**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Implementing OJT Simply and Effectively**

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MR. KEATING: So we've got a lot to cover. So I'm going to go ahead and get myself right out of the way. Before I do I want to welcome you all to today's strategies for "Implementing OJT Simply and Effectively" webinar. My name is Brian. I'll be here if you need anything technically. Again, introduce yourself in that chat window.

And without any further ado, I'm going to turn things over to Andrew Ridgeway. Andrew is with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Andrew?

MR. RIDGEWAY: Thanks, Brian, and thanks to everyone joining us today. I'm Andy Ridgeway with the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, the Office of Workforce Investment working specifically in the Division of WIOA Adult Services and Workforce System. And I'd also like to point out that I'm joined with Virginia Hamilton, ETA's regional administrator for Region Six. I'm excited to kick off this webinar and wanted to thank Tom Hooper made it all set and Geri Scott with Jobs for the Future for putting this together as well as our featured presenters Sue Thompson and Oswaldo Alvarez.

The topic of on-the-job training has been a key emphasis of the Employment and Training Administration over the past couple of years, including Vice President Biden's job-driven report and culminating with the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in 2014. As you're all aware, President Obama signed WIOA into law on July 22nd, 2014, and DOL and the Department of Education are in the process of finalizing WIOA regulations this June. WIOA provides a strong emphasis on work-based training, particularly on OJT, registered apprenticeships, incumbent worker training, and customized training.

Additionally, WIOA has included a stronger emphasis on work experiences, included a provision regarding transitional jobs. All this focus is because data has shown that training linked to employment leads to good outcomes. Some local areas have been very successful utilizing these OJT strategies for a while now, whereas other local areas have limited their use because of some confusion and the questions about implementing successful OJTs.

To address these concerns and allow for greater, easier innovation of OJT strategies, ETA is providing local workforce development boards, American job centers, and their partners with a guide to help facilitate and promote the effective use of OJT. I'm excited to –

MR. KEATING: And, Andrew, just a quick – sorry, Andrew, to cut you off. Could you just speak up a little bit? We're getting some feedback that you're a little bit hard to hear. If you could just speak up a little bit, that would be great.

MR. RIDGEWAY: Not a problem. Thanks, Brian. I'm excited to join you today for this presentation on strategies for implementing OJT simply and effectively and encourage you to submit questions throughout this presentation, and we will try to provide answers at the end of the presentation. On those that we'll be unable to answer some questions that may be involved in the WIOA final regulations. However, we look forward to hearing from you your ideas and questions for implementing effective OJT strategies.

I'd like to thank you all for attending today's webinar, and I'll now turn it over to Tom Hooper with Jobs for the Future for today's presentation. Thanks again for joining. Tom?

MR. HOOPER: Great. Thanks very much, Andy. Well, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar. My name is Tom Hooper. I'm a senior director with Jobs for the Future, a non-profit based in Boston that helps develop and implement effective workforce development and education strategies. Thanks again for joining us today.

OJT could be a critical strategy for addressing the needs of workers, businesses, and the public workforce system, and we look forward to sharing some key practices that local boards and their partners are using to help implement OJT simply and effectively. And we also want to leave plenty of time for questions and answers at the end of the session today.

We have four key objectives for today's webinar. We'll provide an overview of major changes to OJT and key changes to OJT in WIOA and address some common misperceptions about OJT. We'll outline the benefits of OJT to businesses, workers, and the workforce system. We'll identify solutions to common OJT challenges, and then finally, we'll provide examples of OJT in action to help you replicate these promising practices and strategies in your states and local areas.

So first, a very brief, high-level overview of some of the key elements of OJT for those of you for whom it's a new strategy. Now, this is going to be very, very familiar ground for many of you. So I'll move through this quickly.

OJT is a form of work-based training provided by eligible businesses to eligible WIOA clients that's customized to address gaps in trainees' knowledge or skills. It's limited to the time that's needed to address skill gaps and improve job performance.

OJT's a resource for defraying the extraordinary costs of training and supervising trainees, and it could be applied to a wide range of skill needs and occupations from entry-level jobs to higher skill jobs.

And then finally, OJT is an effective strategy for supporting the employment of a diverse array of clients from low skill older youth to more highly skilled dislocated workers. So again, that's a very, very brief overview of OJT, and obviously there's much more detail in the law, in the regs, and in other TA that ETA has provided, but we wanted to set that context for those folks for whom it's a new strategy and a new concept.

WIOA provides local boards and their partners with a good opportunity to reconsider its use – the use of OJT. I mention this since some local areas have been reluctant to implement OJT, and a number of aspects of WIOA may now make OJT a more attractive training strategy for them. So with that in mind, we wanted to highlight five key changes to OJT under WIOA that may make it more attractive than it's been in the past.

