanks, Eric. I hope everybody who's on the line or at least a huge percentage of you know how extraordinary it is for us at the Department of Labor to have somebody like Eric who knows so much and knows exactly what you're going through. It's an interesting time, obviously, for a lot of reasons, but just to have people in leadership positions who know what the work is and what it can be makes so much more possible.

So while Eric is shapeshifting from judicious, well-informed, experienced leader to talk show provocateur, I'll talk a little bit about the next piece, which is you, all of the audience, participating with five certified smart people.

We've got some extraordinary people on listening as well as who are going to be on the screen. The people on the screen will have some discussion building on each other's knowledge and experience, but how you interact with them is going to be crucial to you getting what you need.

It was interesting watching the polling earlier where two-thirds of you said you were in the process with your sector work. Not heating up nicely, not hot, not cold, but in the process, and that two-thirds of you we really, really want to move into heating up nicely and hot. So it's going to be great. We have different pairings, different threads.

Stephanie Veck is with us. She's the director of the Colorado Workforce Development Council, and Joe Barela is at Arapahoe/Douglas as the regional workforce director there. And so they bring that information about how a state and a local – what is that line? How does regional work? What are all those different pieces? They've had very different successes, and they've had shared success?

So in addition to Joe on the local front, we have Mike Temple who's of course done such extraordinary work with the Gulf Coast Workforce Board. And so he can bring that – Texas of course is a different land entirely, but so those two, Arapahoe/Douglas and Gulf Coast been leaders on working with business, on getting results for their business community, as well as the people who live either in rural or urban areas. So just that breadth is astonishing.

And we have Beth Brinly who's now the vice president of workforce innovation at Maher & Maher but has been an extraordinary leader in the state of Kentucky bringing this work to bear on different – there was a – how do you say that gracefully? There was not an evenness of capacity across the state and how you go in and how you work with people to take them their next step.

So you got five very, very smart people ready, willing, and able to take any questions you have. And I do believe Eric will have some of his own. So I will turn it back over to Eric and the team, and look forward to all the questions and all the answers. Thanks.

MR. KEATING: All right. So I think now we're going to do a video panel. So let me go ahead and bring that up, and if we could have everyone on the panel go ahead and put themselves on video there, that would be great. And I'll go ahead and turn it back to the team to moderate this video panel.

So I see Mike, Eric, Beth, and Stephanie. Welcome, all.

MR. SELEZNOW: Excellent. Thank you, Todd. Thank you, Diane, and thank you to my friends. Man, we are all over the country today, folks. Thank you very much, and this is the way it ought to be. So Eric Seleznow back again, and I'm joined by three people who really have been in this work for a while, and we're going to hear from all of them. And we're going to move around so we don't just look like photos on the board there.

But I'm joined by a long-time colleague and friend, Stephanie Veck. Stephanie's the director of the Colorado Workforce Development Council and has been for, gosh, many years now. Probably seven years now, Stephanie? Something like that?

STEPHANIE VECK: (Inaudible). Yeah.

MR. SELEZNOW: She's done a great job. Colorado's been in the sectors face for many, many years. I think it got supercharged and propelled under Stephanie's leadership, and they're doing a lot – they've done a lot in sectors, and they're now starting to do a lot in the world of apprenticeship, which is a logical extension of that work. So I'm sure we'll hear a little bit about that today.

I'm also joined by Beth Brinly. Beth is a vice president of workforce innovation at Maher & Maher, and hello, Beth. And Beth has a long history working with the federal government, working with state government in Kentucky most recently. So, Beth, thanks for joining us.

We're also joined by Mike in the upper – well, anyway, he's right next to me. That's the wrong way. That's Mike right there. Mike Temple is the director of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and its operating affiliate Workforce Solutions, and he's got a rather large 13-county region in the Houston metro area. So a lot – I mean, that's a very populous area with a lot going on in business and industry these days, Mike. So thanks for joining us.

And Joe Barela I saw on the screen a minute ago. Joe is the director of workforce in the – regional workforce director in the Arapahoe/Douglas County – there's Joe – Arapahoe/Douglas County in Colorado. And been out to that One-Stop or that American job center out there. It's a beautiful site. Joe, thanks for joining us today.

So this is going to be interesting on video from all across the country. So what we're going to do is I've stopped moving. There we go. So I'm just going to try to freeform a conversation with my good friends here and learn from what their experiences are across the country. And, Stephanie, I'm going to be going to you first for a little bit. Just to sort of lay a little bit of a foundation, give us sort of a background and bring us up to date. When you came on several years ago, Colorado was sort of toying with the ideas of a statewide sectors initiative, and then since you've been there you've actually implemented a statewide sectors initiative. So tell us a little bit about how you got started, and bring us up to date in where Colorado is. Stephanie?

MS. VECK: Thanks, Eric. You're accurate in saying Colorado has actually been working in sector strategies long before I was involved with the National Governors Association and several other national groups.

Colorado really helped create one of the first toolboxes for sector partnerships and sector strategies, and when I came on in 2010, we were doing sector partnerships through grants from the state to the local areas and had some really great sector partnerships that came out of that.

One of the ones I'm sure Joe will talk about, the Greater Metro Denver Healthcare Sector Partnership was one of those that emerged from those – that grant process. But what we decided we wanted to do is take that success in the sector partnerships and scale it in a whole new way where we were truly having industry lead and figuring out what the challenges were going to be in not only being successful locally but scaling statewide and developing regional sector strategies.

So we took the 9 to 12 grant recipients that existed at that time and did a case analysis of all of them, created some lessons learned, and then used that in partnership with our local workforce centers and their sector partnerships to create what we now call our next generation of sector partnerships.

And we launched those in January of 2013 with our first sector summit that was really focused on regionalism, on the convener that's a trusted third party that could be workforce but it didn't have to be, that if we wanted to really, truly scale this statewide, it could not all be on the backs of the workforce centers. The community colleges, economic development organizations, and others needed to step up and be a part of that as well.

And then most importantly, putting business in the center and really making sure that it was industry-led and that industry sets the priorities, that the priorities aren't necessarily workforce, and they aren't by any means all workforce. But when talent is a priority, then how does the sector partnership use career pathways to address the talent issue through their sector partnership?

So that's where we started off in 2013, and over the last three years we've done a lot of work in that realm and are truly working every geographic region of our state has at least one sector partnership. Some have as many as four or five, and they are regional.

They are local regions. We start with our economic development regions but the industries themselves define what the geography for their sector partnership is and those partnerships range from the seven largest healthcare providers in the Denver metro area to 50 small to medium-size manufacturers in northern Colorado.

