**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Sustaining Grant-funded Projects for Long-term Success**

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LAURA CASERTANO: So with that I'm going to move us right into today's presentation. Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's webinar, and I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Cheryl Martin. She's a TAACCCT program manager with the Division of Strategic Investments for the Employment and Training Administration with the U.S. Department of Labor. Cheryl, take it away.

Cheryl, can you hear me?

CHERYL MARTIN: Welcome, everybody. This is Cheryl, and we are delighted to see everybody here today. We have a really large group today, similar to what we've had in other webinars in this series. So that's great.

I'd like to introduce my co-moderator for this series, Erin Berg from the Department of Education. We'll be hearing from her in just a moment.

The speakers on today's webinar are all past grantees. That's the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant program. It's such a long acronym that even I get it goofed up sometimes. For those not familiar with TAACCCT, I'll just say briefly that it has been a $2 billion grant program wrapping up – it will be wrapping up in September of 2018.

It provided funds for capacity building for community colleges to support changes that would make it easier for adult learners to attain industry-recognized credentials to improve their job prospects. And TAACCCT grantees have developed nearly 2,700 new or revised programs of study, along with implementing many other strategies with those funds. So you'll hear about some of those today.

Many of the products from those programs of study are at SkillsCommons.org, including resources from today's presenters. So if after listening to today's presentation, you would like to easily share information about SkillsCommons.org with your colleagues, there's a flyer in that file share box. It's called SkillsCommons overview, and you can share that with your colleagues, if you wish, or of course just send them the website as well.

And now, I want to turn it over to Erin to say a few things, and then we'll come back and get going.

ERIN BERG: Thanks, Cheryl. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you so much for joining us today. As Cheryl said, I'm with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, and it's my pleasure to serve as the liaison to all the community and technical colleges in the United States.

And since the inception of TAACCCT, the Departments of Labor and Education have been working to support applicants, grantees, and then now through SkillsCommons.org the greater workforce development community. And in my role with the Department of Education, I'm able to hear about many of the successes and innovations at community colleges, but I'm also often asked what resources might be available for colleges that are facing challenges or for those that are seeking to improve and update their curriculum and instruction.

And today's webinar addresses sort of the core of that, those challenges is that finding ways to sustain success when you do have a grant, when that grant-funded project moves beyond the funding period. In addition today, we'll also hear about – in addition to sort of the capacity building and sustaining success, we'll hear about some topical information about some of the excellent resources available in the TAACCCT SkillsCommons.org as well.

So we at Ed are just really excited to be a part of this webinar series, which will offer several more opportunities. And there will be a list in a second talking about the different webinar – upcoming webinars. Can I have the next slide? Thanks.

So just a little bit about this webinar, though, as I mentioned that you will hear some topical information about very specific projects that were funded through the TAACCCT program. One of them was strategies to accelerate credential attainment. Another was strategies to support program completion, and another was strategies to engage employers and align programs with labor market need.

Now, these are all TAACCCT grant programs, but the main thing that we'll be talking about today are the approaches that these grantees took to sustaining that work and how that can apply to anyone who's seeking to make a long-term impact with their grant-funded project. The speakers will talk about their successes and also the challenges that they face. Can I have the next slide? May I have the next slide, please? No. OK. Sorry.

So this is the webinar series that we've been doing this spring. There were webinars about making industry experts into expert instructors to increase student success, but we'll also have one more webinar in addition to the ones listed there today on apprenticeship and work-based learning. That's on May 16th, and then we just added a seventh webinar which we think will be on June 6, which will be powerhouse partnerships between community colleges and the workforce system.

Looking forward to hosting that and as well as seeing what our four presenters have to say today. And with that I just want to thank my colleagues at the Department of Labor and as well as the presenters from Santa Fe Community College, Sinclair Community College, Grand Rapids Community College, and South Central Community College. Thank you very much, and, Cheryl, I'll turn it back over to you.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you, Erin. So we – I'm going to go over the results of the poll questions really quickly here. I'm not even going to bring them back up again, but just so that you know who we have here, it looks like, as I was looking at this before, we've got a large number of community or technical colleges, around 33 percent. We've got a few four-year institutions and a few secondary technical. We have another good about third of you from the workforce system, and then the other third is other or two-year or four-year – I mean, secondary or four-year. So that's who we have on the call here today, which is great. Thank you all for being here.

