**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Navigating Language and Cultural Barriers to Increase Access to Employment, Education, and Training Opportunities**

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JONATHAN VEHLOW: So without further ado I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Laura Ibanez, Specialty National Programs Unit, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. Laura?

LAURA IBANEZ: Thank you. Hi. Good afternoon. Good morning, everyone. My name is Laura Ibanez, and I'm the unit chief for Specialty National Programs Unit which includes the monitor advocate system, National Farmworker Jobs Program, disability and employment initiative, and work opportunity tax credit. So it's such a great pleasure to have you all here with us today.

Today's an opportunity for us to hear from two of our National Farmworker Jobs Programs grantees, specifically our employment and training grantees who are here to talk about some strategies that they use in order to improve job and career options for individuals with cultural and language barriers. Specifically in this case today, we're talking about our migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

So for today's objectives there's two main things that we want to stress today. We want to talk a little bit about – learn about NFJP and migrant seasonal farmworkers, specifically about who is this population? What are some of the barriers to employment that they experience? And not only thinking about the barriers but thinking about what are some of the strategies that our employment and training grantees have adopted in order to meet the needs of these individuals. The second point is to discuss culturally inclusive strategies, best practices in outreach and case management, and strategies for staff hiring and development.

So the National Farmworker Jobs Program, often referred to as NFJP, is authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, WIOA, under Section 167. Its primary goal is to provide career services, training services, housing assistance services, youth services, and other related assistance services to help retain agriculture jobs, including agricultural skills upgrade or acquire new skills.

One of the things about WIOA is that it's important to keep in mind that WIOA presents an opportunity to align services in order to better meet the needs of English language learners with substantial cultural language barriers to employment. And so this is something that we keep in mind, which is why we're really excited to have two of our employment and training grantees. And we wanted to make sure that this is something that we could share not only with our other employment and training – (inaudible) – grantees out there but open it up to the entire workforce system.

So in regards to factors creating access barriers, the publicly funded workforce system envisioned by WIOA is quality focused, employer driven, customer centered, and tailored to meet the needs of regional economies. It is designed to increase access to and opportunities for employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment.

And so when we think about who are migrant seasonal farmworkers, I just – we wanted to take an opportunity to just sort of give you some background. What are some of the barriers a migrant and seasonal farmworker experience?

And so given that there are majority of them working in the fields, they are considered geographically isolated. Limited transportation, and regards to limited transportation and the fact that they often have to commute or find transportation to go from one field to another, that also brings up some challenges out there when you think about safety and work hazards.

The third point here is that there's social and cultural isolation. So agriculture workers are far more likely to be Latino/Hispanic 76 percent, and foreign born 71 percent. However, because of that percentage being so high, one thing that we often need to remind our self is that just because it's 76 percent to be Latino or Hispanic, there are also other ethnicities and individuals that speak different languages that are also doing farm work.

And I know that one of our employment and training grantees from Telamon is going to share a little bit more about that. It's not always Latino in that sense.

Only 39 percent have schooling beyond the ninth grade, which as you think about that and thinking about whether or not they can speak English well or not, that is sort of the starting point that our grantees need to keep in mind that, if we're talking about increasing career and employment opportunities for individuals who walk into our One-Stops that are also known as American Job Centers, that we are thinking about where are they starting from and how can we get this individual who may have this type of education level or maybe is still learning how to speak the language and speaking English at the time, how can we make sure that they have access to these services and do well and also receive the support that they need in order to be engaged and continue onward to a career pathway of their choice?

So if we could just go to the next slide, we just want to really to highlight here is that under WIOA Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act prohibits discrimination base of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or political belief. So something about this slide that it's just important to keep in mind that the vision of an American Job Center is to ensure meaningful access to all customers, including participants with substantial cultural language barriers to employment. And so when we speak about migrant seasonal farmworkers, this is something that we really want to keep in mind and not only for our NFJP grantees to keep in mind but also others out there that are providing services.

As you know, our customers that walk into the American Job Centers really do represent all walks of life. So it's important to keep in mind that this is actually required by WIOA. One thing that I want to point out is that Section 188 is often viewed as a provision in the law that's primarily for people with disabilities, and that's not the case. And so it's something that can be applied to make sure that it prohibits discrimination due to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or political affiliation or belief.

And I think we're ready for the next slide, and so here we are joined with Kathy Nelson who's the director of workforce development from Association of Farmworker Opportunity Program, also known as AFOP. So Katie, why don't you take it away?

KATHLEEN NELSON: Thank you, Laura. You can go to the next slide. One of the things I wanted to talk about, through a grant from the Department of Labor at the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Program that's a national association made up of all 52 NFJP grantees, was able to design a peer sharing program and offer the NFJP grantees the means to attend or host peer sharing meetings on a variety of topics all geared toward improving services or practices related to NFJP performance outcomes and improving the lives of migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

We had one such visit in February of 2017. Representatives from multiple NFJP grantee organizations gathered in Little Rock, Arkansas to discuss the challenge of serving segmented and segregated populations of farmworkers. In many NFJP service areas there are multiple distinct populations of farmworkers, as Laura said. One population may be a group of recent immigrant English language learners, and another group, as in Arkansas, may be community of African American or other non-Hispanic farmworkers who performed farm labor for generations in the same community.

Though immigrant and non-immigrant farmworkers have many of the same barriers to employment, an outreach worker or a case manager may see successes reaching and serving individuals in these communities with very different approaches.

