**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**WIOA Wednesday: Employer Engagement to Support People with Disabilities in the Labor Force**

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JENNIFER JACOBS: So again, we want to welcome you to today's WIOA Wednesday on Monday, employer engagement to support people with disabilities in the labor force webinar.

Now, without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, David Jones. He's a workforce analyst for the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. David?

DAVID JONES: Great. Thanks, Jennifer, and good afternoon, everyone. My name is David Jones, and thank you for spending the next hour with us. Historically, our presentations have been focused on the customer with a disability, and today we wanted to shift our focus on how we can also meet the needs of another important customer - the employer. We will examine strategies on what we can do to strengthen employer engagement with the disability population, which is the focus of today's webinar. Next.

Today we have an experienced and talented panel. First, we have Kathleen West-Evans who serves as director of business relations at CSAVR. CSAVR is a coalition of vocational rehabilitation offices from around the country represented by chief administrators. As background, I heard Kathy speak many years ago about employer engagement and still have those notes today. Kathy truly understands the needs of businesses and the role the disability population can deliver to meet their needs.

And we have Josh Christianson. Josh served as project director at the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology, simply known as PEAT. Josh right now is truly in the center of innovation as technology continues to expand and rapidly change all around us in the labor force. Next.

So amongst the three of us we have three key objectives. First, I will set the foundation on leading guiding principles from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, WIOA, to effectively maximize employer engagement. I will also highlight some innovative work-based training examples to help make our dialogue a little more interesting.

And second, Kathy will highlight successful strategies and barriers in bridging the disability population with employers in the labor force based on her observations visiting business sectors from across the country on behalf of CSAVR. And finally, Josh will provide insights on current and emerging accessible workplace technology tools to foster solutions during our current digital revolution. Next.

So let's get started. Today, surprisingly, some people still believe that only VR can provide services to people with disabilities. Our first slide reinforces the notion that both American Job Centers and VR do have a strong shared interest in serving the disability population. In program year 2015, 156,000 individuals with disabilities found work through the services of an American Job Center, and over 188,000 obtained employment outcomes through the VR services during the same period.

Another key data source is that within our WIOA Title II Adult Ed services program, out of an enrollment of nearly 1.5 million people from across the country, approximately 52,000 people with disabilities are known to have been enrolled during program year 2015. In knowing these numbers, this is why we collectively have a joint interest in seamlessly connecting all our WIOA customers with our employers across the country through the American job center network. Next.

One key way we maximize seamless service delivery for our employers is through joint planning and assessment across WIOA core program partners. I'm going to be highlighting VR today because they are going to be the One-Stop's greatest strategic partner with their expertise in serving the disability population.

There are two key ways in which this now gets carried out. First, through unified and combined state plans, WIOA establishes that we jointly ensure employment and training services are coordinated to meet employers' needs. To track down the current joint strategies of working with employers in your state, RSA, who oversees the VR program, developed a very helpful online resource tool in which you can conduct word search such as employer engagement or business services. And that link is listed in our upcoming resource page.

And through performance measures WIOA establishes we jointly assess the effectiveness in serving employers. A WIOA Wednesday webinar occurred back on November 8th, and the key take-away from that webinar is that the measure is a shared outcome across core program partners through which states pick two of the three indicators.

And again, those three indicators are employer retention, employer penetration, and repeat business customer. It is often said that what gets measured gets done and there is evidence of good dialogue now occurring across agencies in how they can improve collaboration with employers during this pilot stage and that is good business. Next.

The state and local workforce development board is an important convener and intermediary with employers. As many in the field know, WIOA now requires VR representation on both boards to ensure we are transforming into an employer-driven system through that partnership.

There are two key ways that joint leadership is now carried out. First, jointly promoting the use of industry and sector partnerships, and second, being jointly responsible to meet the needs of local and regional employers. And here is why this is so important at the local level.

A common historical challenge within the disability community is that job services get carried out by a lot of different organizational stovepipes that a person with a disability or parent of a child with one would sometimes fall through the cracks in this model. Today, under WIOA, through the joint membership, we seek to improve.

The local board listens and advocate together from the same board room table with our community partners. This includes the local high school, community colleges, and universities in an effort to better align with the high-demand occupations of the area. At the end of the day, in working together as one, we are supporting our local employers to help close the skills gap to a population that is already facing considerable hurdles and barriers to find jobs. Next.

Under WIOA we've begun to see workforce agencies bring solution to businesses by hiring people with disabilities. In Iowa, they've adopted a new kind of job fair by organizing what we call reverse career fairs. Just as the name implies, a jobseeker creates displays to showcase one talent, and it's the employer that's actually walking around circulating among the booths and introducing themselves to a jobseeker.

In South Dakota, representatives from WIOA's board core program partners developed an initiative titled targeted occupations business interview and tour, and this project basically involves interviewing and touring businesses that are in high need of employees.