And in terms of this question, a number of you are current round four TAACCCT grantees or you worked on previous rounds or you worked with. But rest assured that this webinar is for everybody. You don't even have to know what TAACCCT stands for to benefit from this webinar because we're going to be talking about sustaining – what these grants have sustained and how they set it up and how they're doing it. And we hope that that will be useful for others in any kind of a grant as well.

I'm going to now move to introducing our presenters. So our presenters today, this webinar features four TAACCCT community college grantees who have been able to sustain innovations through a variety of creative approaches. We will hear from Kristen Krell from Santa Fe Community College, from Christina Amato from Sinclair Community College, also Julie Parks from Grand Rapids Community College, and Anne Willaert from South Central College in Minnesota. And we're really delighted to be hearing from each of those.

The way we're going to do this today is we'll hear first from Santa Fe and Sinclair, and then we'll have a break for questions from both of them. So as you listen to them, if you have questions from them like, well, how did you do this or can you say more about that, just type that into the Q&A box there. And we will try to answer as many of those as we can right after we hear from Santa Fe and Sinclair. And then we'll hear from Grand Rapids and South Central, and we'll take questions for Julie and Anne right after that.

We will also at the end take other questions as we have time, particularly general questions that apply to everyone. So please just put any questions you have in the chat and presenters will see those questions and we'll try to answer as many as we can. We also may have some members of the TAACCCT Learning Network. If there's a question that seems more appropriate to have them just answer it directly to you, that may happen as well. So if you see that popping up, that's what's going on there.

So now, without any further ado, let's move to hearing from Kristen Krell whose focus is on job development career coaches. Kristen?

KRISTEN KRELL: Thank you.

MS. MARTIN: Sorry. There we go.

MS. KRELL: Thank you. Yeah. Greetings, everyone. So I will be speaking to you today about our job development career coach innovation, how it's structured, the benefits of the partnership, and how we've been able to sustain this innovation after the grant ends. So SUN PATH is an acronym that stands for Skill Up Network: Pathways Acceleration in Technology and Healthcare.

New Mexico SUN PATH Consortium is a consortium of 11 community colleges across the state of New Mexico, as well as our Department of Workforce Solutions and over 200 healthcare employer partners. And our mission is simple, improving lives and strengthening healthcare.

So we have three goals that have really drived all of our efforts these past four years, and the JDCC, which is the acronym for job development and career coach, has been the innovation that's addressed goal three, so to create strategic alignment between education and workforce systems, resulting in improved employment outcomes, retention, and average earnings.

The TAACCCT initiative and the JDCCs have served as a catalyst for alignment between our Department of Workforce Solutions and our community college system. So this is the way we structured the component. We contracted using grant funds with the Department of Workforce Solutions to hire, train, and supervise job development career coaches, which are workforce employees located on every college campus.

We also hired a job development career coach manager who I speak with as the director of the grant multiple times a week – so we're really close partners – to provide training and oversight to the job development career coaches. At least one part-time JDCC is located on each college campus. On the larger campuses located in the big cities, we have up to three JDCCs. The college provides the office space, phone, and computer, and the JDCC really becomes a part of each SUN PATH team at each college, meeting regularly. Effective communication is really the key to success. So regular ongoing communication with the JDCCs on campus.

So I'm going to talk about the benefits of this partnership. We're thrilled with the results. After they were trained, the JDCCs really brought the expertise in the workforce resources and career readiness workshops and resources to students and campuses. In the past students have graduated, and there's been real effort to connect them with employment after they graduate.

But the JDCCs have used this 30, 60, and 90-day graduation checklist with students to make sure that, as they're anticipating graduation, they're actively preparing for employment upon graduation. You can find the resources on SkillsCommons. We have a variety of PowerPoints the JDCCs use, but basically, it's resume development, professionalism training, soft skills, a graduation checklist, mock interviews, organizing job fairs.

So one of the great benefits – another great benefit to this partnership is we know that a lot of our large government structures function in isolation and are less effective as they could be as a result. And so having the systemic alignment gives us the opportunity to colleges to access the workforce resources such as WIOA and TAA scholarships for students. SUN PATH has also served as a catalyst to build a partnership with our Human Services Department, and we now use TANF funds to pay tuition for students who qualify. This is an alignment that is expanding across the state as a result.

So JDCCs also take the lead on engaging with industry partners. When we wrote the TAACCCT IV proposal, we had 30 employer partners written into the grant. We now have over 200 healthcare employer partners across the state that are actively involved, and you can see these are the ways that they're involved, including advisory councils, both state and regional, providing input on curriculum, visiting classrooms for mock interviews. That's been a great benefit.