So partnerships look different depending on the region and the industry, and we just work to really make sure that we have a methodology that can help them be sustainable and successful and really honor the commitment of industry and leading and the role of the public partners. So that's where we're at right now.

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. Thanks for that update, and before I go to other folks, let me just ask you for a very short answer to this. When you talk about putting employers at the center of what you do in Colorado – we're going to dig into this with everybody here, but tell us what your vision is and what you really mean when you're talking about putting employers at the center.

MS. VECK: So we have a belief that a sector partnership should not exist if it isn't the desire of industry champions in that sector and that they're willing to step up and be the co-chairs of the sector partnership, set the direction, lead it, and then work with their public partners and the third-party convener to make sure that it goes forward.

So we go as far as saying, this is how you should set up your room, and all of the industry should be in a circle around the table. And the public partners should be around the edges coordinated and convened by that convener but industry-led.

And we actually consider it a success when a community thinks that they need a sector partnership and they determine that industry isn't willing to step up and work together and lead that. Then we consider that a success that we don't force a partnership where industry isn't willing to step up and lead it.

MR. SELEZNOW: Excellent. Very helpful. Thank you very much. So I'm going to go to Mike Temple of Gulf Coast Workforce Board in Houston. Mike, thanks for joining us. Look. You're a very large area. You deal with thousands of people a year, 400,000. You deal with 20,000 businesses every year. That's a lot of activity going on. Where is the Houston general area, the Houston region at with sector strategies? How do you get your handle around such a large region to pull some thoughts together on sectors with businesses? Mike?

MR. KEATING: Mike, you may need to unmute your line.

MIKE TEMPLE: Thanks, Eric. Good to see you all. We do have a large region. We've got about 12,000 square miles and 6.8 million people in it and 120,000 businesses. So it's a big place by any shape. I will say we started doing sector work 16, 17 years ago, and we worked in a lot of sectors over time. Some of those sector partnerships lasted a while, and then they kind of went into remission.

And we're right at the moment going into a second round with some of these industries. Industrial construction and commercial construction is the place that we're really hot with at the moment. That's where we're having the most success and where the employers in that industry have given us and the community colleges and the community-based organizations in the region a lot of direction on where to go and how to go.

I think one of the things that's been important for us is to realize as a big region we often focus on employers that are located in one part of the region. So the – most of that industry may be located in one section, one part. We're looking for talent in helping them address their needs throughout the entire region.

MR. SELEZNOW: And so with a region that large with – I would imagine your healthcare sector is huge in the Houston area. The energy sector is huge. How do you sort of focus that for your local workforce system to be able to address that? Who's – how do you organize industry from a large region like that? Who does it, and then I want to come back to another point you made shortly? But how do you sort of organize that to get started? I know you've done it in the past. They sort of subsided. Now, you're reenergizing again. So how do you do that, Mike?

MR. TEMPLE: We mostly go where those employers already are because there are industry associations for all the major industries in the region, and we start with the regional economic development guys and those industry associations. There's the AGC. The Associated General Contractors and the Associated Builders Contractors in the region form the biggest portion for construction. The hospitals, there are 13 major hospital systems in the region, and those hospitals all have a local organization that they work through.

And in the energy company field, when it's the down string side, the petrol chemical manufacturing there are two large organizations of petrol chemical manufacturers in the region. And when we're talking to the integrated oil companies, we go to the American Petroleum Institute.

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. Mike made a really important point I think, and that's that – what did you say? I think you said – the word you used, you were doing sectors, and they went into remission. I think it's a really important thing to understand this is ebb and flow work. It is tough to sustain them.

It depends on what the industry need is. They could have gone in remission because a grant ended, because funding got tight. Maybe you solved all the problems in that particular industry. Maybe the employer group broke up. But it is tough to sustain these, and it takes some care and feeding to do that.

And that's something I want to explore as we move forward in today's discussion, but we've got to manage our expectations. What can we develop? What can we maintain, and what can we sustain over time? Or is it a short-term thing we want to do for a year or two and then move on? Those are sort of local and regional decisions, but I get the sense that we'd much rather sustain them, particularly if it's an exciting industry sector or a high – or a growing industry sector in your region. So, Mike, we'll get back to you shortly.

Let's go over to Beth now. Beth Brinly is vice president of workforce innovation at Maher & Maher, and I've known Beth for years. A lot of you do. Beth has been in the workforce business for many, many years, formerly with the Department of Labor regional office, then at the state of Kentucky where she really led some exciting activities.

Good morning, Beth. So you're all around the country. You've been around the country. You've seen a lot of areas over the last 10 or 15 years sort of get interested in sectors. What sort of general observations do you have about sectors? How hard was it to get started on that in – when you were in Kentucky? What are some of your observations, Beth?

BETH BRINLY: Thanks, Eric. It's a pleasure to be with everybody today. Having the opportunity see sector work all across the country, what I have found is that you have the opportunity to see sectors that have really been built from the state level and worked through the system, and you see really strong sector partnerships that had started at the local and regional level and worked their way up to a state-supported structure.

But in every case, as Stephanie mentioned earlier, those that are the most successful are where the employer community is the driver of the agenda and it's the workforce system partners that are listening and responding to that work.

In Kentucky, as the efforts began to implement our Work Smart Kentucky plan specifically, it was an effort that the state board saw as a transformational agenda item for the system as a whole. And we really started with the conversation of local workforce investment boards showcasing what they were already doing. This allowed us to really have an opportunity to appreciate the depth of understanding around sector strategies, what work was already going on, and then how we as a state could complement those efforts and lift them up in a meaningful way. The board them worked on a number of key action items that had sector strategies as a thread.

So our Kentucky Career Center certifications process had sectors in it. We also had sectors as part of the work that was going on with our high impact – (inaudible) – initiative. We overhauled our policies in regard to the – (inaudible) – training provider – (inaudible) – to support sectors. We hosted a sector institute where we brought our local partners around the table and shared labor market data and really supported expanding sector partnerships and identifying regions that are important.

The other is that we worked on the effort from the standpoint of building a common language between education, workforce, and economic development and the community partners by developing a Sector Strategies 101 Guide that partners could work through and understand. We built a self-assessment tool so our local partnerships could –

MR. KEATING: Beth, I'm sorry to jump in. It looks like your video froze. Could you go ahead and re-share your webcam for us?

MS. BRINLY: Sure.

MR. KEATING: All right. Awesome. Thanks.