So first, there's no prescribed sequence of services for qualifying for or engaging in OJT under WIOA. So clients do not need to receive what used to be called intensive services before enrolling in this training strategy. Second, WIOA enhances reimbursement. As a governor, a local board could increase reimbursement up to 75 percent of wages in some cases. WIOA's performance measures are well-aligned with effective OJT. Now, this includes measures such as retention of unsubsidized employment and effectiveness in serving businesses.

Another key change we wanted to touch on is that WIOA also encourages training that focuses on high-demand jobs and industries, and local boards and their partners can then target OJT to high-demand fields. And then finally, WIOA promotes links between OJT and registered apprenticeship as OJT can support the on-the-job portion of apprenticeship training for WIOA eligible apprentices. So those are just five aspects of WIOA that may make OJT more appealing to you than it has been in the past.

OJT has a range of benefits for businesses, workers, and the public workforce system. Now, for example, OJT ensures that new hires are trained to the specifications of specific occupations and mitigates the risks in training costs of hiring a new employee and can help avert layoffs by upskilling current employees so they can adapt to new products or technology required in their jobs. Now, those are all some of the benefits for businesses.

OJT also has benefits for workers. Now, for example, OJT improves the likelihood that an individual will retain their employment long-term by resolving key skill gaps at the beginning of employment. OJT also offers an effective alternative to classroom training because classroom training, as I guess we've all experienced, can be a setting which could be challenging for some individuals. And finally, OJT also helps secure employment with business that have demonstrated commitment to training.

So finally, benefits of OJT for the workforce system. This training strategy has a number of benefits for local boards and their partners, and just to give you a few examples, it can be a helpful resource for local boards and AJCs for building or expanding business services. It can support small businesses' training needs as these employers often have minimal human resources functions for screening candidates and training new hires. And then another example of a benefit, OJT can also increase the likelihood that training will produce successful outcomes and bolster local area performance. So again, just a few examples of benefits of OJT for the workforce system.

So while OJT has a range of benefits and I think as we all know OJT isn't the training equivalent of roses and champagne. Challenges can occur during the development and implementation of OJT contracts that can limit its appeal and ultimately its success. We now want to spend a few minutes identifying some of the challenges that often occur with OJTs and offer some solutions that are being utilized by local boards and their partners around the country to address those very specific challenges.

It's important to note that while we'll discuss four specific challenges, the resource guide that ETA has recently developed regarding successful and simple implementation of OJT identifies a few other challenges and accompanying solutions. We encourage you to refer to the guide for additional detailed information on all these challenges and their solutions. And actually, the guide and a few key appendices are accessible for downloading during the presentation today, and we'll come back to that.

One common OJT challenge cited by local areas around the country is a lack of staff capacity to identify business targets for OJT contracts. And one solution to this challenge is to cross-train staff that work with businesses such as Wagner-Peyser staff and then other partners like economic development agency staff on an OJT sales pitch that they can include in their menu of businesses and economic development services that they market when doing outreach to employers in the area.

Another solution is empowering jobseekers to include OJT as a part of their self-initiated job searches so that they can make the case themselves on the value that they bring and could bring to a business, despite any skills gaps they have. They can actually offer OJT as a strategy to fill those specific gaps.

A second common challenge is that some businesses think of OJT as a burdensome government program. The overarching solution to this challenge is to simplify and streamline the OJT paperwork process. Local boards have identified a number of ways to do this. For example, local boards and their partners can take on as much of the OJT paperwork as is feasible, including formulating job descriptions as well as transplants that meet the specifications of businesses and the skill and training requirements of clients.

Another helpful step is reducing the length of the OJT contracts to about two to five pages with the required assurances in fine print. Another innovation is using a master training agreement and then seeking signatures annually so you don't need to initiate a whole new training agreement and can use what you've already developed. That innovation also means that when new agreements need to be approved for the next program year, local boards and their partners need to simply work with businesses to acquire any information in the agreements they've already developed that just need to be updated.

So that's a quick overview of two specific challenges regarding OJT and some solutions that are already being implemented to address them. My colleague Geri Scott is going to discuss other challenges and solutions as well as highlight some local innovations in the implementation of OJT.

MS. SCOTT: OK. Thanks, Tom. And again, these are only four of the many kinds of challenges that you all encounter, and our information here is drawn from some of the best practices we've seen across the country.

One of the biggest challenges that we hear about from folks is training plans, what goes in them, how long should they be, how short should they be, and in some cases we see training plans that are almost like an eighth grade teacher's lesson plan. It's got all the questions and the training resources and how something should be taught. That's at one extreme.

On another extreme we see training plans that basically say we're going to spend 1,000 hours learning how to become an entry-level machine operator and that's it. So what would be my happy medium here?

And essentially what a training plan should consist of is an analysis or a description of the skills and competencies that a particular individual needs in order to qualify for a particular job. So not every individual going into an OJT for a machine operator, for example, will have an identical training plan. Your training plan starts with an assessment of the skills and competencies that an individual brings.