The other benefit is we've used the workforce online connection system as our platform for tracking – basically, tracking application for TAACCCT data collection and reporting. So JDCCs enter in all of the TAACCCT participant student data, including case notes, completion of program, and industry credentials. The site is useful because it's the most powerful job searching system in our state with over 10,000 jobs.

We also are able to use the labor market data, and the prepare reports for us for – regionally, and college leaders and advisors use this occupational information to advise students but also make – to make decisions about allocating resources to make sure that the programs they're investing in are in alignment with their regional job demand. That's also located on SkillsCommons, if you're interested in seeing it.

So sustaining the innovation, we're thrilled that the cabinet secretary of our Department of Workforce Solutions has recognized the tremendous value of this partnership for all stakeholders, and she's agreed to realign workforce resources to sustain these JDCCs on the college campuses, most of them that are really strong results. There's a couple that the partnership didn't work out as anticipated, but for the large majority they'll be there.

And you can see that we've also really benefited for our data collection analysis and reporting. It's allowed us to track students through programs and into the workforce. So here's an example. These are our performance outcomes data dashboards, and you can – if you – if you're interested, you can use this link and see our dashboards for all of our partner sites, all 11 colleges. But this compares our targets, which is the blue bars, to our actual progress, which is the yellow bars, and using the workforce online connection system has allowed us to track them as they move into employment and track their wage increases as well.

So finally, I just wanted to make note we're really proud that SUN PATH has been a high functioning and high achieving consortium in a state that has a reputation as otherwise. And I am well aware that all of this can go wrong very quickly. So we set some really clear expectations about a high performing collaboration and shared these up front consistently throughout the consortium and wanted to share them with you as well. So here they are. And no. I don't have time to go over all of them, but they're there.

And then finally, we did a training early on with all of our staff about how to be effective change agents. And so this was like an hour-long training, and I really think it was effective. As I've gone around to all of our sites, I have seen this list hanging in the SUN PATH offices around the state. So we're super proud of what we've accomplished and that it will be sustained after the grant ends. So thank you very much.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you, Kristen. Really appreciate that, and I'm sure there's so much going on behind those short words that you were able to fit in here.

So I'm going to move next to Christina Amato at Sinclair. Please tell us what your main focus – well, your slide tells us that; right? Competency-based education is what you're going to focus on today, and I should say that for all of these folks there were many things that they've sustained. But we asked them to pick one to focus on for the purpose of today's webinar. So, Christina?

CHRISTINA AMATO: Hi, everyone. I'm going to talk a little bit about Sinclair's competency-based education program today, also known at our institution as The FlexPace Program. I thought it was appropriate to begin with a discussion of what CBE is at Sinclair, and one of the best ways to do that I think is to compare CBE to a traditional classroom modality. So if you look at the left side over here, it probably looks familiar. I think it's how most of us went to college. You would begin at the beginning of a structured term, maybe in the fall or the spring.

You would take a 16-week course, maybe an 8-week course, but typically, once inside that course there's very little control for the student on how they advance inside the course. Students would advance based on weekly timelines, and so if you're a student who brings in prior knowledge or maybe you've already figured out what we're learning and you're bored, your opportunity for acceleration in this modality would be extremely limited.

Conversely, if you're a student who is struggling with material and the class moves on, it's time for the class to move on, whether you've mastered it or not. And this modality also instruction tends to be standardized across all levels of academic needs like those we just talked about, and advising is separate from the classroom experience.

Our CBE classroom diverges in important ways. The first is that the student is the driver and is in control of the term. Enrollment is continuous and begins at almost any time during our term, and students may finish at any time. Students toss out the weekly timelines in this modality and advance based on showing and doing what they know.

So as they master materials, hands-on labs, or assessments, they advance through the course. Because of this students may accelerate through courses by testing out of units entirely or just accelerating through assignments, if they're able to move quickly. Importantly, they can also slow down where they need to. In this modality as well instruction is customized.

Obviously, when you have students coming in at varying points with varying levels of academic need, the relationship between instructor and student changes greatly in the CBE classroom. In this classroom also a student is assigned a faculty and coach team. So they work together for the success of the student.

So what does CBE at Sinclair look like? Since our round two TAACCCT grant when we developed our first program, in the last five years we've developed 11 CBE programs and 55 courses. Our second bullet is already outdated because we're constantly enrolling. So we've educated over 1300 students who have earned more than 650 certificates and degrees, and enrollment has obviously significantly increased, as you can see by the bullet there. So why, in addition to enrollment, are we doing this?