Through our peer meeting the grantees discussed the challenges they faced on the ground in performing outreach to different segmented populations, the types of cultural competencies that their outreach and case management staff needed to be able to serve participants in their service areas, as well as the cultural competencies and workplace readiness skills that their participants needed in order to be successful in the growth industries in their areas. Next slide.

I want to look for a minute revisiting what Laura discussed in her introduction at some of the demographic information that DOL has gathered about NFJP participants. You'll notice in the first pie graph that white has the highest response rate. In the world of statistics Hispanic is not considered a race but an ethnicity. Many Hispanics identify as white, black, or mixed race.

As you can see in the second pie chart, almost 70 percent of NFJP exiters in 2016 identified their ethnicity as Hispanic. This means neither pie graph fully represents the complex diversity of the migrant and seasonal farmworker population. Additionally, it's important to remember that Hispanic people in the United States are not culturally homogenous and that cultural norms vary across and within different Spanish speaking countries. Next slide.

Looking at the additional barriers to employment at intake that the NFJP grantees reported in 2016, it's typical of most farmworkers that their main barriers are a lack of work history and the fact that they have been long-term agriculturally employed. This is something that we see across all participant demographics, English language learners or not, and it's interesting to think about too that in some service areas in certain industries the lack of work history may be a bigger barrier to employment than limited English proficiency, especially if the migrant and seasonal farmworkers' primary language is one that is more commonly spoken in the service area.

For example, a farmworker speaks Spanish where there's a large established Spanish speaking community may be able to transition to a new industry where Spanish is commonly spoken more quickly than someone who speaks primarily mixed tech or Somali or Arabic or some of the other sort of smaller populations of farmworkers that NFJP grantees are serving. Next slide.

So focusing back on our peer gathering in Arkansas, at this meeting representatives from NFJP grantees from New York, Vermont, Ohio, Louisiana, Maryland, and Arkansas came together to talk about the different ethnic and racial groups that make up the MSFW population in their service area. As you can see, just among these six states the migrant and seasonal farmworker population is richly diverse, including immigrants and refugees from Mexico, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Somalia, Laos, Haiti, Puerto Rico, as well as non-immigrant African American and Caucasian farmworkers. Next.

So what did we learn in Arkansas? One of the main things that we talked about was what it means to build cultural competency. A lot of the grantees reported the importance of developing cultural sensitivity training or cultural competency training for outreach and case management staff.

We already prepare staff to meet customers where they are academically or in their skills, as Laura discussed, but staff can benefit from increased professional development in recognizing cultural barriers experienced by farmworkers from many different ethnic, religious, or other backgrounds.

The grantees who are working with participants who primarily speak a non-dominant language – in this case I mean languages – especially languages other than English or Spanish – it can be very challenging for effective case management if none or very few people on the grantee staff or in the local One-Stop speak the primary language of a participant. Some of the solutions that grantees reported were making strategic hiring decisions in their own staff to ensure that they have bilingual staff to be able to communicate with the participants in their area.

Many of them keep lists of translation services available all the time so that they can, if someone walks in to their center, be able to at least communicate through an interpreter. One of the challenges for languages that are not spoken as commonly is that, if you only have one or two bilingual people on your staff or in a workforce center, those individuals can become overburdened. And that's something that the grantees who were gathered discussed strategies for helping to ensure that no one person on the staff becomes overburdened by the ability to communicate with participants.

Another thing that the grantees reported was working with partners to help participants – potential participants' basic level of English proficiency before enrolling in NFJP. This is especially helpful for groups of refugees that have other – that may have other service providers even outside the workforce system working with them that you can come up with some basic levels of competency in English language before enrollment.

Another important area for staff development was an awareness of cultural barriers that affect workplace expectations of the participants. Developing your staff's cultural awareness can be very important when, for example, a participant has religious or cultural beliefs that will impact their ability to succeed in training or the workplace, for example, people who come from places that are segregated by gender or whose religious worship falls on days outside the typical American weekend. Next slide.

I really want to highlight something from our meeting that was a major aha moment for me, and that was reviewing and improving outreach materials and eligibility assessment questions to be as inclusive as possible. The majority of NFJP participants enter services through direct outreach conducted by the grantees or in partnership with others serving farmworkers like the state Monitor Advocate Network.

Many migrant and seasonal farmworkers identify culturally as part of a farmworker tradition or community, but many eligible participants may not. Outreach workers should consider whether they communicate to partners or potential participants that they're looking for people who have done farm work or worked in the fields rather than are farmworkers. The subtle different in personal identity may open your program to people who may not pursue services otherwise.

A grantee also shared that the same approach can be helpful in identifying individuals who are eligible for veterans benefits or services. Because many veterans don't self-identify as a veteran unless they've served overseas or during a conflict, changing the question from are you a veteran to were you ever in the military or something similar may help identify people who qualify for additional services or possible co-enrollment earlier.

So that is a summary of our meeting in Arkansas, and it was a wonderful experience to get the grantees together to share. And on that note we can move to the next slide. One of our program directors, Jennifer Shahan, the state director of Telamon Corporation in Maryland, was at our visit in Arkansas.

Jennifer has been a state director for Telamon's Maryland-Delaware division since 2007 and has worked with Telamon in various capacities since 1994, starting as a summer outreach worker for three summers while obtaining her Bachelor of Arts in psychobiology and minor in Spanish from Hood College. Her tenure – during her tenure with Telamon, Jennifer served on several boards, operates a variety of employment and training programs, including the NFJP in Maryland and a mainline out-of-school youth program. And she assists with various other initiatives, and, Jennifer, please take it away.