So if you have someone who's a dislocated worker who's actually worked in manufacturing, might have some of those skills and competencies already, you don't need to put that in the training plan. There's no rule saying that the training plan has to include every possible thing. So the best way to go about this is to try and take a look at the job description that the company has for the position because that will usually say they've got to have this, that, or the other skill and competency.

They have to know how to use a particular piece of equipment, or they have to know a particular procedure or a software platform. That tends to be true with bigger companies. Smaller companies might not have job descriptions, in which case you, as the intermediary who is marketing OJT and trying to make it easier for the employer to adopt OJT, can help them develop a job description.

And this is where your knowledge of things like O\*NET comes in really handy. And if you're experienced at this, you've probably got a great archive in your own files of other cashiers, engineers, whatever occupation you're doing an OJT for. Pull up that job description. Go over it with the employer, and tweak it to the point where it's actually reflecting what the skills are that that employer is looking for.

Now, the lesson plan, as I said – the training plan isn't a lesson plan. It doesn't include all the examples of how you teach various skills, but the OJT guide actually has a couple of really good examples in the appendices of high-level here are the tasks that someone needs to be able to do. Here are the skills and competencies someone brings to it, and here's what they've got to do to become fully competent on this. So I encourage you to take a look at that and both Sue and Oswaldo have developed these and use these and they'll probably say a few more words about them.

Another point that we want to make is training plans can get to be a kind of – OJT is a specialized area of work. So it does pay off to have dedicated staff who become your internal experts at this, and so we encourage you to assign specific staff to specific tasks. So this is one of the biggest challenges really.

The next challenge that we just want to touch on is how does OJT fit into a career advancement pathway. A lot of us look at OJT as a stand-alone activity, but employers are commonly complaining about the fact that completers of classroom training or new college graduates don't have the applied skills. Linking OJT to classroom training is a great way to demonstrate – to bridge that gap between the skills that someone needs and the skills that they already have.

Another great link is between OJT and registered apprenticeship, and I actually encourage you to take a look at registered apprenticeship because it does have training plans for the on-the-job learning involved in the apprenticeship. OJT and apprenticeship may be used for the incumbent workers who might become the apprentices, and so it is a very good way to bridge those gaps by linking OJT to a registered apprenticeship.

And we also want to really encourage folks to look at advanced skills. We've seen in our search around the country people who are using OJT for very high-paying jobs, jobs that pay $75,000 to $90,000 a year. They're engineers or they're accountants, and again, it's a great way to retrain folks for jobs where their skills just have a little bit of a gap.

There are some workforce boards around the country that have just done some amazing work on these kinds of things. One of the cool things has been done by Spokane Workforce Development Council, and I've been really fascinated by it. They actually train their clients, the participants in behavioral interviewing skills so that the participant – him or herself – when they're applying for a job, can say, OK. I might not meet all the skills that you're looking for in this job description but, boy, I've got approval for an on-the-job training and the workforce board will help subsidize you while you're teaching me the skills that I need for this higher job.

Southeast Missouri does a great job with sequencing employment services to place hard-to-serve folks. They really do link things like work experience to get the basic skills down, and then follow up with an OJT for a specific job.

And just for those of you who think OJT is too hard to do, in Westmoreland-Fayette they actually obligate half of their resources under WIOA to OJT, and they do this by giving allocations to service providers who are the intermediaries who go out there and market OJT to specific employers. Those intermediaries get a budget, and then they don't have to go back to the workforce board for every single individual OJT contract. It's a great way to streamline the process.

Now, that's the overview, and what we want to do now is turn this over to Sue Thompson from the Lane Workforce Partnership for a description of how Lane implements their OJT project. So, Sue?

SUE THOMPSON: Hello, everyone. I guess I'm one of the few that are on the West Coast. So it's lunchtime for us here. So I have a brand new phone. So can everybody hear me OK?

MS. SCOTT: I think so.

MR. HOOPER: You sound good.

MS. THOMPSON: OK. Then we're going to go on. So Lane County is a small county. You can see my map on here. Oregon doesn't have a lot of metropolitan. So I'm probably one of the smaller places that are talking today but Lane County is our fourth populous in Oregon and we range from the coast to the mountains. So we have an urban area and then some real rural areas, and we do OJTs with all types of businesses throughout the county, whether they're small to what would be a larger business from us, which is somewhere between 200 and 500 people.

So we have been talking – we moved OJTs to a business service about two years ago. Maybe almost three now and we've talked to some metropolitan places about what we do and it seems to kind of be catching on that it truly is something we market, sell, and assist businesses with more than we do jobseekers.