They assess the workforce needs and the culture of the business to see where alignment can occur, and once this exploratory process is completed, the interagency staff examine possible customized solutions and goes back to the employer with solutions to meet work the workforce needs.

And we have the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, commonly known as WOTC, and this is another way to support employers who providing a tax credit to hire people with disabilities. The maximum tax credit could reach as high as $9,600, depending on the employee hired and the length of employment.

While no business should have a disability employment strategy based on this incentive alone, one friend did note that it is a sweetener of sorts that cannot be overlooked. And to learn more about WOTC, we have the ETA link listed within our upcoming resource slide. Next.

Another innovative way the Department of Labor can support employers in meeting their training needs is through the expansion of public-private partnership. I'd like to briefly highlight two key areas this is currently occurring. First, our TechHire partnership grants. In 2015, DOL awarded nearly $150 million to 39 partnerships in 25 states across the nation.

TechHire grants are basically designed to rapidly train workers with technology skills to meet the labor needs across different sectors in IT, healthcare, and financial systems. These grants really have an innovative way of bringing together three key groups, the workforce system, education training providers, and business organizations.

And I am really pleased to report that this grant initiative has been inclusive of the disability population. Today two of the grantees are targeted to youth with disabilities located out in California and each of them using $4 million in grant funds. Both of the grantees are very similar in that they provide technology boot camps as part of their training.

And another public-private partnership model is through apprenticeships. Basically, this is implementing the pragmatic approach of earn while you learn, and in this area we are seeing a shift in training in traditional manufacturing to training in tech sector in companies such as JPMorgan Chase in Houston and Amazon down in Dallas. In our next slide I will point out the resource page linking the apprenticeship with the disability population. Next.

Now, on this page we have six resources, and we like to highlight three of them. The first is what we simply call the playlists, and this is a disability resource guide for WIOA practitioners that was jointly developed by Department of Education and Labor staff jointly. There are 10 playlists that contain resources, and it is playlist six that focuses on employer engagement strategies. This playlist has been our most popular resource on ETA disability employment page.

On the top of the second column you'll note storyboards, and this TA resource came out this summer. There are five storyboards in total, and two of them actually have a disability themed focus. One storyboard is from the perspective of the employer named Charles in seeking to recruit people with disabilities, and the story goes through how that dialogue may occur. This is a great resource for frontline staff, and these have recently been made available in Spanish based on how popular they have become.

And finally, the WorkforceGPS, and that's at the end of the second column. At ETA we have been working very hard to make sure you have the latest information, and there are three sites that I wanted to highlight. One, our business engagement page. There's a lot of good resources surrounding sector strategies on that page. The apprenticeship page, it is inclusive of making a link with the disability population, and that's the link right there. And we have a disability and employment page. Next.

And this is the site picture of the online resource platform for disability employment. At ETA, we recently took a step back and tried to simplify how we present our resources to the workforce system through an approach to help you connect the pieces. For example, one way in which we connect the pieces can be found under featured content in which we have targeted disability resources for three key groups- the One-Stop, person with a disability, and the employer.

And another way ETA connects the pieces is under our announcement tab. You will currently find there describing an opportunity about a six-month rising leader mentoring program post being coordinated by the U.S. Business Leadership Network that has an application deadline of next week. Mentoring is a great thing, and I hope you can get the word out there to prospective candidates. So check out the link. If you are not already a member of the community of practice page, come join us around the table, and let's problem solve this together. Next.

So in closing, I would like to share a brief story. During a recent technology convening hosted by Cornell University, I learned about an innovative pilot carried out by a company called Cisco. The company was looking to fill more positions for its customer service center. Rather than fill these jobs from overseas, it was decided to expand its diversity pool through hiring people with disabilities, and I understand most had different levels of blindness that eventually got recruited.

Over time what they found was that the level of customer satisfaction by services provided by these new employees were rated very high based on customer satisfaction survey results. To better understand the outcomes, one leader surmised that the services were being provided by those who face everyday barriers themselves, and they simply identified and related to those customers who were experiencing new barriers, even if they were just temporary.

As one senior executive observed, "The benefits at Cisco are far greater than most realize. The people we have hired under this program have great loyalty, work ethic, and customer empathy." Today Cisco is currently in the process of expanding the lessons learned from this pilot across the company in an initiative called the LifeChanger Program.

I think the message is simple. As you work with employers, it is important you go beyond just talking about corporate social responsibility but also make the case in describing how hiring people with disabilities can support their bottom line in business. They can simply become one of the company's best employees because you simply gave them a chance. So at this point I would like to transition it over to Kathy from CSAVR. Kathy?

KATHLEEN WEST-EVANS: Thank you, David, and thank you, everyone, for being with us this afternoon. So as David said, I work for the organization called the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation. It's the membership organization of the public sector VR directors, and as you can see on our next slide, we have 79 agencies and we're in every state and territory and D.C.