JENNIFER SHAHAN: Thank you, Katie, for the warm introduction. Yes. I work for Telamon, a private non-profit operating workforce and career service programs, as well as other programs in multiple states in the Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Midwest. As noted, we operate the National Farmworker Jobs Program or NFJP for short and have had the opportunity and blessing to provide this programming to farmworkers for many years.

My work focuses in Delaware and Maryland, especially the Delmarva Peninsula. Operating this program long-term has been a real honor and has given us the opportunity to adapt and work with many cultures over the years. The changing cultures and languages of farmworkers on the Delmarva Peninsula over the past 25 years has resulted in us needing to be highly adaptable and flexible as we work to ensure that the services we provide are aligned with both the customers' needs that we serve and the employers that we serve.

In the late '80s to the early '90s we saw a huge change in the farmworker demographics in this area from predominantly African American to predominantly Latino heritage. Now, for the last few years the customers who are eligible for NFJP have been predominantly Haitian Creole. Each time that the demographics change we've had significant changes to adapt to as well as having to work diligently to assure that resources remain available to serve the existing customer base.

We currently provide all of our services in three main languages, English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. For our National Farmworker Jobs Program about two-thirds of our ENT customers are Haitian, one-sixth are Latino, and one-sixth are African American at this time. So the farmworker population remains about 80 to 85 percent Latino on the Delmarva Peninsula. Many of them are not NFJP eligible for a variety of reasons, but that's just a breakdown for our specific location.

Across each location of course for the NFJP grantees there are different cultural groups, and the targeted groups that we work with ebb and flow with economic and societal conditions. Today I hope to share with all of you listening some of the practices that we've put into place to assure cultural and linguistic competence with a person centered focus, which is designed to lead toward better outcomes for our customers, some that we're working toward and some of the challenges that we continue to face.

To begin with we use a person centered approach for outreach. That's our central tenant that we use for establishing cultural competence. As Katie discussed earlier, we strive to meet customers where they are. That has a variety of meanings, both literal and figurative. First, we meet them at locations where they are physically located, which might mean in the fields, in their neighborhoods, where they congregate at grocery stores or at laundry mats.

We work to outreach in places where they are. We meet them where they are in places where they feel comfortable and at times that work for them. That means that it could be on the evenings and on the weekends. It might be during the work day when they're working.

And this might not seem on the face of it to be such an important topic for culturally sensitive person centered approach, but it establishes the baseline of a trusting and a genuine relationship that we are willing and able to meet when and where it's most convenient for them, where they are most comfortable, and that helps to establish that we are a team working together on common goals.

Next, we accept everyone with where they are and help them determine where they want to go, understanding that our personal values are not to be put onto our customers. Learning about their individual culture, their individual needs, their families' needs and goals helps us to work with where they are and decide what pathway they want to use to get to where they want to go.

Again, being supportive of those goals and aligned with WIOA regardless of our own personal beliefs and values. For example, being person centered and WIOA aligned allows us to support the customer and their ability to pick and choose from a menu of services that are culturally appropriate instead of necessarily following a prescribed pathway, understanding that individuals have different needs at different times along their career choices.

Q: Hey, Jennifer, if you don't mind, I'm interrupting for a second. We're having a little problem with hearing you. If you could speak a little louder, that would be great. Thank you.

MS. SHAHAN: OK. It's also important to remember that not everyone has the same goals as to the levels of acculturation that they're interested in attaining. It isn't up to us to determine these goals but the person that we are working with. This can be hard at first because we are so engrained to focus on the common measures, the LMI, the labor market information, and the outcomes.

But in reality, by working to meet the customer where they are and to identify and develop goals and outcomes based on their needs and desires aligned with their cultural and linguistic needs, many times you may end up with higher outcomes as the relationship continues and the trust builds. Without trust and rapport, the long-term relationships needed for WIOA outcomes and follow up and retention can become strained and difficult to achieve.

Even if your short-term goals are achieved as you assist the customer with their immediate needs, once they don't need you anymore but you need them for retention, the value then becomes apparent as to how well we've established the long-term trust with our individuals and the communities that we're serving.

Working to learn about the cultures of the individuals we are serving is the next critical step that we work with. This is an ongoing process, and it's important for all of our staff, not just the immediate case worker.

First, learning about the cultures or the individuals that we serve can occur in a variety of ways such as researching cultural sites, talking with communities and faith-based leaders, and learning from staff and volunteers who identify with that culture. It's critical to remember a couple key points, though. We have to do our homework first. It isn't up to our customers to educate us about their culture. We should be prepared ahead of time and know the basics. However, there are a couple important caveats to remember. One, most cultures are not homogenous. There are subgroups within each culture.

So, thinking that we've learned everything about a culture and not doing the next important steps can also lead us down a wrong path. The next one to remember is that everyone is an individual with individual personalities and preference that may or may not align with self-identified cultural norms.

So even though we may have done our research and learned about our customers' preferences and cultures, the next steps are just as important, and that's about assessing and checking our understanding about what we think we know.

For example, we do quite a few home visits with our customers. It's important for us to know ahead of time what we think the cultural norms are for visiting homes, making sure that we're checking in, and making – seeing what that is. Do we take our shoes off, or do we leave them on? Do we sit, or do we stand? Do we accept the cup of coffee, or do we not accept the cup of coffee? What is appropriate, and what isn't?

And then the simple act of asking the customer is critical for checking in. For example, we could say, would you like me to take my shoes off before I come in? That can make all the difference in a budding relationship. Learning about the cultures of the customers we currently serve as well as any new targeted groups that we would like to serve and determining what is appropriate and not appropriate, checking for individual preference is important for all of our staff and volunteers.