But on the other hand, everybody's benefitting from that. And the key point to this is to stay true to the training plan, that even though a business is who we're serving with an OJT, the training plan still belongs to the individual, and I think we leave it to the choices which we'll – one of the ways we really work with our sectors is keeping business – or really going out and working with the businesses that are in our sector, but we give them the choice. We will do business services, make referrals, train participants for the jobs, or they can make their choices or decide who they want to hire and then send that person to us and we'll respond for eligibility and such with WIOA.

We have a business service team. We're a very integrated workforce center and our business service is made up of Wagner-Peyser and Title 1-B (sic) and they market OJTs out to the businesses equally, even though we write them out of the Title 1-B side. This is one slide out of a marketing PowerPoint that we have that we show to chambers and rotaries and it might seem pretty simple but these are really the six steps that people need to take to at least talk to us about OJT.

And we really made our turning point when we did reduce the paperwork and made – took the contract and invoice away from the agreement with the business so we can go out and work with them before they get into that hiring situation where they are rushing to get somebody on board. We've gone through the assurances. We've helped them decide what skills they need so that then we're just matching that to the individual while we're writing the training plan.

See if we can change slides. There we go. Employers understand there is no guarantee that the person that they send to us is going to be eligible, but we obviously try to make everybody eligible. It all depends on what money we are paying that OJT out of, and I heard somebody say earlier that 50 percent of some regions' money goes to OJTs. We are a little higher than that. I think about 75 percent of our money goes to OJTs.

So we write a lot of OJTs, and employers became – once we had an employer who got excited and had a real positive OJT, then we just were getting calls after calls. And we ended up putting a cap of $3500 on our OJTs, and I said, oh, my goodness. Employers are going to say, it's not worth it. And that did not happen to us. $3500 has been a – has been our cap for the last two years, and that has not been an issue with employers wanting to participate.

The board also said, we don't want to use these funds for jobs that are not living wage jobs, and so we have a minimum wage of $11 with benefits and $15 without benefits that, if the job isn't paying that amount, then we don't write an OJT with them unless there is some special circumstances and we get a waiver for that. So we literally put some financial caps on our OJTs, and when we started, a little afraid that that was going to be an issue. Has not been an issue at all. We get requests for more OJTs than we have money to put out there.

So by giving – we really went out to these employers and gave them credit for what they're doing with their employees as it is, giving them credit for training people, bringing them up to the skill level that was necessary for them to work there, really opened that door with employers.

And we have talked to a lot of employers who have just thanked us for coming out and talking to them about skills needed for their jobs. It has helped them in developing job descriptions and really knowing where the competencies are within their business, and we offer that as a business service. So we're not just coming in and trying to force them into some government job training program, that we're really there to help them and the whole process of an OJT as again and again been set by businesses – (inaudible) – even if they never literally had an OJT on site and got paid for it.

So Lane County has a strong entrepreneurial small business movement going through here. We have some pretty big programs around that, and we do a lot of OJTs with small businesses. We limit how many they can have at one time, depending on how big the business and the capacity for training, but we do with – we do write a lot of them with small businesses.

And we're really pushing in our county that the Kaplan study issued this year shows that job growth in America is those small startup businesses, and we're really reaching out to them and working closely with them and helping them with what bigger businesses do with their HR departments, job descriptions, and skill needs and skill deficiencies. We're working with them on the business side to grow that part of their business and to help them and along the way helping them with OJTs.

And a lot of businesses have said that that just really has taken them over the hump, that they want to hire, not sure they can, and just with all the help around an OJT have been able to get over that and move forward in growing their business. And that is our whole outcome here is we want to grow businesses and keep them here in our area.

So we really try hard to say OJTs isn't for every job. There is a lot of jobs you can't do an OJT with, but if we can get down and talk about what the skills are and what is needed, we can see if we can make that match and write that OJT. We do an employer check-up list that some people call an agreement, some people call an assurance. But we get those employers to understand not only what it takes to be a good employer but also then what it takes to have an OJT on site and what can we help them with and any deficiencies that they don't have in those assurances.

We've got a high satisfaction of businesses. I mean, once a business has an OJT they're so much more comfortable with the workforce center and with us, and we have quit hearing this is a government program and it's too much of a pain and we don't want to deal with it. The paperwork has been minimized. We go to a one invoice at the end of the training period.

So we've really tried to take that paperwork down and try to help out as much as we can with making through all of the things that we need to do to have an OJT. Again, it certainly has increased our performance. We went from pretty low performance around training and training-related employment, and with OJTs it is training-related employment.

So our performance and even retention has grown with this program and we are big fans and write lots of OJTs and I think that they've attached our OJT plan. And I look at it and I think it's simple but it is really what it takes for an employer and the employee to understand what it's going to – what they need to do and how they can move forward. It's really that plan, that roadmap of how that employer moves forward.

So I think I'm going to turn this over to Oswald from Chicago.