MS. BRINLY: Thanks. We also were engaged from the standpoint of developing an assessment tool that local partnerships could use to determine where they were in regards to key indicators of successful partnerships like the use of data and validating that data and items such as that.

And so from there we really took that data and developed tools and resources to support the partnerships and put the money out there through the governor's reserve to support not only the building of new partnerships where they needed to be built but also to move forward with training agendas in a mapping environment. So those were some of the things that I've seen across the country and some of the particulars from the work in Kentucky.

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. Thanks, Beth.

We're also joined today with Joe Barela. Joe's out in Arapahoe/Douglas area out in Colorado. He's a regional workforce director out there. Good morning, Joe. Thanks for making the time. Joe did a little stint through the Department of Labor to help us with some of the WIOA work we were doing. We appreciated that. I know he's focused on a lot of human-centered design work focusing on customers through the One-Stop there. But now, we're going to talk about – little bit about focusing on employers.

Joe, you're a local workforce director. You're where the rubber meets the road at the local level. I think Beth and Stephanie talked about sort of driving a state process, which I think is very, very helpful and a good thing and certainly locals have a part in that. But what makes it work where you live at your county level? How do you convene employers? How do you get connected? How do you make stuff happen?

You have a big, beautiful One-Stop there that's got a lot of people coming through the front door. You've got TEGLs and TENs and direction coming from Washington. You got your local partners at the college. You got your business community. You got to run all these youth programs. A lot going on. How do you make time and space to make this important where you live?

JOE BARELA: Thank you, Eric, and good morning, everyone. I think the key there – I think Beth mentioned it – is my workforce development board was very interested in data. And so probably about seven years ago we really made some investments in looking at how we look at the data in our local area and in our region before we make decisions on how we invest in talent.

And so we've done a lot of work with industry profiles, and we work with our economic development organizations, our Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, as well as the state council in making sure that we're looking at the most recent data we have on where there's industry growth, where Colorado and specific in the metro Denver areas sees growth currently and in the future. And so we take that data, and the workforce board vets it with industry experts.

And so part of what the board has done is really make sure we mirror what our economic drivers are in our community. So I think on your workforce development boards you should have representation from those industries that your data show are relevant in your communities. And I think getting that buy-in and connection really helps with board membership as you start looking at sectors and sector work.

And so Stephanie mentioned the Greater Denver Metro Healthcare Partnership, and really that's the sector that we've had the most success with and making sure, first of all, at the local level we have industry representation at the leadership level from the healthcare industry and making sure that we bring in other workforce development boards in the metro Denver area.

And there are seven, and so we have an association that brings those workforce development boards and American Job Centers to the forefront and say, how can we make sure that your boards and that our operational staff are looking at this sector on the regional level because we all know that we have people that are coming in and out of communities on where they work and where they necessarily choose to live isn't exactly the same place. So there's value here.

And so I'm thinking once you get that involvement in your board level, I think it's very easy to jump on board and say, OK, what's the next level? How can we make sure that you may represent this XYZ healthcare system, but we want all of them at the table? And so with the Greater Denver Metro Partnership we have the 10 major hospital systems in the metro area coming to the table and really looking at here's the data we can produce through all our various sources. Is this what you're seeing at your hospitals or your healthcare centers in the metro area?

And have that discussion, and if those aren't the right people, those hospital systems are bringing in their subject matter experts and saying, no, here's where we have the need. Now, let's see how we can make that pipeline issue more relevant to what we're seeing critical shortages in. And not all healthcare systems have the exact need. So there's a negotiation process that has to happen, and then you prioritize that and see where we can make inroads.

And I can tell you for the first several years with our healthcare sector initiative we did a lot of incumbent worker training. We upskilled current workforce because there was critical talent needs at higher skilled positions within the healthcare system. And now, recently we're coming into, OK. Now, we want to look at middle skills jobs and even lower skilled jobs in the healthcare industry and be relevant to those populations.

MR. SELEZNOW: And have you learned any – I mean, what have you learned in that process? I guess one of the first things you learned you just said was they had a need for incumbent worker training and wanted to do that. But what are some other things you've learned in the process? And also if you can comment about some of the other partners around the table without naming names?

MR. BARELA: OK.

MR. SELEZNOW: How did that go? Did people get engaged? You have to bring them in? Talk about that.

MR. BARELA: I think my biggest a-ha moment was let the industry tell you their story or tell you what their experience is, and that way you hear the whole story. And then they decide where they need, the skills they need, and then you go to education, your community college, or even your four-year institutions and ask them to help you.

What programs do they have that can be relevant? What programs do they have that aren't relevant to the industry and where there's a misconnect, and then re-fine tune those so that there is some connection between those talent preparation programs and what industry is hiring because the last thing we want to do is make sure that our community college and our four-year institutions are training to what industry is hiring.

And so many times we saw that they were leaving an institution and didn't have the credential or didn't have the certification that the hospital was looking for or healthcare system was looking for.

So we want to make sure, OK, let's make sure when we invest in students and education, that when they graduate and leave schools, that they are going to be hired by those employers. So education comes in, and not all their programs are meeting that requirement. So we had to say, how can we make this a little bit more relevant to both the supply and the demand side so that there are hires from your institutional programs?

So I think education is definitely very relevant to what you do with industry sector partnerships and making sure that there's a connection between their legacy programs and maybe new programs that they have to create as you're being relevant to that business and industry.

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. Thanks. So, Stephanie, I'm going to integrate a couple of questions that are starting to come in on the screen to some of my questioning, and, Stephanie, I think this one rang true for me as a former state workforce board director as well.

How do you get boards behind this work? Was this staff driven? Was this just you and your staff saying, oh, we got the answer for Colorado, and us in the government side are going to do it? Was your board engaged? Are they engaged?

Do they have an understanding of what sector strategies are because I know there's a lot of boards around here, having worked with two of them, there's a lot of education and training and preparation you have to do for either a state or a local board? So can you talk a little bit about advice you have for people from the states about how they get their boards involved or supportive?

MS. VECK: Absolutely. I can't imagine doing the work that we have done over the last six years without a very, very engaged board. So when we worked to get appointments to our board, we make sure that we have geographic representation from our entire state on our board and also that all of our 14 key industries in the state are represented on our board.

So our state council truly is representative of the state of Colorado geographically but most importantly of the industries across the state. And when we decided that sector partnerships and sector strategies would be the way we do business with business, not as a customer but as a partner, that was a critical decision by our board, not just the staff but by the board.