There are a couple of key and important reasons. The state climate in Ohio is one. We know and we hear constantly about the skills gap. We've been talking about it for years. We also know that in Ohio we have more than a million adult learners with some college and no degree, and we have very aggressive state attainment goals by 2025 that as a state we're unlikely to meet if we continue to do business as usual.

CBE is also another and sometimes the only option for our students who need increased flexibility. 70 percent of our Sinclair CBE students are adult learners with heavy representation from military, veterans, and working adults. Also, importantly, our employers validate CBE with partnerships and other things.

We have 85 employer partners to the CBE programs, and they participate in things like reverse internship fairs where we flip the relationship and put the students behind the table with a poster and the employers come shop for an intern. Our CBE students are also 10 times as likely to take an internship, and the internship-to-hire rate is 90 percent. CBE students tend to finish courses, programs faster across all programs at Sinclair, about 30 percent faster course completion, and the graduation rate is double traditional students in the same program.

So what it took to get here in the early phases? To be honest, the first thing is grant stimulus. We had a lot of will to do CBE, and we had talked about it for years. But resource and a deadline is really what pushes you to do the things that are hard and challenging. But equally as important, we had an early core of very committed faculty who were invested in trying.

They were okay with failure and they continued to adapt as programs needed changes and they were really invested in producing the best quality CBE programs. Also important, we had executive-level support from the very beginning. Our president and provost have been and continue to be outspoken advocates for our program. They supported us even through the bumps and bruises, and they've watched us grow into a sustainable program.

So what did it take for us to sustain post-grant funds? Sinclair created several hard-funded positions dedicated to CBE and identified it as a college and eLearning priority. So we began to shift resources in the direction of developing more CBE programs. Additionally, we created a strategic plan to think about not just what we're going to do this year but what we're going to do in three or five years.

The ongoing impact could not be overstated. Competency-based education has generated around $14 million in grants for Sinclair. We've also been recognized by the Ohio Department of Higher Education as the best practice model for CBE in the state, and subsequently, we were asked to co-chair a state committee for CBE best practice to help advance CBE in the state of Ohio. We also presented or provided technical assistance to more than 60 schools and organizations nationwide in 2017. So that seed that was planted with the TAACCCT grant has helped not only us grow, but we've been able to use that to help other institutions as well.

I thought an appropriate way to end my presentation and my talk here is to talk about one of our CBE students, Jennifer. Jennifer came to us. She was an army veteran who had served during the Iraq war as a network engineer, but during that time, her seven years in the military, she never earned a credential.

Subsequently, when she separated and came home to the Dayton area, she was unable to find any employment in the IT field. When she came to us, she was working full-time in the restaurant industry and had a young family at home. She had interacted with Sinclair several times but never enrolled because the traditional programs really just didn't suit the kind of pressure she had in her life. So Jennifer is really our classic prototype for the student that's going to take five to six years to graduate. Luckily for us, that is not what happened. Luckily for Jennifer, that's not what happened.

Jennifer was a dual major graduate in network engineering and secure systems administration. She graduated in a little less than two years while working full-time. Through our CBE program she was able to apply a lot of her prior knowledge, and she interned and directly hired in the spring of 2016 and later moved on to the university in our area. So I think stories like Jennifer's remind us why we continue to do this hard work and why it's important for us to sustain our CBE program at Sinclair.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you so much, Christina, and thank you, Kristen. Wow. Those are two really different kinds of strategies that you pursued at your colleges and two different sets of things that needed sustaining and figuring out, and inspirational to hear about Jennifer there.

Let's come to a couple of questions that we have. I'm going to start with a question for Kristen Krell. So a couple different people were asking things that we've put together in one question here. So just to be clear, how were your career coaches funded during the grant and then afterwards? You talked some about the secretary doing some funding and things like that. So can you speak to that, please, Kristen?

MS. KRELL: Absolutely. So the career coaches during the grant, we contracted with the Department of Workforce Solutions using TAACCCT funds. So we paid the Department of Workforce Solutions, and they hired all of the employees. So they were workforce employees located on the college campus.

But after the grant ends and now that – as of March 31st we no longer are able to pay for the JDCCs, and that is when the cabinet secretary has – I mean, we've been planning this for well over a year. She's reallocated workforce resources, such as Wagner-Peyser and WIOA, to realign the resources to ensure that the JDCCs stay on campus really because it just makes so much sense systemically for the two systems to be aligned. So she was able to make that happen, and we're thrilled.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Great. Thank you. Erin, do you have a couple of questions for Kristen?