It's important that not only do customers have a comfort level with their primary case manager or case worker but also all other staff. Sometimes we're apt to just think that it's the main case manager working with a customer, but because all of our staff work with all of our customers in some form or fashion, it's important that everybody have that ability to learn.

That's where cross-training is so important. It also alleviates staffing pressures during natural staff turnover or for staff coverage, for example, during personal leave or sick leave. This can involve ongoing cross-training, cultural competency, diversity training, for example. This picture that you see up is actually one of our volunteers who was really big on providing cultural diversity training and other cross-training for us.

A concrete step that we can do is to make sure that we have policies and procedures in place that help guide our work toward cultural competence. There are several places online that provide valuable tools and checklists for our HR teams and policy teams to review and to use as we strengthen this area. I like to use the National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown, but please Google and find resources that make sense for you and your team.

For example, some of the changes that we made based on our research involved what information we gathered in our comprehensive initial assessments. We've now added several items that focus on our customers' individual and cultural preferences. For example, we now ask their preferred communication styles that include not just their language that they prefer to be communicated in but also what manner communication they prefer, be it written, oral, text, phone, face to face, etc.

We also ask about their natural support systems, and these responses help us to meet the customer where they are with a person centered design but also allow us to learn about their specific cultural needs via a strengths based model. It helps us with continuous improvement and assessment of their cultural and linguistic needs and the strengths in the communities that we serve. They're so critically important to understanding and being able to utilize and support our customers as they work to transition to their postsecondary education, if they're youth, or training in careers leading to self-sufficiency for themselves and their families for our populations.

Some other policies and procedures that can be instituted revolve around interpretation and translation services, accessible systems, materials in alternative formats or low literacy, some policies for ongoing training, staff volunteer development, and confidentiality, for example. One of the policies and procedures that are most effective that we focus on regards – revolves around our hiring policies.

Hiring and utilizing diverse staff and volunteers is where we start, making sure that we recruit as much as possible from the cultural backgrounds in the communities that we serve. This serves a critical importance in building trust and establishing relationships. Hiring from within these communities and providing ample onboarding and training opportunities, recruiting volunteers who have experiences similar to our targeted populations also help to establish strong dynamic relationships in the communities we serve.

Additionally, hiring staff who are open to new experiences, who are naturally curious and interested in getting to know people is also important because the customers that we're serving today might not be the same customers we're serving tomorrow. You heard earlier about how our demographics have been changing. That could be the same thing that happens in the next five years.

The cost of staff training and turnover is so very high. Just because someone isn't the same gender or ethnicity doesn't mean that a meaningful and valuable counseling relationship is impossible, however. Though some customers prefer case workers from similar backgrounds, sometimes customers prefer someone who is not from their community.

For example, our financial assessment and budgeting process is quite detailed and personal. We found that some of the customers that we have really don't want a fellow community member knowing fully all of that information about them, even after being reaffirmed of the confidentiality clauses.

Instead, they prefer a non-community member for that component of the program, and that makes them feel more comfortable to have someone who isn't in their community knowing all of their financial information. We wouldn't have known this had we not asked about their hesitancy in sharing that information with us. This goes back to assessing what we think we know about a situation.

Another strategy we use is to utilize volunteers for new targeted populations when trying to determine whether or not there is a need there to hire staffing. Recruiting from within that targeted population is a great idea to get started, and this may involve outreaching to community groups, faith based groups, or student affinity groups.

The final strategy is to be sure to provide the information not just written but also the services in the language that the customer speaks. Using language lines are helpful for determining immediate needs, but intensive case management services, establishing rapport, and building relationships are best done in a more natural environment.

Technology continues to grow at a rapid pace, and in the next decade it is forecast that computer interpretation might be as good as human interpretation. But meanwhile, until that happens genuine authentic counseling relationships involve a more nuanced communication style, often in person.

The next step we've done is being flexible enough to change our program design based on the needs of the cultural norms of the individuals being served. For example, formal graduations versus informal graduations or formal meetings with supervisors versus informal chats, meeting with families as a whole versus meeting with a single individual. This requires a lot of flexibility and adaptability on the part of the staff because there isn't necessarily one way of doing something all the time.

It takes extra time, open and transparent discussion, and lots of planning to address the various concerns, but it's important to do so. For example, when we're having a graduation of a training class, the decorations, the food, the agenda, all of that changes based on who is graduating. We ask each cohort how they want to celebrate. It would be a lot easier for us to do the same thing each time, but that isn't person centered design. We do a small focus group each time, and then based on those results, within reason, make those arrangements to be culturally appropriate.

This picture, for example, has a graduating class where all the flower decorations on the back were handmade by the graduating class. They also invited about 30 of their family members. They wanted a very big event. It was important for them to celebrate that way. For other graduations the groups wanted a much smaller, more subdued event. So we provided that avenue for them.

I use this as an easy example, but the same process takes place, taking into consideration the individual or the group's cultural, linguistic, and educational needs. It's important to understand also that goal setting, both short-term and long-term, is also based on cultural and individual needs. What motivates individuals and cultures are also different. This takes time by the case managers.

Case managers or direct service needs to understand the difference between direct versus indirect and how that impacts goal setting, assertiveness, low versus high, and individualism versus collectivism. How does that impact motivation? How does this impact the work readiness? How does this impact goal setting? This is all – these are all things that take time to sit and talk with an individual, to research the culture, and to figure out how this is going to impact the services delivered.