And we are partners in WIOA with our workforce partners. We serve a range of individuals with disabilities, including veterans. So our program is designed to really focus on careers and to work with individuals as a customer in terms of building a plan for employment, and at any one time we have roughly a million individuals in plan.

We're working with individuals that are at the high school level transitioning into a career and sometimes it's – (inaudible) –their first employment all the way to those who have acquired disabilities at any time during the employment lifecycle because disability happens.

So we've seen a large increase in the number of customers who are veterans and we do have a working partnership with the VA. They serve veterans that have service-connected disabilities, and we have joint cases with them. We also serve veterans who have acquired a disability after service and often they're getting medical supports from VA and we are providing the vocational support.

So it's a wide range of individuals, and as the workforce agent, we're seeing more. A lot of requests coming from our business customers to work with individuals to keep them working. These are often the most valued people on their team with a lot of experience.

So on the other side, what we recognized in the early 2000s is that we'd been working across the country with businesses. In order to build a good career plan, we really wanted to begin with the end in mind, and we knew that to build those plans, we really need to understand what the business customer needs.

We had a group of 35 of our business customers that joined the national conference that was co-sponsored by CSAVR and our federal partners, the Rehab Services Administration, and we simply asked them, what do we need to do differently? How do we need to position our candidates? How can we better understand your needs, and how can we help you retain individuals on your team as they acquire disabilities and often many of them are non-work-related? So how do we keep people working? And we learned a lot of things from our business customers.

Number one, they'll tell you that we just don't know what we don't know and we're afraid to ask. Disability is a population that we have not had a dialogue about in this country. There are one out of five individuals that experience disabilities. This impacts families, workplaces, et cetera. So how do we start focusing on the talent? How do we get past the label of the disability and help business see the skill set?

So number one, they don't us build a relationship. Build the trust because we want to be able to ask you questions, and we want to be able to have an honest dialogue about what we need on our side. Listen to what we have to say, build a plan, bring solutions, and deliver what you commit to. So what we're looking at is really how we support a dual customer system and VR be the connector between the candidates, the talent pipeline, and the business who is hiring and/or retaining individuals with disabilities.

The other thing they told us is that, with a lot of our large company partners, we have a multi-state footprint. We want to be able to find you because you're not easy to find. Our agencies all have different names. We're located in different umbrella agencies or independently.

So it's difficult to find us. We've got 25,000 staff. They didn't want everyone calling them. We have 10,000 community agencies that are our partners supporting individuals. So what they wanted was more of an organized approach and the ability to build a model that they could move across their footprint without having to reinvent it 79 times.

So what we did in early 2000 is build what we call the National Employment Team. Each one of our agencies has a business specialist that's part of our national team. We work cross state, and we provide a wide range of business services that we collaborate on between our agency. In the reauthorization of the Rehab Act through those WIOA amendments, you'll see how we've expanded our work with business.

Prior to these amendments, the act basically gave us the authority to use money to educate business on the ADA and let them know that we existed. So in this expansion we now have language in not only the partnership with the America's job centers but within our own law about being able to use our resources, both staff and fiscal, on building business relations at the national, state, and local level because we all know and I'm sure our AJC partners and our community colleges and other workforce partners will agree that, as much as we focus nationally, we've got to be able to deliver locally.

They wanted us to be able to deliver a wide range of services, and I'll walk through those real quickly in the next slide, but education, consultation, and technical assistance. So how do we bring our expertise and our support to a business customer? Again, cross-state. We have state rehab councils that advise our agencies and are required in law.

We have business sitting on those as well as being part of the workforce board, and then, again, the ability to support retention and rapid response. If someone is in danger of losing a job, how can we respond quickly because it doesn't make any sense for us or our partners to let someone lose a job and then come to us. So we have that ability, and we really look at it as how we bring the specialization of disability and employment to the larger workforce team. So how do we partner around that?

The range of business services, I alluded to these earlier. The pre-employment supports, a lot of businesses are out looking early. We're seeing and I'm sure you're seeing too job fairs, interactive events happening in junior high school. So how do we connect those young students who have not graduated to that vision of a career, help them understand what the options are? For individuals with disabilities, in the past we've seen them coming out of high school and never have experienced a job.

So how do we help our school partners in the K-12 system focus on careers and help them start to really engage both the students and their parents and their support system in that dialogue? How do we look at sharing career information, providing mentoring opportunities, job shadowing, maybe providing summer supports for a business-based training, looking at those opportunities?

Again, recruitment and hiring, although I will say one of our partners strongly emphasized to us understand us as a business. We're not just an employer. So really understanding the big picture and sometimes when we look at a company, we may assume that we're going to start with HR recruitment and hiring, but many times companies are takin a step back and saying how do we educate our team because, if we're bringing people with disabilities onto our team, we need to address the comfort level of their coworkers or we need to look at the accessibility of our training sites and our facilities or the accessibility of our website, which Josh is going to cover and is a really important component of this. So thank you for that, Josh.