OSWALDO ALVAREZ: OK. Well, thanks so much, Sue. Hello, everyone. This is Oswaldo Alvarez. I'm with Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, and I am going to be talking – thank you so much, first, Jobs for the Future, for putting this webinar together, and thank you so much for the invitation. And I am going to be talking a little bit about a project that we actually just engaged in to increase the utilization of our OJTs and a tool that we have developed and we use here that helps us track and analyze our OJTs.

So the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, we are the nation's second largest local workforce development area. We represent a merger of the city of Chicago and Cook County. So we oversee about a $60,000 million budget annually, and we subcontract to 53 delegate agencies. Ten of those are One-Stops. Eight are satellite centers. Four are sector centers.

The sectors are in manufacturing and IT and retail and hospitality, and we serve about 140,000 individuals a year. So as you could imagine, coordinated services among everyone here is a – could be a little challenging, but we are all trying to work together here in better implement OJTs.

So the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, we are divided – just like the field of workforce development is a dual client system with jobseeker and the businesses, we are divided – our program department is divided into units. One is the programs that oversee services for the jobseekers and then our business relations and economic development department that oversees the services for the business community.

So our BRED unit, business relations and economic development, is divided into seven different sectors that are – have been identified as high growth and high need in Cook County and the city of Chicago. And so we identify – we say – I mean, for us "high need" means that there are jobs readily available if we train, and we can place folks right now. And then "high growth" is we look at labor market information to the – it's five years, and if we see that there is significant growth and then that – then it makes it into our list of target sectors.

Last year the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, we engaged in a project to help us look into our processes and our procedures and our policies with the goal to help us identify specific gaps within our system and how we can best address those gaps so that we can increase the utilization of our OJTs.

We received a grant from the JP Morgan Chase Foundation to be able to engage in this project, and this project, really what it included was a series of surveys. They went out to employers that – so folks that have been touched, if you will, by OJTs. So employers, our delegate agencies that execute the OJTs, and then participants that have used an OJT, both those that have completed the OJT and those that dropped out during the OJT.

So these surveys gave us a wealth of information of all of the different – because we are here implementing OJTs and we're thinking that we're doing a great job and then it's not until folks come back and they tell you, well, you need to fix this or fix that that we start seeing the actual gaps of our system; right?

So one – so from the actual – our delegate agencies, of course one of the biggest things that came back was that they would like for there to be some sort of automated service or something so that we can best simplify the paperwork that – the paperwork of the OJT.

But point two and point three here are kind of related. The other big challenge, if you will, that agencies identified was that there needs to be some sort of consistent messaging and consistent marketing, if you will, that best talks about the benefits of OJTs and, again, in a very consistent way.

So agencies – many of our agencies have felt that they have some sort of need to develop some sort of marketing tools on their own. Some feel that they have been all over the place. So one of the things that they identified was that they needed – they would like for us, the partnership, to develop some sort of marketing materials that could be used for both employers and jobseekers.

But also related to this point, what the agencies also identified was the need to have consistent staff development and staff training that can deliver the message again in a very consistent way.

And I say this because this was actually – consistency was actually a series of meetings that we had here because, how to say it, everyone is believers of OJT. I think we've all been trying to implement the OJTs in different ways. We've been doing different strategies, and when you end up doing a lot of different strategies, then it ends up leading to some sort of inconsistency. So anyway, so that was a big one.

Now, from the employer side, when we did all of the surveys, one thing that came out, which was very interesting for us, is of course we were thinking that most employers were going to say the paperwork is a lot and everything that we always here. But most of the employers that came back, what they identified as their main challenge, if you will, with OJTs was the time it takes for their reimbursement.

So some of the employers indicated that when they first signed on, they were told that they were going to receive payment within a certain period of time, and then they were receiving payment within another period of time, which actually that's what most employers said, if we can fix that, then that's really the main challenge that we have.

And something that it was very interesting from these surveys was that – and this kind of is related to the point that Sue was making earlier about a cap with $3500. So one of the questions – so we have in a way a sliding scale here where small employers we'll do the reimbursement up to 75 percent. And by small employers, we mean 50 employees or less. And then larger employers we do a reimbursement to up to 50 percent.

And so one of the questions that we asked to all the employers was that, if OJT was less than 50 percent, would you still use it? And overwhelmingly, they all said yes, which for us, it led us to understand that what we need to be focusing on is our procedures and reimbursement more so than a lot of the bigger picture conversations that many times is – we like to have here.

And something – and then finally, something that was also very clear of all of the surveys was that our agencies were saying that they need some sort of very clear division of labor. They needed to – for us – for the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership to be the one that says, these are the duties of a career coach when executing an OJT. These are the duties of the job developer, and these are the duties of the OJT admin staff.

So these are the things that you need to do this. You need to do this. This is your responsibility. This is your responsibility. So as soon as we actually developed these kind of, if you will, work descriptions, if you will, actually this allowed agencies to actually have a more clear picture of who did what and it referred them to be able to execute those duties exceptionally.