And in making that decision we were going through a process of reestablishing our bylaws and our standing committees, and we decided that we would have three standing committees, an advocacy committee, a sectors committee, and an education and training steering committee. So our sector steering committee is made up of the business champions from across the state that serve on the state board, and they are the steering committee to all of the sectors work that happens around the state.

So they work to represent not only their own industry but their geographic area and make sure that we even at the state level are making sure that our support, our technical assistance resources and efforts are driven by industry, even from the state board perspective. And I really believe strongly that we can't expect our local boards or our local sector partnerships to do something that we aren't modeling ourselves, and so that's been critical.

And that would be a very strong piece of advice to someone is get your board engaged, find a champion, have a business member from your state board agree to take on as the chair of your sector strategies at the state level, and make sure that you're listening to industry on your board as much as you're expecting everybody else to do so.

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. So, Beth, I can relate to some of those things that Stephanie said. I know with my board at the state level, once they understood the concept, they instantly got it. They had done some other sector work before I got there and so they were oriented to it but we had a lot of new board members.

And once they heard the concept of being employer-driven, they got it, and they were there. But it needed a little bit of education foundation building; right? So we brought in a national expert to help my board understand. We did some out of board meeting training so they would really get it, and that was very helpful. Beth, what's your experience at the state level?

MS. BRINLY: Mine was very similar to both what you and Stephanie have shared. Our state board had a passion for the work from the get-go. What we did was we identified a champion from our state board. We brought in experts who shared some groundbreaking work that was going on across the country around sectors as well as that's going on at the local level so that we could build a common understanding among our members on the state board.

We also developed a steering committee that included all the state level partners, our friends from community college, from vocational rehabilitation, from the blind, and from the university system as well as the K-12 system and our state policy leaders so that the board and the leaders of the workforce system pipeline were engaged and syncing up from the get-go.

So that steering committee served as an entity that worked through those state-level sectors and brought recommendations to the board for major policy discussions about how we wove sector strategies into all the work that we were doing at each level of the system. So that was really an important part of the work that had to be done, and our board members were excited about that work because they truly wanted the system and believed the system needs to be business-led at every level in order to be effective.

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. So Mike Temple with Gulf Coast Workforce Board, so let's – I'm going to shift the conversation just a little bit and talk about other partners around the table in an industry or sector partnership.

And one of the questions from our audience was, "How do you balance the short-term needs versus longer-term needs and all the effort that put in for it?" I mean, I know if I were to ask Stephanie this or – this does not happen quickly; right? This is a commitment and a process. But who are the other partners at the table, and how long is it going to take to put the beginning of a partnership together?

MR. TEMPLE: Well, in our case the other partners around the table include the economic development folks, the community colleges, which in our region we have 10 community college systems, and a rather large network of community-based organizations as well as the local folks from organized labor depending on the sector that we're working in. Actually, pulling the group together was not the part that takes a lot of time for us.

The part that takes time is once the business leaders are there talking about what their needs are, it's sort of getting the group to stormin Norm itself so that they can devise a plan to go forward. And it's a plan that those business leaders have identified, and they're the ones saying, this is what we need. This is how we want to go. Here's what our issues are. And it's not the other partners telling them what to do.

MR. SELEZNOW: I think that's an excellent observation, Mike, and I want to drill down on that a little bit with you and then go to Joe on this. So, Mike, there's a lot of listening that has to happen, and my personal experience was sitting in some of these initial conversations with employers and other partners and stakeholders telling employers what they needed to do. And it really turned off some employers.

Did you have any of those experiences, and how do you manage that? I mean, I think we think, oh, you just bring business together, and magical things happen. Well, that can happen, but it's some hard work. So can you talk about that because I think people watching are going to run into some pitfalls?

MR. TEMPLE: Sure. And I heard Joe say something similar a little earlier and I want to second that point that you have to start the conversation with the employers, the business folks in the room and then you bring in your additional partners, including your training partners because, God bless them. I love them dearly and respect them and work with all of those 10 community college systems, but if they come into the conversation at the very beginning, they are more likely to tell those employers, this is what we can do. This is what you need, rather than listening. So it's often important to get the business folks in there first all by themselves.

MR. SELEZNOW: I absolutely appreciate that. I sort of learned that lesson the hard way where I had some stakeholders in the room who did exactly what you described. So it's sort of a universal thing. They came in and told the employers what they needed, and the employer said, well, I'm not an expert in this, and they shut right down. And so I had to shift my model to what you described, which was no stakeholders. The first couple meetings were just employers.

Now, Stephanie described employers at the table and stakeholders sitting around the table in the peanut gallery, which I thought is another way to deal with that. So that's very important.

Joe, can I sort of get your perspective on partners and stakeholders and any wisdom that you've learned on how best to sort of organize and engage or manage the process? It can be a challenge.

MR. KEATING: Joe, you might need to unmute your line.

MR. BARELA: Thanks, Brian. I think, Eric, one thing that we learned real quickly is that when you bring these industry leaders to convene in meetings, make sure that it's relevant to them and a lot of the background work is done prior to the meeting so you keep them on task of what are we doing collectively to make sure these critical occupations within our industry are being filled?

So I would say from the board perspective is make sure that you have a subject matter liaison, an industry liaison, if you will, a project manager that can help guide the work behind the scenes so that you're not taking care of a lot of that administrative work in your convenings when you have those industry leaders at the table.

In Colorado we were very fortunate that the council, the state workforce development board has funded sector work where we can support some of that project management staff to help with sectors across the state and particularly in the metro Denver region with the healthcare initiative.

And just recently the council has some grant money out to help with emerging industries so that more regional collaboratives can come together with business as lead and really decide, OK. We have a model in Colorado that can work, but with your particular industry how would you like to start a sector initiative? And is there a need collectively across local areas and regions to do that?

So I do think you can't discount the partnership you have with your state workforce development council and also your state workforce agency to make sure that they give you opportunities and resources so that you can have permission to go down that because it does impact your training policies, how you work with incumbent workers, how you offer opportunities for special populations, especially with WIOA moving forward, is we need to get beyond just high-skilled critical occupations but working with industries to open up occupations that in the middle skill area and actually the lower skilled area in those sector initiatives.

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. Thanks. So I'm going to go to another sort of question that we – that somebody sent in, and I think it's a good and honest question. Mike sort of hit on it initially, but I want to get Stephanie's perspective. I won't hesitate to give you mine either, but some folks have suggested that in some places, not all, on occasion their training provider is not as nimble or as flexible as they would like them to be and is not – they go through an industry process.