The retention piece again. Staff training, I talked about that. Disability awareness. How do we help individuals see the talent and not just the disability? How do we get past the assumption? The only way to do that is to really open the dialogue and build the trust. How do we talk about the employment laws, the ADA and the amendments, Section 503, and compliance, but how do we do that in a way that helps the business understand how to leverage those and how to really make those reasonable and how to make them work in a company? So being value added. We're not attorneys, and we're not compliance officers. So we fit in a unique role for that dialogue.

Worksite assessment, again, we have AT specialists and rehab engineers that are part of our teams and/or part of our community partner network that we can bring to the table. And PEAT has been an important part there, as well as our partners at JAN and other organizations. Compliance support, I want to hit those real quickly before we go to diversity inclusion. As much as we're talking about the ADA, we're also talking about Section 503 for federal contractors and the new regulations that are coming up in Section 501, which are federal agencies.

How do we help them build a plan? And again, working at the corporate level is very important because a lot of these federal contractors are developing their plans nationally, but they're implemented locally. So how do we coordinate that across the footprint of a company and help them build an affirmative action plan or an AAP that makes sense for their company and to support it across their footprint?

Coming back to diversity and inclusion programs, disability has not always been part of a diversity movement within a company. We're seeing that more. How do we help companies build that in? As we're working with companies and they're building employee resource groups or business resource groups or affinity groups, whatever the company calls them, how do we work with those on-site entities to help build that educational component and build out their expertise as well?

The tax credits and deductions, David covered those. We're partners on WOTC tax deductions for barrier removal, and then the other thing that's interesting, as much as companies see individuals with disabilities as a talent pool, they're also a large market as customers. And as companies are looking in terms of products and services, we're working with some companies to test the accessibility and to look at how to get a product to market and how to do that through the community.

In some companies we tie this all together. There are companies that are starting from ground zero, and they really want to build the programs and tie all of these components together in a larger strategic plan for the company. And again, the bottom line is the relationship with the business. How do you build the trust, and how do you tie it all together, building a plan, preparing a talent pipeline, and then, again, retaining your valued employee?

As part of this we built out a online platform that's completely accessible, and we built this with a business-owned company out of San Diego called Disabled Persons. And they, again, are a disability-owned company. So one of the things that we talked about with him right up front is how do we build an accessible platform. How do we make it national in scope because we built it with business?

So we worked with the U.S. Business Leadership Network, the national industry liaison group, the compliance officers, and federal contractors, but we also built it from the perspective of the individual customer.

And we had several individuals on the build-out team with us as well as our own staff, and a lot of our customers said, we're willing to relocate or we want to relocate. How do we look at opportunities in other states? So the platform is built out to be fully accessible but also to offer individuals the opportunity to let potential businesses and potential employers know about their availability anywhere across the country.

Again, we built it out with business customers who were also federal contractors. It provides support on those AAPs, the compliance reports. We're also offering virtual hiring events and career fairs. So as we're continuing to build this out, we're seeing several areas where we're partnering with our job centers, and we're building resumes on the talent acquisition portal and we know that we've got businesses coming there. We have currently close to 100 businesses.

We're screening about 18,000 candidates there, and they're coming there because they want to access a known talent pool of individuals with disabilities. But individuals are developing their resumes there and uploading them into their job center portals as well. So we're working across systems for them.

I want to share in my last few minutes here some examples of companies that we've worked with at the national, state, and local level. CVS Health, as you probably all know, has retail distribution and corporate operations. Their corporate headquarters are in Rhode Island, but one of the things with this company, one of the specific projects I want to reference here was their need for pharmacy techs.

David referenced apprenticeships. We have several businesses that are building business-based training models, and these are areas that they have an immediate need for and some of these projects include them, CVS Health being one. For their retail operation, obviously, pharmacy techs are critical. If you are distributing pharmaceuticals through a distribution center by mail order, you have to have a pharmacy tech.

This is an increasing area. CVS is also growing. They acquired a company called Coram, which is a home infusion and home support company. They also recently acquired all of the pharmacies in Target, and if you've seen – if you've been watching the news on the business side, you'll see that they're in negotiations about finalizing an acquisition of Aetna. They operate – (inaudible) – clinics. So CVS, if you look at the bigger picture, they're really one of the largest, if not the largest, healthcare organization in the country.

So with the pharmacy tech training program, we built it out. One of our early models was in Massachusetts, and we built out a training program where VR paid for the training. It's provided by CVS. CVS certifies the individuals, and then they're – they have the built-in work experience and come to work directly in the stores.

We've also done training programs. We have eight states with actual training centers that we operate. We also were collaborating with community colleges and our other partners at the local level to develop the skill sets for their distribution, and we've had hires at the corporate level.

With Hyatt Hotels, again, this was built on the need of the business. They needed more individuals in culinary arts because a lot of individuals coming out of culinary arts training programs don't necessarily envision themselves starting in banquet services and working their way up in a hotel. But the Hyatt saw that opportunity. We started this partnership close to 20 years ago.