So and then finally, I would like to talk a little bit about a spreadsheet, a tool that we created here at the partnership. So we created this, and I believe the spreadsheet's going to be available to everyone here. We created a spreadsheet back in 2012 that – in order for us to try – for – and the spreadsheet was really meant for us to track OJT folks, where they are in the process, have they falled out, and just it was really just meant to be used to be a tracking mechanism.

Now, but very fast this spreadsheet became a data analysis mechanism. It really – very fast it – after – within six months, instead of a spreadsheet we were able to see which agencies were performing very well with OJT contracts and then which agencies needed more technical assistance. We also were able to see which industries make most use of OJTs and which occupations and then which industries and occupations are we not marketing OJTs effectively.

And then finally, it actually allowed us to do some sort of very local wage data analysis to see which occupations were paying how much and which other occupations were paying less when used OJTs versus were not using OJTs. So those were three very, very specific data analysis that this spreadsheet allowed us to have.

Now, something else that the spreadsheet actually did was that, because the spreadsheet is available to our agencies, folks were starting to actually see who was performing better than others. And so because of that, in a way it started, if you will, spurred some sort of competition within the agencies where the agencies were actually – if they were not performing as well, they were actually coming out as saying – asking us if we can provide more technical assistance. So very fast we started performing very well. Other agencies that were not performing as well started performing better, but yeah.

So with that I'll give it to – I'll hand it over to Tom with Jobs for the Future for questions and answers.

MR. HOOPER: Great. Thank you very much, Oswaldo. That was terrific and some really, really practical advice for folks about how to replicate some of the great work you all are doing specific to OJT in their area. So we will start working through the questions, and we got some really good questions on a whole array of topics.

So we'll start off with a question about someone was interested in getting updated information on OJT strategies and practices. And that was not a planned question from us, but we were happy to plan a couple resources that I think you all will find helpful. ETA has actually developed a new guide on some very specific solutions that local areas can take to help streamline and offer OJT perhaps more efficiently than they've done in the past. And that was actually the foundation for the information we shared today.

The different innovations that Sue and Oswaldo talked about are profiled in that guide along with some specific practices Geri Scott talked about as well. So – and another aspect of that guide is it's actually got six different tools in it – and both Oswaldo and Sue talked about them – that local boards and their partners have created to help them offer OJT more simply and effectively than they have in the past. And those tools are also offered to all of you as a part of that guide.

So if you look on the – should be the lower left-hand corner of your screen, there's a file share option. From that file share option you can download the resource guide itself. You can also download two of the tools that are available, and that's the Chicago Cook tool that's an OJT training worksheet employer agreement, and there's some really helpful guidance on how to use that tool embedded in it. So we encourage you to download that. Also Sue talked about an OJT plan that they developed, and that also is available there. It's labeled appendix, but that's available there as well.

So those are available right now for you to download on this very screen, and then the other four tools that were developed, as well as all these ones I talked about, are already posted on WorkforceGPS. We'll also post them again when we post the transcript and the follow-up from this webinar in the next couple days. We're carpet bombing you with ways to get this information but all that information is there and we definitely encourage you to use it. I mean, we put this together very carefully based on really detailed conversations with local boards and their partners.

And so it's really grounded in practices that are tried and have worked, not just – (inaudible) – ideas. So definitely encourage you to use, folks, and also ask questions of our practitioners that are on the line today because they're going to have really, really good in-the-weeds feedback and guidance to give. So that is a quick answer to your question, and then we're also going to post an actual link to where you can get those on WorkforceGPS as a part of the session today.

So our next question is around businesses – actually, we'll do a foundational question first. Someone asked a very important foundational questions. "Is OJT the definition of a program or of the sort of type of training being offered?"

And there's a really specific answer to this question, which is we've been talking today about the on-the-job training, which is a very specific strategy defined in WIOA and in its regs and which has specific parameters that go along with it. So on-the-job training, as we've been talking about it, refers to WIOA-defined OJT. It's also important to note here that the field as a whole will use the term on-the-job training – little o, little j, little t – to refer to training provided in a business setting.

And sometimes they might be referring to WIOA-defined OJT, and sometimes they're referring to something like an internship. It could be – it can vary, but there's no actual specific definition there. So we are referring for this session today we are referring to WIOA-defined on-the-job training or OJT for short. So a couple just baseline questions there.

One question that came in was around the businesses that are eligible to participate in OJT, and, Andy Ridgeway, do you want to take that one?

MR. RIDGEWAY: Yeah. Sure thing. Thanks, Tom. So yeah. First of all, like Tom mentioned, we are finalizing the WIOA regulations, which will be coming out in June, as well as offering up guidance afterwards to more articulate these things. But I just wanted to note generally, like – (inaudible) – training your local workforce area, it should be tailored to your local plans and it should be in industries that you've identified as being in demand.