They assess the needs of what the employer really wants and needs, and then they go to their training provider. Their training provider is part of that process and says, well, I can fit it in as long as it's a semester, a Monday through Friday, 9:00 to 5:00, and may not be as nimble or they don't offer the right curriculum or whatever the particular need is.

And so I know that's happened. My suggestion for addressing that, maybe if it's a community college or another provider, is getting them engaged with the process certainly so they can hear directly from business. I think folks respond to business needs in communities but – or to have a broader conversation about training providers, colleges, and others, Stephanie. So I just wanted to get your perspective on influencing the outcome of training providers to meet business need.

MR. KEATING: And, Stephanie, you might need to unmute your line.

MS. VECK: Yup. That's a very valid concern. I personally think that when you have your – at least your community colleges and if you've got a strong university that understands workforce training, I think it's important to have them in the room earlier than later and that they understand the role of public partners.

By doing that – and what we have in our most successful partnerships around the state, they have a core team of public partners that work with the convener, and depending on the sector partnership, they all take turns being the convener in different sector partnerships. But by having those, especially the community colleges, in that core group from the beginning, they hear themselves what industry needs.

So it's not us going to them and saying, you're not responsive enough. They're hearing it from industry and we've actually experienced where the community colleges and a university recognize that they're not quick enough and they'll bring in a private training provider that's working with the workforce center, the community college, and the university to fill the gap and allow the community colleges to get up to speed faster.

But I think by bringing people to the table sooner and making sure that they're hearing it from industry rather than us as the workforce leaders saying, well, you're just not nimble enough, it puts it in a different light and it allows them to recognize where they are a nice fit and where they're not.

And when you see the businesses agree to come together in a non-competitive environment and collaborate, it inspires a lot more collaboration among the training providers as well. It's a little hard for them to be really competitive and hold their competitiveness for their training programs when they see businesses that are competitors collaborating and working together. So I think that's the biggest thing.

I also wouldn't get too wrapped up in the eligible training provider list and those kind of things because the reality is when the sector partnership identifies the problem and works with the public partners to develop the solution, there could be a variety of training providers that can be a part of that solution. And they may not all need to be funded with WIOA dollars. Some of them funding – we often found the funding for the training isn't the biggest issue. It's access to the training.

A lot of times the businesses are willing to pay for the training themselves. So I think being willing to think differently, that this isn't only for career pathways that are only funded by WIOA but all different types of training that could be funded by a variety of mechanisms, and businesses aren't going to pay for something that's not nimble.

MR. SELEZNOW: That's a great point. So another question came in, Stephanie. While I have you here, I just want your two cents on it before we move on. Certainly I won't hesitate to give mine, but so this is a really good question. "How do you view the relationship between sector strategies and career pathways? Can you have one without the other? Does sequence matter? Do they have to go together?"

And I would say yes would be my preference, but it can happen and it does happen in different ways. But I think my overall answer to that is there's not a clear delineation between the two. I would imagine that you should not really be developing a career pathway program unless it's been informed by the industry sector. Unless there is a group of multiple employers, as we've described before, have come together to sort of really have input into that career pathway that can sort of help chart out the sequence of courses, the timing of things, the outcomes and credential needs.

So I would say, yes, very much career pathways and sectors are part of the same ball of wax there, and the sector strategy part, when you're strategizing about what needs to happen versus the partnership is really where you need to be thinking about, OK. What can my college or my labor union or my other training providers help develop that pathway that gets people where we want to go?

Some sector partnerships across this country have come together solely and only on career pathways. Some is focused on pathways from pre-GED to credentials. So they come together for a lot of reasons, but I think sectors ought to inform the career pathways partnership project. Stephanie, your thoughts on that?

MS. VECK: I agree. In an ideal world your sector partnership would be strong, and your sector partnership would be working – the industry-led sector partnership would be working with the public partners to build out the career pathway. And when we talk about career pathways, we mean the entire comprehensive system of on and off-ramps, wrap-around services, everything that goes into helping a person determine career exploration through all the training that they need to a degree, an apprenticeship, whatever it may be.

But we also struggle with the reality that you may not have strong enough sectors that are ready to lead in that capacity when a career pathway needs to be built. So Colorado's dealing with that right now.

We have some IT sector partnerships that have some really great specific projects happening but we were mandated by our state legislation to create an IT career pathway and it's very much needed. All the data, the Colorado Technology Association and all of their partners tell us that it's needed, but we didn't have a real sector partnership in IT to lead that work.

So we are using sector strategies and the concept of sector strategies to partner with the Colorado Technology Association and create an IT career pathway that will be the initial foundation for the IT career pathway. But as specific regional IT sector partnerships are developed, then we can mold and change and adapt that career pathway to their needs.

But it's a chicken or an egg kind of thing. You have to do what you need to do when you need to do it, and sometimes there'll be a sector partnership ready to step up and lead that. When there's not, you work with whatever industry group you have to work with, and you use sector strategies in informing the career pathway, even if you don't have a full-fledged sector partnership.

MR. SELEZNOW: Excellent. Great observation. Thanks. So let's see. Getting more questions in here which are interesting. So there's a lot of folks watching or tuning in today and this week. Again, just to be clear, this is not all workforce boards and American job center staff. You've got community colleges on this webinar. You've got community-based organizations. Probably some philanthropic organizations who are participating.

We welcome you all because it really does take many of these partners to put these sector partnerships together. And I've seen across the country – here we are with big area like Houston. You got a state like Colorado. Joe's in a pretty large area right outside a major city. But what if you're a small workforce area or a rural workforce area? Can these activities happen there?

I mean, I've seen them across the country. There's one in southern Virginia that is a small community that the workforce board has partnered with a foundation-funded organization and the chamber, and the three of them have been doing great work for several years down there in a sector strategy.

There's a number of examples across the country, but, Mike, if I'm a small workforce area, rural, which you are not – let's be clear about that. You got a large area, but what advice would you have for some of these smaller areas that are just thinking of getting started? Mike?

MR. TEMPLE: Well, we are a large area, but we do have within our large area rural parts where we have small communities that are looking to work in this kind of work. And to get started, honestly, you have to talk with those local employers, those local businesses, the ones that in a small community make up the largest part of the business community to see what kind of needs there are.

And then you kind of follow the process that everybody's talked about here, which is getting some data. So you can look at the data, checking that data with those employers, and it's sometimes a little easier in a smaller footprint to work with the local chamber or the local business association to get things started.

MR. SELEZNOW: Thanks. Another question came in. "Are there successful sector strategies that exist without state or local board leadership?"