We have a vendor out of the Florida area that we use across the country. The training program is two weeks long. We sponsor that training program. We pay for it, again. The individuals train on site at the Hyatt, and we've had close to 1,000 people trained. And that partnership is expanding, and those people are working not only at the Hyatt but they've been hired by other large hotel chains. The Marriott's hired from this training program, as well as we've had an individual who was hired on a cruise line, et cetera. So restaurants, food service at a university level, et cetera.

Lowe's, again, another partner. Lowe's wanted to start in the distribution centers. They operate 14 of them. We started by building a program there and building it across all 14 locations across the country. That model moved across their footprint, again, and then started moving into retail and corporate. In the first full year of that partnership, they hired roughly 600 people from us. So again, we partnered to bring people from outside our system as well because there's a lot of need in these distribution centers as well as retail.

Microsoft, you've probably heard a lot about the hiring of people on the autism spectrum. Because of their support and their CEO – I'll put a little plug. If you haven't read his new book called Hit Refresh, I would really recommend it. He has a child with a disability that I think has really changed the vision of that company, so not just in the accessibility of their software products but in their hiring, and one of those was looking at individuals on the autism spectrum.

Because of the barriers that these individuals face in the interviewing process, they don't interview well. Sometimes they don't make eye contact. It doesn't mean they can't do the job. So what Microsoft has done is worked with us and a community agency to build a week-long working interview so they really have a chance to see the individual. The individual experiences the company, and we pay for an on-the-job mentor or coach that helps support the individual while they're there.

We've had over 40 people hired in that program and recently have two paid interns that are coming out of Pennsylvania and Ohio. So again, this occurs at the corporate office in Microsoft, but we reach nationally for the candidates and use, again, the same community provider for those supports so that we've got consistency for the company.

We're also working with Disabled Persons, our partner on the talent acquisition portal, on the Imagine Academy. This is Microsoft software training program. So we've got about 1700 candidates right now training in that program for full certification and 7,000 overall that are taking different levels there. And this is training that allows them to compete for jobs not only in Microsoft but to look at companies where that training is valuable as – for upward mobility.

Starbucks, another one. They wanted to expand in their roasting plant. One of the models – the initial model here started in Nevada, and that model included the VR agency and the community college that helps provide soft skill training. So again, a business-based training program, work experience right with the company while also receiving support from our other partners on those valuable soft skills. I like to call them survival skills because we all know why we're hired and how we retain our jobs and how we look at upward mobility.

And then the last company I want to include is Wells Fargo. Wells Fargo is a large company that's recruiting nationally. We are hosting hiring events on the talent acquisition portal, but we're also building local models. And again, they operate some of their own distribution centers where they print and distribute information, but we're also looking at the tellers, the retail, their financial.

So it's really incumbent on our side of the house to help our team understand what the business needs. So as we're launching these partnerships, we have those sessions with our companies where we learn about all the different aspects of a company and the way they hire, what their accommodation process is, and how we connect at the local level.

So that's just a very high-level overview of some of our partnerships with business. Right now, we're currently involved in close to 250 of those. Some of those partnerships are built at the local level and driven nationally. Some of them start nationally are driven down to the local level. So we're always looking at how we build that team at the state and local level. So we really appreciate your partnership around that.

The last page are some of the resources that we have available. As I said, we started out the NET with our business roundtables. We are now focusing on an initiative called Vision 2020. In 2020 the public vocational rehab program will be 100 years old. So one of the things we're doing is we're out doing business roundtables in the community. We've been in California. I was in Pennsylvania last week. We've been in Michigan, and we're looking at how we continue to build and stay relevant and on mark with our company partners.

There's other resource pages on our website with links here. Our Investing in America publication which talks more about the Microsoft project and featured other business success like with Hershey's and the – (inaudible) – company and also a specific link to the autism program. And with that, I am, I believe, turning it over to Josh from here.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Kathy, and we can go to the next slide. And so what we wanted to do was have a quick learning moment for everyone in the room, and the question is the following. Mixed reality is, one, the digital and physical world becoming one, two, currently available in a headset apparatus, three, poised to change the way we work and do business in the future, or four, all of the above? So let's have a quick poll and see what the answer is.

Okay. Let's close down the poll, and I want to let you know that you are all winners because there are technical no wrong answers because all the statements accurately reflect mixed reality. In short, mixed reality can be best described as an immersive experience, and it's going to be a game changer in how we do business in the future. As I recently learned, your view in mixed reality becomes a computing surface with seamless access to data, apps, and contact, and with this new technology I can only imagine all the creative ways this is going to be a tool for the disability population. And so with that, I'd like to transition now to Josh Christianson who's going to give us more insights about technology. Josh?