These are some of the cultural values that we assess when we look at our program designs and working with our individual customers. For example, in our ENT programs we provide work readiness training. We practice elevator speeches, working with mock interviews, and preparing job portfolios. With many of our Haitian Creole women, not all because they are all individuals, but many struggle with maintaining eye contact during mock interviews.

We practice this with them multiple times with various individuals both within Telamon and within the One-Stop, gradually going to people less and less familiar with them. Many times, even after lots of practice, they still struggle with it, and it's because it's part of their culture to show as a sign of respect not maintaining direct eye contact with someone they perceive at a higher authority such as a potential supervisor.

So even after lots of practice they still struggle with this, but as we end up – we end up doing is we go and prepare their real interviewers when they go to a real job interview and placing them at jobs just by sharing that piece of information with the interviewer, and we let them know that this is just a sign of respect, that this is in their culture. They respect somebody by not making eye contact with them.

In this next picture here you can see these individuals of the four, three of them – by helping prepare their actual interviewer and letting them know that this is just a part of their culture, three of these four individuals were actually able to get jobs with their very first interview after preparing their interviewer.

So finally, don't forget that linguistic competency doesn't just mean language but also that those who are low literacy and not literate as well. For example, we also currently have six women enrolled in our ENT program who are functionally illiterate in their native language as well as mono-lingo in Haitian Creole.

We have several layers of linguistic sensitivity that we need to be aware of when working with them. It takes a multi-faceted approach to help them build their skills, and it will take some time. We can't do the same thing that we do with them as we do with other customers who are more literate and expect the same outcomes. Our program design has to change. It has to be adaptable, and it has to be flexible.

All of these changes, this adaptability, this flexibility is all designed to work together to lead to better outcomes. Working with customers to develop genuine rapport can only be established if cultural intelligence and sensitivity is inherent and cultivated from day one. ENT relationships are long-term relationships. Even with short-term trainings we're working with customers for at least 18 months, six months of training and 12 months of follow up.

In reality most of our working relationships span at least two and a half to three full years. Everything we do to strengthen this relationship and help it last not just through the retention period but even continue to grow through the retention period is important as our customers' career path continue long past the time they're being counted in our metrics, and that's the true definition of success in our work.

Another important concept, especially with WIOA, is how important modeling cultural competence is with helping to provide soft skills for better work ready employees. By actively promoting the skill set with our customers, we can effectively help provide better and more culturally competent work ready employees to our business customers, a win-win situation. Advocating with employers about the importance of having work ready culturally and linguistically appropriate employees in our multi-cultural society, as well as with our partner agencies, is another backbone of the work that we must continue to strengthen.

So I've talked a little bit about the challenges around the need for flexibility and adaptability for staff and the program design, and this can be a real challenge for individuals who want or need a prescribed way of doing things the same way every time, the struggle when time is of the essence and having to recreate a tool or a resource that's necessary to be culturally or linguistically sensitive or appropriate.

But my response to that is that basically, if we don't do that and don't invest the time, we are wasting our time anyway as the message might not even be received, and we may even be harming our long-term relationship with our customers.

This is a difficult filter to look through at times as we are stretched, but if the end goal is to help our customers and their families strive for a better life with family sustaining wages, then every interaction we have with them, every communication, every effort must be intentional and focused on those efforts. Not being culturally sensitive or linguistically attuned to their needs can undermine even our best attempts otherwise.

The other challenge is the need for continuous improvement. This is one of those areas where the learning never ends. This is what led us to participate in the peer-to-peer exchange in Arkansas, as we wanted to learn more about how we could better serve our main targeted population groups while also targeting new groups with a small but dedicated staff. Personal growth activities are critical as well as cross-training and always being willing to delve into new communities.

The largest challenge is with the growth in multi-culturalism is how to address that effectively with smaller staffing patterns, and Katie spoke about this a little bit. It takes many staff to provide services in multiple languages. It takes additional time to be culturally and linguistically sensitive as there were thought processes that have to occur and cannot be rushed. Considerations and thoughtfulness takes time and energy. Translation and interpretation take additional time, but the investment of time and resources are worth it.

So in conclusion I hope I've been able to share some concrete ways that we address cultural competence and linguistic issues here on ENT services that we provide in the Delmarva Peninsula. Focusing on these areas have helped us to lead to better outcomes.

When we started focusing on this about eight years ago, less than 5 percent of our adult customers completed certification or credentialing, and now we are close to 40 percent, working every day toward better outcomes. We hope to continue this focus and to work even more over the coming years within the new WIOA legislation. So thank you for the opportunity to share today.

MS. NELSON: Thank you so much, Jennifer. It was really, really wonderful to hear about what's going on in Delmarva, and yes. I did really want to say Delmarva. Our next presenter, if we can go to the next slide, is Dina Eden from the Center for Employment Training. Dina is the senior education analyst at CET, and she specializes in curriculum design and professional development for instructors. So go ahead and take it away, Dina.

DINA EDEN: Thank you so much. First, I wanted to talk a little bit about our organization. We are an educational institution, and we were initially developed in 1967. We started as a grassroots organization. We are based in San Jose, California, and we have 13 centers around the country, 11 of which are in California. The two others are in Alexandria, Virginia and El Paso, Texas.

And I'm really going to be focusing on the California centers today because that's where our farmworkers are. We have 17 educational programs, and all of them are developed with entering the workforce as the end goal in mind. We don't offer all 17 at all centers. That varies quite a lot based on the needs of the workforce in the local area, but we have as few as two programs per center and as many as nine.

The programs are six to eight months long, and the students come six hours a day to learn. And we serve a little over – it changes every year of course, but this past year we served just over 2,000 students. The mission is at the bottom left, and it says, "The mission of CET, an economic and community development corporation, is to promote human development and education by providing people with marketable skills, training, and supportive services that contribute to self-sufficiency."