But generally, a business can engage in OJT if it is a public, private, non-profit establishment. Generally, there's an agreement that the company hire the individual at the start of a training and assigned to the OJT trainee productive work.

And then it provides the OJT trainee wages and benefits comparable to other employees in the company with similar occupations, with similar training, experience, and skills. So that's generally the high level of what the businesses are, but there's a lot of flexibility for local workforce boards in identifying these businesses. So I wanted to pass that along.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. That's great. Thank you, Andy. That's great. So let's see. So looking through the questions – and, Andy, a few questions for you that we'll take in a row. The next question is, "How can an OJT be appropriate and eligible for an incumbent worker?" The question is, "Wouldn't an individual need to be dislocated – a dislocated worker, in other words, or income eligible to be able to access the WIOA-funded programs?"

MR. RIDGEWAY: Yeah. This is a great question, and I want to – this is a good opportunity to clarify one of the key things about WIOA, and that is – and probably most people are aware that under WIOA local areas can reserve up to 20 percent of their adult and dislocated worker funds, the combined total of those funds, to do specifically incumbent worker training. And that has its own criteria outside of OJT specifically, and that generally is with the business directly. Generally, you're directly working with the business who becomes eligible either to do – increase the competitiveness of the employer or to – (inaudible) – us.

And then specifically – so I just want to be sure and highlight there is that pocket and that strategy which can be used. Generally, OJT is for hiring on the new worker. Generally, it takes up to six months. There's no – the department doesn't specifically define a duration, but it's more for the entry level, getting the skills to perform the job fully, whereas incumbent worker is more so to enhance skills or to maintain skills so that people can avoid layoffs or move up a career path.

One thing I would note is for OJT the question is correct. You do have to meet eligibility criteria vis-à-vis adult or dislocated worker program. So that needs to be taken into account. An individual – the income eligibility is not – there's a priority for the adult program to provide low income individuals. It's not a sole eligibility requirement, but it is a priority. So I wanted to note that.

And then dislocated workers are individuals generally who have been dislocated, as we said. The department doesn't define when a dislocation ends. So we do give states and local areas some authority to – if somebody gets laid off from a full-time job and gets hired on part-time, maybe they're still a dislocated worker. We do give that kind of flexibility. So I wanted to note that and hope that addresses the question.

MR. HOOPER: There are a wide range of questions that are coming in. That was great. And next question is for my colleague Geri Scott. Geri, it's a question about OJT in small business. The question is, "Are the small business OJT programs an apprenticeship program? And if so, are they then registered?" So you talk about that a little bit.

MS. SCOTT: Oh, that's a great question. OJT is a component of a registered apprenticeship, but registered apprenticeship and OJT are very distinct activities. Apprenticeship, especially a registered apprenticeship, have to meet certain guidelines from either the federal Office of Apprenticeship or half the states in the country have state apprenticeship agencies that approve apprenticeships.

And it's a formal structured program that has to be at least 2,000 hours long, and it consists of related instruction, which is usually classroom instruction, and on-the-job learning with very clear curricula. It has nothing to do with the size of the business, but it does end up with a nationally recognized credential. But the occupation and the training curriculum must be submitted to either the state or federal apprenticeship agency for approval.

On-the-job training, on the other hand, does not result in any kind of a credential, but it does build skills, applied learning skills. And again, it can be done with any size business, but it does not lead to a nationally recognized credential.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. Thank you, Geri. That's great. Turning to question – there were a couple questions that came in regarding to OJTs in specific industries. And, Sue, one of the questions that came in was specifically about healthcare. Do you have any examples that you could share about – OJT examples for healthcare and sort of related medical type occupations?

MS. THOMPSON: Yeah. We just finished OJTs around taking CNA 1s to CNA 2s and getting them jobs at the hospitals. So we have a major medical provider here, and they were wanting to hire CNA 2s at the hospital and felt that they didn't have a good population. So the nice thing about this was they offered to do the actual classroom training of the CNA 2s, the paperwork, the testing after they hired them.

So we made these people eligible. They hired them. They went to school first or went to the class on site and then for the clinical where they were literally working on the floor in the hospital and getting that hands-on training we paid an OJT for. So the employer put in the money for the actual paper training, and then we added OJTs to get them up to the level that they needed to be to be working on the floor.

And what we found was we just put out a marketing to the whole community saying, if you are currently a CNA 1 and you are interested in becoming a CNA 2 and working at the hospital, we got just a flood of people who said, I can't afford to go to school and be a CNA 2 unless I'm making money.

So this was such a great process that the hospital decided they would pay for the two weeks of classroom training, and then we were able to come in with OJTs for the clinical, for the on the floor. It has worked out well, and we're getting ready to do it with another area and another hospital.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. That's great. Thanks, Sue. That's great.

Oswaldo, two questions for you. The first is around the acronym SATO. Could you talk about what SATO stands for and how it's a part of OJT?

MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah. Sorry about that. Yeah. We live in acronyms over here. SATO is the skills acquisition and training outline form. It's just a form that our job developers actually use to assess the specific needs that employers have as far as what skills they are – they would like their new hires to have, and it also then gets implemented into the participant's IEP so that these are the skills that the participant is going to be working towards. So yeah. So I apologize that I had that acronym there and I never mentioned what that was. So yeah.

MR. HOOPER: No. That's great. Go ahead. Go ahead.

MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah. Was there another question you said?

MR. HOOPER: Yeah. Yeah. That's – thank you. That's good. The second question is, "When you give the service provider a budget – (inaudible) – OJTs, is that separated with funding from the adult and dislocated worker funding stream? And then who determines the eligibility of an individual in that – in your range of service providers?"

MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah. Yeah. So actually, our agencies that have been doing OJTs for a long time, when they submit their budget, they put a line item for OJT. However, we don't just limit it to only the agencies that have it as a line item. For those agencies that are new to OJTs, we also do do them, only that we do them as if it was an ITA. So there's a whole separate budget, if you will.

But who determines the eligibility? Well, one is if the participant's income eligible, then they are eligible for services. So in this case the career coach. And if the participant is eligible through other funding streams, then our staff here at the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, we look at that participant's file and then we see what other funding streams – or which other funding streams they may be a best fit for.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. That's great.

MS. SCOTT: That's great, Oswaldo. This is Geri, and I just want to point out that in the on-the-job training guide that we encourage you to download there's a short case study about the Westmoreland-Fayette WIB. The practice of allocating funds to service providers and authorizing them to develop the OJTs as well as determine the eligibility is not unique to Cook County, although it's very well implemented in Cook County. (Inaudible.)

MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah. And just – yeah.

MS. SCOTT: Go ahead.

MR. ALVAREZ: And just to add, one of the reasons why we do that is because the job developers, they work for another – or the agency that we are subcontracting, which means that the employer has the relationship with that agency. And so in many ways the agencies have seen that it is more the relationship is there if they are dealing directly with the employer as opposed to having a third – what employers would think of as a third party, which would be us, being the one that's administering the payment and stuff.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. That's great. Thank you. So we are actually at 4:00 o'clock. So we are running out of time, and these are great questions. I'll say too that we're not going to get to all the questions that have been put out, but we will put out – us at ETA will put out an FAQ on this following up on this webinar in the next few weeks. So that will identify a number of the questions that have come in that we haven't been able to get to today, and thanks for all these questions. They're great.

So the last question to touch on is a local area that's interested in how other areas vet their businesses. And the questioner said, "We do a lot with small business, micro business, but they often end up unsuccessful in terms of OJT. So would love to know about that." Sue, do you want to tackle that one?

MS. THOMPSON: Sure. We get a lot of small businesses, and I guess about vetting them is really that time we spent with them over the assurances and then what is their history. We're in a small enough community that we know whether people want to work there, why they're not working there any longer, and we really take that into consideration.

We have not had a problem with small businesses not keeping those people on, but I think a lot of it is working with them. Are you really ready to hire somebody? Do you have the capital? Are you able to pay wages after this OJT? We talk to them about that around you are hiring this person. Do you have enough money to continue to pay them? So we're not finding, in fact, probably more with larger businesses, people getting laid off around this have been on an OJT than we have with smaller businesses. But I do think it's having those hard conversations with that employer.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. That's great. Thank you, Sue.

Well, hey, Brian, would you post the PowerPoint one more time? Just go back to that just because we – as we wrap up?

MR. KEATING: Yep. Sure thing. Here we go.

MR. HOOPER: OK. That's great. Well, thank you very much, everybody. This is a really, really great information sharing opportunity to get all these questions from all of you, and hopefully we provided some really practical on-the-ground information that you all can use. And big thanks to all the presenters today, to Sue, Oswaldo, Geri, Andy. Virginia Hamilton has been a part of this too, and thank you, Virginia.

And a couple last points. In terms of resources, we've been talking about the resource guide that was developed and the tools that are a part of it. Brian Keating has posted on the left-hand side of your screen a link where you can get all the resources now, and then we'll also repost them again when we share the transcript from this presentation in a couple days. Another follow-up is we'll be working with ETA to put together an FAQ following up on this presentation, and we'll share that as well.

And then I wanted to mention this slide has the same – a lot of the same resources we talked about on it already and also just mention the ETA OJT toolkit, which is a real foundational document that ETA put together maybe five or six years ago but that's really, really good. It's got a lot of excellent promising practices in it again called from and based on working with local providers to identify what works. So I'd encourage you to use that and access it through WorkforceGPS, but that continues to be a very timely resource.

So I will stop there. Again, thanks to all of you for participating, our presenters, and we look forward to working with you on again – working on this again with you in the next few weeks. Brian, back to you.

MR. KEATING: All right. Great.

(END)