JOSH CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, David, and thank you, Kathy. I'm pleased to be on today's webinar. I'm going to start with a little caveat that I have a pretty vicious cold. So I apologize for my tone, and if I mute for a second, it might be a coughing fit. But I'm going to keep it short and save time for questions, and, obviously, contact info will be shared on anything I missed.

My name is Josh, and I'm the project director for PEAT. Stands for the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology. It's a grant out of the Office of Disability and Employment Policy, so coming from the Department of Labor, and the focus on PEAT is really to promote the use and adoption of accessible technology in the workplace. So I'm going to talk a little bit about that, what that means, how we define accessibility. I'm going to talk about universal design, inclusive design a little bit later in the presentation.

But I also want everyone to know that PEAT is a unique grant, and I think we're really focused on partnerships and partnering. I'm going to focus on resources we have for employers today, but we have others. And if there's anything you see or hear or interested in, please reach out because we continue to do our work really in creative and innovative and partnering ways. Let me go to the next slide here.

On the screen right now there's a graphic. It's called the employment lifecycle. Many of you may have seen something similar. There are different stages depending on the graphic used, but this is the one that PEAT created. And the first stage is recruiting. It shows a cycle with arrows going to the second stage of hiring and onboarding. Third is work immersion and productivity, fourth stage career advancement, fifth stage retention, and the sixth and last stage is post-employment and retirement.

And what we found when we kind of started at PEAT to map out how technology plays into the life of a worker, an employee, is there are about 40 technologies that kind of play out in this – different – 40 different technologies that play out in this lifecycle, and that was just our small team kind of thinking about ways in which this overlap.

And so we have on our site kind of those mapped out and I could go into detail but for sake of time, I think you all – if you sat and imagined all the technologies that you interface as an employee or that you've helped employees work with, there are so, so many at various stages. And the ability to have them function properly and do the – and be accessible can help employees do their work. I'll talk a little bit about some of the specifics as we go through this cycle a little bit in my presentation.

So the first one is the pre-employment stage. That's really kind of recruiting and sourcing. It's the time – Kathy talked about how she helps companies when people are looking for jobs, when employers are looking to hire folks, and that part. And as we all know, that has increasingly moved online and become electronic. And so we at PEAT really set out to see what is that experience like for people with disabilities?

And what we did is we set up a survey and so we set up a survey online and worked with advocacy organizations and we were trying to find out what the experience was for people who had self-identified as a person with a disability who applied for a job online within the last year. Now, these are people who found their way somehow to our website, maybe through an e-mail or a posting. They navigated this themselves. They took the survey, and so probably already people who are pretty comfortable with technology in general and yet we found several alarming statistics within that survey.

We have a full report. You can see the title here. It's called "eRecruiting and Accessibility: Is HR Technology Hurting Your Bottom Line?" We have a full report on our website you can find, but I'll just highlight a couple of things. And one of the things is, basically, almost half of the people related that applying for a job online is difficult to impossible.

And so if you're missing – almost half of your people are having a really frustrating difficult time applying for a job, you can imagine what that does to your own talent pool but also your ability to effectively hire people with disabilities. In our conversations with people, this is probably pretty low. Other people who have done anecdotal stuff or earlier surveys had higher percentages.

Again, this is the people that are probably already pretty tech savvy, but that's still an alarming rate. And then sometimes it goes – even if the – even if your application and outreach works well, say an application on your career site works well and is accessible, maybe your social media outreach is inaccessible. And I can talk more about that later.

Or maybe after they apply there's a pre-employment training test that they take place before they get to an interview, which is increasingly popular and common for employers to use, and those can be inaccessible. So there are just so many hurdles around accessibility in looking at kind of the pre-employment stage.

Some of them you're going to see the most common accessibility issues included here, and this is around e-recruiting, but I will say this holds true for almost everything in the employment lifecycle. So to save some time I won't reiterate these but – so this holds true really for technology in general, people interfacing with the web or a platform. Complex navigation, everyone experiences that, but it can be particularly difficult for people with disabilities for multiple reasons I'll get into in a little bit.

Timeout restrictions, lack of video captioning, no alternative text for images so a screen reader maybe can't read what an image is described as, poor screen color contrast – color contrast is important for a number of disabilities – or inaccessible form fields, which gets a little technical. But basically, if you're looking at the back of a website, kind of the back end technical side, there are things called form fields which need to be labeled for them to be accessible.

So there are lots. This is common most in the recruiting but also throughout kind of anyone interfacing with technology or a website, and on our website we have several solutions for these. And we really want to help employers know that these are fixable, to help them for the application process and throughout.

During the employment stage, again, we – similar problems exist, but it's also, if you think about how many technologies are in use in the next stages – so we have work immersion and productivity. That could be about your time and pay. It could be accounting or finance software. Think of how many of you use some kind of collaboration tool like SharePoint or Black or one of those many base camp, one of those many tools that people use.