Here's a little basic information about our students. 75 percent of our students self-identify as Hispanic or Latino, 13 percent of them as black, 6 percent of them as white, 4 percent of them as Asian, and 2 percent of them as two or more races or other. We do have more males than females. 63 percent of our students are male, 37 percent of them female, and the age group that is the most common is 22 to 44. 58 percent of them are in that age group.

31 percent of them are 21 or under. 8 percent of them are 45 to 54, and 3 percent of them are over 55. And I forgot to say this is all data from the most recent program year, which was from July 1st, 2016 to June 30th of this year. In terms of education, 70 percent of those students do have either a diploma or a GED. 17 percent of them attended some high school but didn't finish, and 2 percent of them never attended high school and then 2 percent of them have some college beyond high school.

Here is some more data on some of our students' barriers to employment. 23 percent of our students are seasonal farmworkers and 12 percent of them are dependents of farmworkers and this is the federal definition that we use. And here on the bottom are other barriers that we've found. So 29 percent of them have dependents under the age of six. 27 percent of them are receiving food stamps. 10 percent of them have limited English, and this is very limited English. 3 percent of them are ex-offenders. 2 percent of them are teen parents, and 1 percent of them homeless.

This slide shows data about our farmworker population. You can see the two columns in the middle are all farmworkers, and then the two columns on the right it says EC farmworkers. EC is from our El Centro location. About a third of our farmworker students go through that center, and if you're not familiar with California geography, it's almost on the border with Mexico, very south.

So many of them sort of continue their lives in Mexico and commute back and forth. So if we're looking at the data from our farmworkers, the average reading level for all of them is 7.7, and the average math level is 6.9. This number is a grade level. For the El Centro group it's a little lower. It's 6.7 for reading and 6.2 for math.

434 of the farmworkers from last year were high school dropouts, and that's about a third of them, and at El Centro that number is even higher. It's 44 percent of the total at El Centro. And then 883 or 67 percent of farmworkers last year did have – did come in with either a GED or a high school diploma or equivalency, and that number is 56 percent, 223 in El Centro. 275 of them had limited English, 21 percent for all farmworkers, and 50 or 13 percent in El Centro.

Now, in terms of what we do to help our students, it's really about removing barriers every step of the way. We have this chart on the right that kind of shows the flow of our contact with students from beginning to end. We start with recruitment. We enroll them in the program. They have training, the educational component. They graduate. They start searching for a job, and then they're placed in a job. The way that we've designed our system is throughout this flow chart we are removing barriers, and I'm going to be talking about that.

So our strategies for retention and for removing those barriers, there's three components, recruitment, education, and student services. The first one is recruitment. When we recruit, we use advertising, and we have very targeted locations for those ads. We put them up in public transportation where we know that students of lower economic status are going to see.

We put them in farmworker communities, in those areas where we know that they live, and we put – we have some ads on Spanish language radio that we know that they will hear. We also make sure to hire Spanish speaking recruiters and admissions advisors. Those are the first people from the Center for Employment Training that the students will come in contact with, and it's really important that that first impression is one of openness and inclusivity.

We have some of our formal enrollment documents bilingual when they first sign up and they sign an enrollment agreement and we tell them, OK. You have to come to this many hours, and this is the cost. We have that document in Spanish as well as English. We also have our student catalog which is over 100 pages of just all the details of our policies and our programs. That's also a document that's in both languages.

One of the things I wanted to say about recruitment is we do have advertising and we do have recruiters, which I mentioned, but we found that at every center, when we ask students inquiring about classes where they heard about us, most of those are from referrals. They're not from advertising. Advertising is the second most common answer. The first most common answer is referral. So they're hearing about us from family members, from friends who have gone through our program.

So when I think of recruitment, it's really easy to talk about admissions and advertising and recruitment in a more traditional sense, but really ensuring high quality programs in the classroom I think is also important for recruitment because, when students have a good experience, they tell people about it.

Here is an example of our bilingual advertising. You can see that this is for one of our centers. The programs are listed at the bottom, accounting clerk, green building construction skills, retail operations specialist, truck driver, and welding fabrication, and we have the same flyer in Spanish. And this is just a picture of our student catalogue. The whole thing has two columns, English on the left and Spanish on the right.

Next, I'm going to talk about education, and this is really my specialty. I'm at the Education Department, and so I build a lot of the curriculum. And the way that our educational programs are inclusive, there's two ways. One is some of it is integrated, and it's education within our regular vocational programs, and the other way is through the adult education career pathways program, which is education above and beyond the scope of our regular vocational programs.

This is an example of integrated education. It's a picture of a section of our curriculum outline for the green building construction skills program. This is sort of the format of the curriculum outline. It shows the competencies that the students need to achieve to pass the program. There are as few as eight and as many as 12 in each program, and then on the right you can see the breakdown of hours of how much time the students are going to spend on that competency.

So you can see number one is introduction to carpentry. Number three is rough carpentry, and number four is electrical skills. These are content areas. These are green building construction skills areas. Number two is an embedded basic skill, construction math. It says, "This competency will review basic math skills of the construction industry. The student will demonstrate proficiency of math operations, calculations, and measurement in the performance of carpentry, electrical and plumbing, and solar panel installation projects."

So this competency includes addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals, all of the basic math skills as well as math that is specifically tailored to the industry. This is an example of integrated education.