Absolutely. I think state and local boards are one of the last players in this space. This is – sector's been going on for 20 years in this country. Started with community-based organizations that started – labor unions have been doing this for years. They didn't call it sector strategies, but that's basically what they do. They organized employers within an industry sector. They developed training, had a pipeline of workers, and it's worked very, very effectively.

But also in the past 20 years, dating back to Massachusetts in the early '90s or if not before in Washington state, there were groups that came together to do this, community-based organizations, workforce intermediaries, workers' rights groups, and others who came together to do sectors.

And there's a couple of workforce boards across the country that are really actively engaged in sectors, and they're just a partner. And I don't think – I don't want to say just a partner. That's a perfect role to be is a partner. They don't have to lead it. There may be another workforce intermediary. It may be an industry association. Could be the chamber.

In many cities across the country chambers lead this effort in partnership with the workforce board. I know in Cincinnati I don't think Sherry Marshall, the workforce board director there, would mind me saying, but she's very clear. She's a partner in a much larger context of sector strategies in that region and very happy doing that. So the program I mentioned in southern Virginia, in Dan River, the workforce board is a partner but doesn't necessarily have to be the leader. So there's lots of great examples.

There's 31 national fund for workforce solutions sites across the country. Oftentimes local workforce boards are partners in that. So they don't have to lead it. A WIB – a workforce development board doesn't have to lead it. They can. Very well-positioned to do that with the expertise of their board, but they don't have to.

Joe, do you have any perspective on that, and then I got a follow-up for you?

MR. BARELA: Thanks, Eric. I do want to mention with the Greater Metro Denver Healthcare Partnership the chamber of commerce for the city of Aurora is actually the convener, and the workforce development boards from the four regions that are a part of that help with the project management of it.

So we decided early on that we don't need to own it, and maybe it's better if it's a neutral site, that it doesn't reside in economic development. It doesn't reside in workforce-specific area or education system. So the chamber of commerce took this on as the champion, and so they drive that initiative with all those business sectors. So I think that's a very good point that let business and industry decide how they want the structure of that sector partnership to move forward.

I can tell you sustainability funding is critical. It's not only having the employers participate with what they want but also making them realize, is the result – are the results you're achieving through your sector initiative and working with your other industry experts in your region, is it worth investing in? And is there in-kind investments they can make or even financial investments to keep the sector partnership moving forward?

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. Quick question for you, Joe. Then I want to take a similar question to Beth. A specific question came in just for you, Joe. I think you have a fan club out there, but, "How did the board decide what data was needed to make the best decisions?"

I know that some of us on the call use state labor market data just to get the projections and then refine that with employers. But how did your board think about what data was needed to make the best decision, and how did they get the data to enter into a sector partnership?

MR. BARELA: We're very fortunate at Arapahoe/Douglas. We have an economist – a workforce economist, and we use several data sources, EMSI, LMI information, U.S. Census Bureau. We use a conference board to collect data. We put together industry profiles that are in line with, Stephanie mentioned earlier, Colorado key industries and we present that information to our board and then we go out and vet it with our universities here in Colorado.

And then we actually look at those and make decisions. Where is there saturation? Where is there growth? Where is there predicted growth? Those are available for everyone to look at on our website. It's adworks.org, and there are currently 11 industry profiles that we do updates on a quarterly basis, and we track those industries in the metro Denver area.

And so the board looked at that, and right now we have five key industries or in-demand industries that the board is looking at how we put our operational policies in place to support the growth of those industries.

MR. SELEZNOW: Beth, can I ask you a similar question from your federal and state experience? If I'm a rural workforce board or rural region and I don't have a lot of staff, I don't have a lot of extra funds available, where can I get some up-to-date reasonable labor market information? What suggestions might you have?

MS. BRINLY: Well, first of all, if your state – your state system is really very helpful. In Kentucky we have what's called the Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics that has all the data for our K partners all the way through postsecondary education. Our UI data is there. All of our customer data for the workforce system, and so the local workforce area can actually put research questions into the Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics and get really relevant data that doesn't cost them anything because we built this infrastructure at the state level.

Also, the American community survey. There are great federal tools that are there. If you want to look at those, the resources for the U.S. Census Bureau that Joe talked about are a great opportunity to grab that information and support. And then additionally, it's just to have the conversations with your business community with the data that you have and asking for feedback because they're a really critical sector insight that we got.

We wouldn't have had energy creation and transition in Kentucky if it weren't for the business community saying, we are going to retire 70 percent of our workforce in five years. And then for auto and aircraft manufacturing our economic development partners were the ones who were telling us we needed to continue when the data didn't look there. So it's important to bring those partners in and provide the validation that the data that you do use too.

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. And so, Beth, while I have you here, let me take some liberty to get your thoughts from some of your experience at the federal and the state level and working with a lot of locals over the years, and certainly your perspective now is a little bit more national. But what sort of advice or suggestions do you have for some of those smaller workforce boards? I mean, Joe was fortunate enough to have an economist on – who's on his staff. I didn't have that.

Sometimes you're strained with staff resources. You're trying to implement WIOA. You might be applying for a grant from the Department of Labor. You got all these different things going on, and you might be struggling a bit to get started. But what suggestions would you have for local areas or rural areas to get started?

MS. BRINLY: OK. So that is a great question, and I'm working with the new region in South Carolina right now that doesn't have a lot of resources then. So one of the things that they're looking at is using some of their rapid response money or making application to the state for use of rapid response money to support some of the strategic planning work that needs to be done and the skills assessment work that needs to be done and different tools that will help build the process out.

Another is that if you do have any manufacturing that is military-based, working with the state in partnership with the Office of Economic Adjustment can provide some opportunities for some money sources that folks don't specifically think about.

The other is community foundations. There are a lot of foundations, whether they're healthcare focused or other industry focuses, that want to support the growth of those industries. And so whether it's an arts and humanities council or whether it's a healthcare foundation, there are community resources that can be tapped into, and most states have a book and a national directory that talk about those resources. So I think that's another great place to start.

And then also just asset mapping what you already have in your community, you'd be surprised what's out there that you don't know exists. And so whether that's through economic development or whether that's through the community college system and other places, that asset map can help you pinpoint the resources.

MR. SELEZNOW: Great. Thanks. And one of my observations would be too you don't always need to have money resources; right, to do this? Convening employers might be coffee and donuts and some conversations over time, and obviously you need some staff resources to pull it together. But to get started with these conversations, it just becomes a community convening process to start, which many of us do.