Also, any learning management system, any training and professional development. All of these are oftentimes built differently, and so their accessibility can be shaky at best. And so you really have to look at the wide range of technologies used. In career advancement you've got to performance reviews that are super important, and when thinking about retention – this kind of following on Kathy's own remarks – any employee assistance programs. The return to work programs, the stay at work program, all of that matters to have that information accessible, to have those platforms accessible to the widest range of people and employees. And so it's really important to think about how this plays out across the board.

I will note someone mentioned – I think Kathy or David mentioned kind of 503 – Section 503 and the hiring. There's a big push sometimes to get people in the door, but if you don't have these systems in place, you can hire them and work around kind of your own interviewing and application process, but if you don't have accessible systems in place, that's not going to be very helpful. And, unfortunately, we've seen that in the federal sector. The numbers went up in hiring but oftentimes fell off and people were not retained, unfortunately.

So a culture of inclusion is really important and when you do that, you start looking at your technology systems and you have to make accessible technology. A plug for accessible technology, which I'll explain shortly, is it's the best technology. If you've ever been on a great website that's simple and easy to use, that's probably accessible technology. Millennials want it, and the younger Generation Z wants it. They want good technology, and they want a workplace that includes all people. The younger generations are really big on people being included. So this isn't just retaining people with disabilities. It's about a larger workforce issue.

So I've talked a bit about accessible technology, and I want to bring home to people what exactly that is. Again, we oftentimes define it versus assistive technology. So assistive technology is kind of a technology specifically designed for a person with a disability to perform a specific task. So you might think of a screen reader that reads out something or a sip and puff device that can help people without the use of motor ability in their hands to navigate a website.

Those are assistive technology, and they're crucial and great for many people. But we're really about accessible technology and that's different because that's technology designed for a lot of users in mind and it has built in customization features so people can individualize whatever their needs are to be met to navigate the website.

And so assistive technology alone will never kind of ensure and guarantee access to people with disabilities regarding websites and kind of platforms and the future of work. It really – these are always evolving, and we have to build in accessible technology. Some people refer to it as universal design or inclusive design, and we need to get to a point where fundamental programming that designers and developers are doing are a starting point to make accessible technology.

So that's a lot of what PEAT does, and we would like to encourage people to think about that when they're buying technology. And so the next slide has a couple of our resources. I'm going to move along quickly, but we have BuyIT! there, and that's really – if you're a company and you're going to buy some kind of technology, what do you need to know so that you can make sure the vendor is giving you accessible technology and works well? We have lots of tips, tricks, stuff that you can put in your RFP, questions to ask vendors that can make sure you're getting accessible technology.

Also, TalentWorks is really a website we have that is talking about accessibility throughout the employment lifecycle. It focuses heavily on e-recruiting, but you can get tons of kind of checklists, solutions, answers through TalentWorks that many employers face, kind of challenges around accessibility. So encourage you to check those out.

Post-employment retirement stage, I mean, you can imagine it's important even after folks leave. I'll just give a quick anecdote. I was talking to somebody the other day who couldn't access their 401K because there was a CAPTHA, those little things that say describe the image you see or what are the letters you see but it's real distorted. The image is off. That can be difficult for anybody, but for a variety of people with disabilities, they're darn near impossible. And if you can't get in to validate your 401K there and you got to start calling people, which as we know can be a headache, it's just not right, fair, or feasible for people to be able to do their job or even after their job if the sites aren't accessible.

I want to talk quickly before I wrap up around kind of the future of technology in the labor force. We are putting out a series at PEAT called the future of work, which I'll plug in a minute, but it's really looking at we spend a lot of time in spaces of HR technology, of big companies in technology outside of what we call kind of the choir of hiring people with disabilities.

And so we've seen some of these new technologies just skyrocketing in youth, and they can both be exciting, as David kind of mentioned when talking about mixed reality, or they can be alarming and concerning because, if accessibility isn't thought of now in kind of (inaudible), then it will leave a lot of people behind.

So live video, I'll just quickly say you may know that. You can get Facebook Live. That is increasingly – it's growing exponentially in use by employers. They're using it as recruiting tools, answer questions, to reach out and source people. They're using it on internal calls like all-hands calls.

Being increasingly used and it's great but it can be a problem with accessibility, if you just think about captioning or real time issues. And there are many people that are working on solutions that was exciting.

Mixed reality also on the big upswing. Recruiting. It can be used in training, kind of gamification, but there are a host of issues around accessibility there. So I'm not going to go into details, but we do work on that and have that information on PEAT.

And then lastly, artificial intelligence, which is kind of my newest, biggest concern. You look at predictive analytics that they go through job screening. They – basically, machine learning is machines looking at sets of data and kicking out things that are anomalies. Well, if for any reason for a host of disabilities for some reason they don't fit a profile or they move something differently or they took more time or whatever the data set is, they're going to be kicked out. And so real concern about kind of machine learning and how accessibility needs to play into that and actually working with people on that, presenting with people on that because I think it's a way of the future.