Here are three more examples of integrated education, and this is another picture of a section of the curriculum outline from our HVAC program, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, and number eight is air distribution systems. Number nine is green technology. Those are components of HVAC, and then 10, 11, and 12 are integrated basic skills education.

So number 10 is basic computer skills, and that is how to use desktop, how to use e-mail, how to organize files and folders, how to utilize the internet, those kinds of things that some students don't have access to beforehand. And then 11 and 12 are two competencies that are in every single one of our programs. Those are kind of the integrated education that we have across the board.

So 11 is customer service skills, and this is really about professionalism. It's about how to dress appropriately for work, how to show up on time, how to communicate effectively with your colleagues and your supervisor, things that we really think make one successful in the workplace no matter what your job is. And then number 12 is job preparedness, and I'm going to talk a little bit more about that.

So job preparedness is a real cornerstone of our program. It emphasizes the job search process and includes personal qualities and transferrable skills. We teach students how to create job search documents, including resumes and cover letters, and they develop and implement job search strategies. So we have them conducting online research on potential employers.

We have them developing networking contacts weekly. We also have them conduct mock interviews where they have to demonstrate appropriate dress and demeanor, and they are assessed on all of that. That's one of the competencies that they must pass to pass the program. And we also have a post interview follow up.

So I'm going to segue here into the AECP program, which is that external component. I talked a little bit about integrated education and the basic skills components that are part of the vocational program, and now I'm going to talk about the extra and additional stuff. And this chart shows how co-enrollment works. So the students come in. They take an initial assessment test, and let's say that they meet benchmarks on the bottom left.

And if they do that, then they enroll in a vocational program. Now, if they don't meet benchmarks, we're going to co-enroll them in another program too. So if they don't meet the benchmark in English, we're going to enroll them in a VESL, vocational English as a second language program, but you can see that that student would also enroll in the vocational program. And then if they don't have a high school diploma, they would enroll in the GED program, and they would also enroll in the vocational program.

So this is how co-enrollment works in time. They have their training program and their adult education program. Through their training program they are completing those competencies, and while they're doing that for the training program, they're completing benchmarks for adult education. And then at the end of the training program they get their certificate from us and they graduate and then at the end of the adult education program they get their GED diploma.

So after that is employment. And then in terms of time, the training program, I said it's six hours a day. So it's 8:00 to 3:00 with a lunch in the middle, and then the adult education program is after school. It's 3:15 to 5:00. So the idea is that they're getting adult basic education and they're getting technical training and both of those are important to become successful graduates.

I'm going to talk a little bit about our VESL program, the vocational ESL. Students will learn to perform language-related tasks and duties in preparation for employment, and this is from the curriculum outline.

So I see one question. I'm going to answer it. The question is, is your goal – oh, sorry. My screen. Here we go. "Is your goal to transition migrant workers to more service training industries?"

So our programs vary a lot, and students choose which programs they want. So our goal is to transition migrant workers to an industry where they're able to make more money doing something they enjoy. So I think maybe I should take a minute and just read the list of the programs that we offer because I've been speaking kind of generally about them, and I think it might be more helpful if you really have an understanding.

So I'm just going to read this list of 17 programs. I might have an outdated list, but here's a few of them. So we have accounting clerk, automotive specialist, building maintenance, business office administration, culinary arts, custodial services, early childhood teacher assistant, electrician, green building construction skills, HVAC specialist, machinist technology, medical office administration, medical assistant, medical clerk, retail operations specialist, truck driver, and welding fabrication. Did that significantly answer the question? Is that sufficient? OK. Thank you. I'll continue.

So I was talking about the VESL program, and this is from the curriculum outline. So I'm just going to read the competencies. So number one is demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills for workplace situations. Two is effectively utilize common skill-related and workplace terminology and phraseology. Three is understand the job search process and follow procedures for applying for a job. Four is understand wages, wage deductions, benefits, tax forms, and personnel policies. Five is demonstrate reading comprehension.

So this is English that's really tailored to a vocation. So the goals are oral and written workplace communication skills, introductions in person and by telephone, greetings, customers, employers, grammar, present, past, and future tenses, speaking with enthusiasm, and basic writing business letter.

OK. And I have another question here. "On average, considering that each individual is different, how long do most people stay in training programs before moving into the proposed career path?"

OK. So do you mean the proposed career that they get a job? So the programs are all six to eight months, and they're from – they're given in hours. So there's 620 to 900 hours, and we have a somewhat flexible system. And that is that they need to attend 100 percent of the training hours. If they are not passing competencies or they have issues with attendance, they may attend as many as 150 percent of the scheduled hours for the certificate.

I'm going to go back here to my last slide on the goals of the VESL program. So that includes terminology, describing basic job positions, functions, and tasks, identifying common tools, equipment, and materials, understanding instructions for using machines, tools, equipment, and manuals.

So this is a graphic kind of going through the GED program. This is for students who don't have high school diplomas. If they're said at admission to be lacking English skills and be lacking a high school diploma, this is the program they go through, the GED program, because VESL is included in this.

So you can see that they're reading English, writing English, speaking English. They're getting math, and then by the end they attain their high school diploma or GED. And then they're transitioning to postsecondary adult education, and then they're employed.

So that was all about education, and next, I'm going to be talking about student services. There are four aspects I'd like to speak about. The first is the instructional unit team. The second is federal financial aid. The third is supportive services, and the fourth is job assistance.

So I'm going to answer one more question. The question is, "How does your program help them with their immigration status if they are accepted as migrant workers?"

So we have an immigration services department and that falls under student services and they help them with visa status and all that stuff.