So I'm going to move into – we only have a few minutes left, but I really do want to move into – this is a very intriguing question, which is, "How do you address training programs that are good with theory but don't really provide any work-based learning for folks?" So you might spend six months, a year training somebody, and we're not sure they can do the job even when they get out of training.

And so I think that leads into a natural conversation about work-based learning as part of sector strategies, but there's a range of work-based learning. There are internships and job shadowing. There's formal OJTs, which our system did particularly well during the Recovery Act.

And then there's certainly the gold standard with registered apprenticeship programs, which a lot of people around the country think that it's really hard to do, think it only belongs in building trades or perhaps with labor unions, but there's a lot of apprenticeships out there happening in different industries and different ways and certainly that we in our Office of Apprenticeship here can help local areas do that. But really how do you integrate some really substantive work-based learning?

The other reason why OJTs and apprenticeship are so possible, because a lot of our folks don't have the time to take a year out of their lives to go to school and not be earning any money. And so a learn-and-earn process really makes sense.

You can take a sector strategy like our friends at the Northwest Michigan Workforce Development Board. They had two people working on their One-Stop. did a convening of the industry of health IT. They found out from all of their long-term care facilities and hospitals that there was a need for these workers, and working with our apprenticeship staff person in Michigan, they developed within six months an apprenticeship for the health IT industry and enrolled 27 people. People are working, getting training, and developing skills all at the same time.

So there's models out there. So how do we integrate these things in here in our Office of Apprenticeship? We have information on our U.S. DOL/Apprenticeship website for that.

But, Stephanie, I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit. State of Colorado has traveled across – has traveled to Europe, has gone to Switzerland and see what they're doing. Your governor has an interest in ramping up apprenticeship. Certainly the president has already challenged us to double the number of registered apprenticeships. So how does apprenticeship fit into your sectors work, and where do you see you going on that new wrinkle in the state of Colorado? Stephanie?

MS. VECK: Oh, thanks, Eric. Yes. We're very excited. Last summer the governor created his business experiential learning commission, which I'm honored to get to be a member of, along with the executive directors of state agencies and CEOs of companies in the critical industries.

And we did. We took a delegation to Switzerland. We called the "forced march across Switzerland" for four days. We've been studying the Swiss model because we believe it's a gold standard for bringing apprenticeships earlier in life. The U.S. has done a great job, the registered apprenticeships through U.S. DOL and the labor unions, as you mentioned, and non-labor registered apprenticeship.

We do a great job at apprenticeships, but typically they don't start until after a person's out of high school. And what Switzerland's done is they've embedded it earlier, and that's what we're trying to learn with the governor's business experiential learning commission. And the exciting thing for us is that we have several pieces that's kind of like all the stars are aligning.

Our sector partnerships are strong. Our statewide trade associations, which were strengthened through the governor's economic blueprint, and our industry networks are strong. So it's bringing those statewide trade associations together with the regional sector partnerships and then the state council really working collaboratively with the business experiential learning commission to leverage everything we've already got to bring the value and the importance of apprenticeships at any age, in any level, in any demographic to the businesses as a solution.

And we're really putting it back on the businesses because what they've told us for the last six years is that education alone is not enough, that they get a person who's got a great degree, and they have to completely retrain them.

And so we're kind of using that argument that they've been telling us for the last many, many years that, OK. This is why you have to step up and you have to be front and center and you have to help us embed apprenticeships into the training models, whether it includes an associate's degree or even a four-year degree or if it's a pure on-the-job training model and a traditional apprenticeship but that how we expand that in things like banking and accounting and professional careers, IT, cybersecurity so that we can help people understand that apprenticeships do work in all industries, not just the skilled trades.

As critical as construction and the skilled trades are and we need to support them too, we need to change the culture of thinking that that's the only place that apprenticeships work. And so we're just starting, and we're learning a lot from many other states like South Carolina and other states. But it's where we're going. It's the wave of the future is that partnership between regional sectors, statewide trade associations, and businesses in work-based learning.

MR. SELEZNOW: Thank you, Stephanie. I agree, and I think that it's an example of doing at the state level, seeing local areas that do that too. I mean, when you look at apprenticeship, it can be with adult workers. Our average age across the country is 28 for apprentices, but it can also be in the European model, which is working with high schools, which I think is really exciting.

It's a strategy for employers to grow their own, and of all the outcomes and data that's out there on the range of workforce programs that we operate, not here, in community colleges, completion rates with apprenticeship are exceptionally high. Job placement rates are exceptionally high. Wages are average of $50,000 to $60,000 a year. Job retention is the highest of all of the particular workforce strategies that we use across our broad public workforce system. So there's a lot to learn there.

So we're wrapped up on our time here. We could talk – I could talk about this for hours. I'm sure our panel could too. I want to thank Stephanie Veck from the Colorado Workforce Development Council, Mike Temple from the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Board, Beth Brinly from – where are you now, Beth – Maher & Maher, and the honorable Joe Barela from Arapahoe/Douglas. You've been a great panel. Lots of information.

I just say that the folks watching, this is just sort of a big massive download of information on things that have been working, and I know not everything's been perfect. A lot of these folks have struggled with this over time, but we hope over the course of this week to drill down on some of these issues and get deeper into some of the issues that were raised today.

So I want to thank my guests for coming, and, Diane and Todd, I'm going to turn it back to you.

MR. BARELA: Thanks, Eric.

MS. VECK: Thank you, Eric.

MR. COHEN: Thank you. Thank you all. Appreciate that. Hi, everyone. Yeah. Back to me, Todd. Invite Diane too into this. And what we're going to do, really appreciate laying out those issues as the panel just did. That was fantastic stuff, and all of that is designed to kind of tee up the rest of the workshops. So we're going to walk through a little bit about what the rest of the week entails so that you can figure out how to best navigate it. So stick around for a few more minutes.

Just one thing – let me – one thing I did want to share, this is a larger initiative. So what you see this week is part of something much bigger, and I share these numbers because it's – really, if you want to get involved, if you like what you heard now and you like what you hear this week, that there's more where this all came from.

So we've got a lot of different events from peer learning calls to actually longer-term capacity building where we can work with you, your state, your region to really set out a sector strategies vision and help meet your vision, bring in the right partners.

We've done some regional convenings around this, and then we've got a series of skill building schools, some guides that should be used to help implement a number of the different approaches that you've heard about today that will be coming online. We'll show you where to get that too. So there's more where this came from. There will be a lot more beyond just this week, and we encourage you to participate.