Time is running short. I'm going to quickly talk about some resources. Policy Matters, someone before mentioned kind of ADA and the legal aspects. Policy Matters in the top left is our attempt. We do plain language for employers to understand the policy implications. I mentioned Buy IT! so you can procure accessible resources. TalentWorks is really about how to make your recruitment and hiring strategies accessible.

The top right says creative recruiting strategies for digital age. We just are going to launch tomorrow something called future of work, and so I'd encourage you to go to peatworks.org/futureofwork. It talks about all these cutting edge trends. We're going to have podcasts, blog posts, lots of things.

And finally, we do have a resource there for American Job Centers. What under WIOA around accessibility in programming do you need to know? We have tip sheets, checklists, decks you can use within your American Job Center to help you and your staff understand accessibility issues. So I'm going to wrap up there and turn it back over to David, I believe, for questions.

MR. JONES: Great. Thank you, Josh, and that was very helpful.

At this point we know we are at the hour but we would like to open it up to three questions and there will be one for each person. And thank you for being able to stay with us a little bit longer than the hour. The first question is for Kathy. "One of the WIOA One-Stop vision goals is having an aligned business service strategy among AJC partners. So, based on your travels across the country, Kathy, is there one VR One-Stop partnership model that stands out as a good example and why?"

MS. WEST-EVANS: Well, thank you, David. And there are several, but since I was just in Pennsylvania, I'll launch with them. In Pennsylvania our VR agency is actually located in labor. So they've done a lot of alignment in looking at everywhere from serving youth in high schools to the job retention. And again, VR brings that upfront specialization in working with the business and how they prepare to recruit, hire, and provide support to individuals, but it's done in a way that's very collaborate so that we are looking at candidates that are both being served by VR or by America's job centers or by both.

So again, that's a great model, and that Pennsylvania agency has been housed in labor ever since its inception. So we learned a lot there about their collaboration, on their apprenticeships, and everything up to hiring and support.

MR. JONES: Kathy, that is great and that is my home state and I'm very happy to hear that. So thank you.

Josh, this second question is for you. "What new technology or tool do you think will have the biggest impact in employment over the next 10 years?"

MR. CHRISTIANSON: I'm going to go back to the kind of artificial intelligence at large or machine learning. It is increasingly used in a variety of ways to source people, to find the right people, to do outreach. So even before recruiting starts, it is increasingly used to screen for applications. It is increasingly used to sort through skillsets once kind of pre-employment testing happens before interviews, and that's all before we even get to a job.

Artificial intelligence machine learning is going to take over a lot of the work we do both as employees but then also to our clients and customers, and it can be a super helpful tool because it can compute information much faster than we can.

But we have to be smart about how we initially design the steps and the parameters for the machine learning so that people with disabilities are included and not seen as an outlier, an anomaly that gets kicked out because, once they're kind of kicked out from the machine learning, that's not what's going to be sought.

That's not what's going to be informed. That's not what's going to be posted or moved forward. And so there are ways that technologists can code that will include people with disabilities that I think is one of the most crucial important things that developers and employers need to be aware of.

MR. JONES: Great. Thank you, Josh. And I recently read an article about it's really going to help the blind population with artificial intelligence because it will be able to describe their surroundings, and I thought that was really neat to hear and was quite excited. And I agree with your observation that it's really – you've got to get to the values of people who design these technology tools and making sure that they're being inclusive of the disability population. So that's a good observation.

The last two questions I will take. One is, "To what extent is VR co-located with the One-Stop and virtually collocated? And would this be a good measure for WIOA?"

I can share with you that we do have 2,400 America job centers around the country. I don't know offhand how many are co-located, but in terms of WIOA measures, the good thing that's going to be happening down the road and something to look out for is that we will be able to measure at a more granular type in terms of who we are serving with their disability types. That's not something we have been able to do before, and I think that's going to really be a game changer in terms of how we assess who we are serving. So I wanted to mention that.

And the other question was, "How can I sign up to be a member of the Disability Community of Practice?"

If you go to the disability.workforcegps.org site, on the second paragraph you'll see the word join. Hyperlink on that, but please know that disability employment is just one of many. There's about, oh, maybe 25 other communities of practice, and encourage you to look at those and see which ones can help you in your everyday work. And I'm going to stop there with the questions, and I'm going to go to the next slide with contact information.

We do have – next slide. We do have Kathy West-Evans and Josh e-mail address here for your continued reference, and I want to thank them both for joining us because this is already a busy holiday season. Next.

We want to make you aware of a webinar that is in the works for January of next year. We know many of you are going to be drinking eggnog over the coming weeks, and we do not want to stop you from that. So we are planning a webinar in early January. Next.

And on behalf of the ETA family, we just want to say thank you for partnering with us and all that you do for people with disabilities. We wish you good health and happiness throughout this holiday season and a very happy new year. So we went over, but I think this has been a great conversation. Thank you so much, and we'll see you in the New Year.

MR. CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.

(END)