MS. BERG: Sure. Kristen, some of the audience were wondering if the state of New Mexico gave you access to the online – workforce online system, and if so, how much did you have access to?

MS. KRELL: We did. It was a whole process, and it was a fairly long process that we had to go through the – the procedures of getting everybody access and approved. And we had our college SUN PATH coordinators as well as our JDCCs to get approved to use the system, as well as our data manager. So – and we had access to – as much as I – they entered case notes, downloaded data. I'm sure that there's a whole behind-the-scenes system that I don't know all of the details of, but yes. We had the access we needed in order to enter students, track students, download the data, and then we were able to also access the wage – employment and wage data in the data downloads.

MS. BERG: Great. And how often were the labor market data made available to you?

MS. KRELL: So we requested that and they prepared that for us and that was on an annual basis. So – and it was very specific to each region and all of the big cities as well. So it was a process for them to prepare that specifically for SUN PATH healthcare programs of study across our SUN PATH regions.

MS. BERG: Thanks, Kristen.

MS. MARTIN: All right. Thank you. Before I go to a question for Christina, I want to come back to one for Kristen, your first question about the funding. Was that funding from the workforce solutions at the local level or the state level?

MS. KRELL: At the state level.

MS. MARTIN: OK. OK. And that's partly because you were part of a consortium of colleges across the state that were doing this in a coordinated way; right, Kristen?

MS. KRELL: That's right. That's right. So it was through the state Department of Workforce Solutions. Now, we did partner with our regional boards, but the actual funding came through at the state level.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Great. Thank you.

So I'm going to move to a question for Christina, and people can keep asking their questions here. But the same question for you as – essentially, as we asked for Kristen. How – financially, how are you sustaining your program? Are partners taking on costs for their own institutions, or how is that working?

MS. AMATO: So when we set up our CBE program, even though we were on a grant, by design we embedded the development of that program in our centralized eLearning division. So within that division currently we already do eLearn course development, eLearn faculty support, and eLearn student support.

So as we took our three years to build, work out the kinks, we knew at the end of it we were going to fully move all CBE development and support into the online division. So basically, we just had to reallocate some resource towards the end of the grant towards developing for CBE programs, but by 2016 it was solely sustained within the existing model for course development and student support.

MS. MARTIN: Wow. That's pretty amazing, actually. Erin, do you have another question for Christina?

MS. BERG: Sure. So for Sinclair's CBE programs, how did you fund any alterations to the behind-the-scene processes and systems necessary for CBE, for example, financial aid or transcripting?

MS. AMATO: Again, one of the key elements was the way we started at the beginning. So when building a CBE program, the worst possible thing to do would be to attempt to build it without talking to those individuals first because then you are going back and retrofitting and rebuilding those behind-the-scenes processes.

We set up a taskforce when we first got the grant, and we put representation from all of those areas into the taskforce. And we would meet with them weekly and tell them, here's what we want to do with financial aid. And generally, then financial aid would say, no, and they would tell us how we could do it. So from the very beginning we had key stakeholders at the table, and they were able to then in kind with a lower level of resource expended help us build the program from the start in a way that it would be sustainable.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Great. Thank you. So those are some of the questions that we heard from folks. If you have additional questions for them, you can add those, and we'll try to get to those at the end.

But right now, we're going to move to Julie Parks, who's the executive director of workforce training for Grand Rapids Community College, and after that we're going to hear from Anne Willaert. So, Julie?

JULIE PARKS: Hi, everybody, from beautiful, warm Michigan today. I'm talking to you about the Michigan Coalition for Advanced Manufacturing in Michigan. Eight community colleges work together with our Michigan Works, which are our America's Career Centers. They were key partners in this project, and what I'm going to focus on today are apprenticeships. And apprenticeships aren't new to most community colleges.

We've been doing them for years and years, but this was really new models of apprenticeship that we took on here. So we started with customizing apprenticeships and customizing not only in the curriculum that we offered but embedding national credentials into them and then putting them all in one day or in a half a day in a session where the students or the individuals from the companies could get very specific skills that they needed to move forward.

So Autocam and NN Manufacturing were two companies that really wanted precision machining and wanted specialized precision machining, more than what we offered through our degree programs. So we built a cohort that worked – they worked for the employer Monday through Thursday, and on Fridays they came to GRCC for eight hours where they went to school. And then we were able to draw the alignment to the credit programs, and we were able to articulate 30 credits towards a 60 degree associate's degree program for individuals in the program.