OK. So the first thing I'd like to talk about is the instructional unit team. This team consists of the student, all program instructors, and other school officials such as the center director, training manager, or financial aid officer.

It's a meeting that occurs weekly, and it is to assess student progress and address any barriers. And then there's follow up after the meeting. So this is really a way to help a student who is struggling and to – you'll really focus on the needs of the student and maybe find and fix something that we didn't know about earlier on when the student came in.

So I was speaking with our electrician instructor the other day, the one who works at San Jose, and she told me that – she gave me an example of the instructional unit team. So basically, there was a student who was working full-time when she applied to the electrician program and switched her regular work schedule to work nights.

So she was in this electrician program, and she was really having a hard time with attendance. And we knew about her job when she applied to the program, but one of the things that came out during the instructional unit team meeting was that she was struggling with alcoholism. So this is something that we wouldn't have caught before but we were able to provide some supportive services for her and she did eventually graduate and got a really good job at Helix Electric.

The next student service is the federal financial aid, and that is need-based. The WIOA-167 students receive biweekly stipend for attendance. There are Title IV funds, and they're eligible for these if they are enrolled in a career pathway program. That's the language from the law, and all of our programs would be considered career pathway programs.

There's also this ability to benefit funding for students without a high school diploma, and the idea is that, if the students don't have a high school diploma coming in, they take this test, the ability to benefit test, and they must pass it to get federal financial aid. So it's kind of they're low enough to not have graduated high school, but they're high enough that they would have the ability to benefit.

And then a big component of student services is job assistance. So we have job placement after they graduate, and these – we have job developers – full-time job developers at every center who are working to place students, and we have partnerships in the community with different employers. And we also follow up monthly after they graduate to make sure that they've retained their job, and sometimes if they haven't, we place them in other placements.

We also provide students with supportive services, and this is kind of anything that can't be categorized in another – anything that they need above and beyond part of our education program and what we've already given them. So here are some categories for supportive services. We've got clothing, DMV services, food, housing, medical services.

We have an "other" category. There's transportation, and there's utility, and on the left we have all of our California centers here and how – this is how many students have used those services in the past year. Transportation is a big one, and I wanted to talk about that. We have a bus going from farmworker areas to our center in San Jose, and some of them are as far as 80 miles away. So we really go out of our way to help those students remove the barrier of transportation.

And I wanted to just highlight the fact that there's an "other" category. I think the whole message with this and with being culturally inclusive is it's really student-centered. It's about the needs of the students, and just like Jennifer said before me, you have to kind of meet them where they are, find out what they need.

It might not fall into any category, but it's important to really have that narrative and provide it for them. So one example of one in the other category was tattoo removal for finding a job, for example. So it could be a variety of things. That's one of them. OK. Thank you.

MS. NELSON: Thank you, Dina. That was really wonderful. It's really – when you start looking at the field of NFJP grantees, you'll see a wide variety of different types of organizations that are operating this grant, and CET is able to do so many exciting things as an accredited training institution.

A lot of our other grantees are small community organizations that work more with outside trainers. So for those of you that are interested in learning about what the NFJP community in your service area are doing, I encourage you to look for the – look for the list of grantees on the DOL website or reach out.

We have a few questions. I think the first was, "What makes some farmworkers non-eligible for the program?" Jennifer, do you want to talk about the eligibility process?

MS. SHAHAN: Sure. Yeah. Thank you. So I mentioned in my presentation that about 75 to 80 percent of the farmworkers here on Delmarva are still Latino, but most of our people who are eligible for the NFJP program are actually Haitian Creole speaking right now. And the main reason for that right now is that the populations that are eligible for NFJP must be 50 percent of their income has to come from farm work.

So that means at least 50 percent of their income has to be documented as primarily engaged in farm work, and so many of the farmworkers do other things besides just farm work. So if more than 50 percent of their income is doing something else besides farm work, then they're not going to be eligible for this particular program.

Another thing is that they also have to document low income status, which means that they and their family, the total income for their family has to meet certain income guidelines. And if they go over those fairly low thresholds, then they're not going to be eligible for this particular program. Two other things is they have to meet selective service requirements, and then they also have to be legally authorized to work in the United States.

MS. NELSON: Thank you, Jennifer. Another question came in about pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. Dina, do you have any programs at CET that are registered as pre-apprenticeship training for registered apprenticeships?

MS. EDEN: I'm not familiar with that term. So I'm thinking we don't, but I might be wrong. I could check and find out, though.

MS. NELSON: Great. And if there are other questions, please keep them coming in. I think – did the – did Jennifer and Dina sort of both answer the question that we had about immigration status of farmworkers? Does anyone have a follow-up question about that, about eligibility or anything? Go ahead and type that in the chat.

Well, I don't see anybody typing seriously. So hopefully we've answered the questions that you've had during the presentation, and we have a couple of pages of resources about NFJP and about cultural competency that you can find on WorkforceGPS and on the DOL website.

And additionally, if you have – if some new burning question about NFJP or about this presentation comes to you, please feel free to e-mail me. My e-mail is going to come up on the end page, and I'm – this is Kathleen Nelson again. I'm the workforce development director at the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Program, AFOP, that is made up of all of the NFJP grantees.

So please tell us how you felt, and I'm going to hand it back over to John for some more housekeeping.

MR. VEHLOW: All right. I just want to thank all the participants and presenters today. If you could fill out that poll right now that came up on your screen, how do you feel after today's webinar? Inspired, a little overwhelmed, huh, or no vote. Just going to leave that up for a couple more seconds here and you guys can fill that out and we'll get that contact information for Katie up. OK.

(END)