All right. So there's a rhyme or reason for how we set this week out, and let me talk just a little bit. There's a sector strategies framework, an ETA-based framework that sets out how to really implement sector strategies. Now, it's going to be different everywhere you go. Obviously, we heard that today, but there are some common elements that are part of all really good sector partnerships and sector strategies. And these are the elements, and we've really hit on all of these during this past conversation. But this is how the rest of the week is organized.

You're going to see workshops on data, and we talked a lot about data. How do you use data? How do you understand data to help inform sector partnership training and education investments? How do you not only engage industry, but how do you position them as champions to help corral and bring in other industry? We'll talk a lot about that. Sector-based service delivery, think about the services that actually get delivered that are informed by your sector partnerships, in particular career pathways.

We're going to talk a lot about how that fits within the larger sector partnership model. How do you sustain this kind of partnership work, and how do you measure it to help improve performance over time? And then finally, what are some of the organizational changes you might make as a board, as a community college, as a business services unit that actually supports long-term execution of sector work?

So that's the framework that the week is set up, and then here's what the whole week looks like. I'm not going to go through all this, but I will show you in a second where you can go to register and learn more about each. But here's how it looks. We've got about two or three workshops per day.

We start this afternoon at 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time visualizing data to improve workforce development collaboration with – now, you should know each one of these is essentially designed the same way where it's a facilitated conversation. We have brought in one or two really smart experts that have done some excellent work in each of these area topics.

They will present their story briefly, and then you will break into small discussion groups where you will really get to dig into some of the common challenges and really get to get your questions answered in a much deeper, more profound level. So they're all set up that way. You can see the different topics.

Well, tomorrow we'll hit on the sustainability side of this, and we'll talk about some, how do you fund this work? And then Wednesday get into career pathway, regionism, the work-based learning throughout the week. And so you are free to register for all of these and any one that will really fit your schedule.

And then got a really – and actually, I want to turn it to Diane for a second because we've got a closing session that it's late in the day on Friday, but it's really something I think you don't want to miss. Diane, do you want to shed a little light on that?

MS. WALTON: Sure. It's funny because it's not a really compelling title on the schedule, closing. Anyway, Manny Pastor, who is just a remarkable human being – he's currently at USC doing a bunch of work – is going to come and talk with us about some of the results of his latest research and just some work he's been doing over time that brings all of these pieces of our work together. He talks. Done a lot of research into the impact of working with low income people and the positive impact that has on regional economy.

And so this whole notion that we have one side of our brain that's about business and the other side that's about, oh, what are we going to do about those barriered people and we can't do both, it's so not true. And his – he has just this extraordinary way of bringing those stories so that you can go back out and do your work a little bit differently maybe but also with such huge impact.

So I think Brian's going to put up a slide – oh, it's in the chat – for how to register for that particular session. We're going to – his book is available for free download. It's an experiment that they're running. So that's cool. It's like book club. I would read at least the first chapter to get more out of the discussion, but you can also come if you don't read the book. And I just think it's going to take us to a new place. So do join us for that last session. Thanks.

MR. COHEN: All right, Diane.

MR. KEATING: As Diane noted, we posted that link in the chat along with another link from one of our panelists today. So feel free to visit the closing plenary registration page, and feel free to sign up for that, if you haven't already registered. Back to you, Todd.

MR. COHEN: Yeah. Thanks, Brian. And there's additional site information that you can go. Space is limited on all these workshops, but it's still available. So please, if you're going to consider doing this, we'd encourage you to go register for all these sessions. But the closing session will be greatly his work. All week will be spent getting really into the nuts and bolts and the weeds of how to do this work, and the closing session I think will wrap up and I think remind us all at a broader level of why at the end of the day we're really doing this to help people get long-term careers and help communities grow.

I also have to say it again. These sessions are really – they're not webinars. So when you come to the session, we really ask that you be prepared to pose some questions, share your own story, work; engage. It's going to be – that time is built in, and the sessions really rely on your active engagement and participation.

If you are not sure, if you want to attend some of these but you're not sure which one makes the most sense for you, we've got a couple of tools to help you. There are two self-assessments. One is for regional, local folks that are trying to put together sector partnership or advance what you've done in the sector partnership work.

And then those at the state level, how do you put together the right conditions at the state level so that local partnerships can survive? And then we've got some – you'll see that there's – down below, if you see the file share, you see two self-assessments. One's a state. One's a local. It's a great exercise to go through. Take it. Take it as a team. Take it as a board, and it will help you figure out where your strengths are and where you might need to prioritize future work, and then that could help drive where you decide to spend your time this week.

So it's a couple of good tools to use to help you figure out how to maximize your time. And yeah. I think so this is the visual of the framework to get a little more understanding behind the sector strategies frameworks itself, and yeah. You'll see some easy fun tools to use to really – it's quick. I mean, it won't take you a long time to take these assessments, but it will help you figure out how best to spend your time.

And I think that's it. If you've got any other questions, let us know, but otherwise, we look forward to seeing you. Diane, any parting words on your end?

MS. WALTON: No. I'm just thrilled with getting to listen to those five people, so all that knowledge that bounces around in the virtual room. But I also really look forward to the discussions throughout the week because we really do get down into some interesting how do you change? What are the outcomes from change? Give me a reason to change, and then give me a way to change kind of discussions. And I think those are hugely helpful to people who are in the process of getting into this whole sector business. So thanks for coming, and come back.

MR. COHEN: And so many – and, actually, Diane, so many staff also too how to get to register. So what I'm showing you here, this is not just the opening and closing plenary. These are where you'll find all the workshops on this page, and you can read more about them and register for them there. Hopefully that answers your question. And with that, yeah. Thanks again, everyone, and we look forward to a fantastic week.

MS. WALTON: Thanks, all.

MR. KEATING: All right. Very good. And we want to invite you, before you log off, to stay on to give us some feedback about today's plenary session but also hope you can join us for the other session workshops happening this week, if there's room. And we're going to go ahead and bring you over now to a place where you can give us your feedback.

So we'd like to know if you'd recommend this virtual institute to a colleague. Feel free to spread the word. We still have some room on some of our workshops this week as well as the closing plenary. We already posted a link to that. You can give us an overall rating. We'd love to get your open-ended feedback.

We've got a general poll question and would love to see what other additional topics you'd like to see covered this week. So we'll leave it there so you can give us your feedback. Thanks so much for participating, everybody, and hope to see you on the rest of the workshops this week. All right. See you then. Have a great day, everybody.

OPERATOR: And this concludes today's opening call. You may now disconnect. Presenters, please hold the line.

(END)