But the unique part and the way – we only have 3 percent unemployment rate on the west side of Michigan, but we have neighborhoods – what we call neighborhoods of focus that had some 20 percent unemployment rate. And so we were able to work with community partners to help bring individuals in from these high unemployment neighborhoods, low skill in some situations, bring them in and put them in education along with a job, which, yes. That's what apprenticeships are, but these companies took an opportunity to do this with individuals that really started with very low skill sets to begin and to move this forward.

It was so successful that we were able to expand to two more cohorts to do this, and so some are Tuesday nights and Wednesday nights because they ran a second shift. And what it's doing is the retention of these individuals – we knew from the beginning we were going to have to build return on investment measure to help these companies understand what the value of being able to retain these individuals and to move them on, which is a pretty cool thing for us to be able to do.

And then what it's led to, there was a lot. West Michigan is not a union heavy part of the state of Michigan, and apprenticeships were always seem to be affiliated with unions. And so what was happening were these two non-union companies. There was a buzz that started within the employer network, and they wanted to know what was happening. What's so different about this? How is Autocam keeping all these individuals? How are they growing?

How are they able to recruit 60 individuals that have stayed with their company now? They've only lost one person in the four years that they've had them as a part of this project. So those employers, they loved it, but then the small manufacturers wanted to know, how could you do this for us? So we were able to work with our workforce board, and our workforce board, actually, they hold – West Michigan Works holds the apprenticeship and handles all the paperwork.

So then different small employers could have one or two individuals from their organization that are a part of this cohort. Now, it's gone even beyond manufacturing, and we're doing this in IT and in healthcare. We have over 800 apprenticeships now, which is a pretty significant number for us and then our non-profit partners.

What we do best at GRCC is education and training, what our partners that we formed with at the Urban League, the Hispanic Center, they are 100 percent of our recruiting arm. We spend no money on recruitment. They come in and understand our program, talk about what's a good fit for the program, and they recruit all the people. That's part of our sustainability effort that we have. Along with that, we worked with the employers to really track, what is it costing you of turnover of employees?

And most of our smaller employers had no idea until we started to build that metric. So, for instance, Mercy Health St. Mary's, they figured that it cost them over $23,000 every time they lost someone and had to bring in someone new. And then using WIOA funds, using different grant funds, using their own funds, we were able to show them with half of that investment how they would be able to retain and have a better workforce. So that was pretty exciting for us.

It really has helped us start faster curriculum change at the college in credit and non-credit. We built a fast track system for curriculum – for the curriculum approval process. We put national credentials in, and our academic governing council for our college voted to allow us to totally articulate from national credentials to credits in our college, that that would be a means, no matter what area of the college it was in, to allow for easy articulation. We had coach navigators like you heard about earlier and job developers, and we started from day one saying what the value that those people brought to the positions.

How are we improving completion? How are we improving job placement? What kind of data could we track? All of those things helped ensure sustainability. When the grant came near to an end, I was able to then go out and build the case for the budget system about why we wanted to keep these people on. So it's really changed what we do, and it's really brought in a lot of different funders who are interested. So we're moving people from poverty to great jobs.

The average paycheck of a starting apprentice was $18 an hour in our manufacturing sector. It's less than that in the healthcare sector, but these are good jobs with full-time benefits. And employers – you would not believe the support from the employer community, which also really helps us sustain, build. Our president, our board of trustees loves that positive employer feedback. Those employers have contributed new labs, new equipment.

So really the TAACCCT grant was just the start of us to be able to really move forward quickly, and so I just encourage you to really think about what do I have to prove to be able to get general fund budget money to continue this program when my grant money is done? What do I need to track to convince leadership that this is something worth investing in? And I think that's one of the things we were most excited about. Think about that up front because that really will make a difference in what happens when your grant is over. Thank you.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you. That is exciting. It's amazing how much information you guys are passing into a short amount of time here. And now, I'm going to turn to Anne and ask Anne from – who's the statewide director for the Minnesota Advanced Manufacturing Partnership at South Central College to tell us about sustainability at South Central. Anne?

ANNE WILLAERT: Thank you, Cheryl. Our consortium under the TAACCCT grant consisted of 12 community and technical colleges and two centers of excellence that sit within our university systems. So it really encompassed the whole state of Minnesota.

I'm going to really talk about today the how we engaged employers through our grant by aligning our programs to meet the labor needs in our state. When we wrote the grant, there's a large skills gap as it relates to manufacturers in the state of Minnesota, but when we received the grant funding there was an economy turn with low unemployment rates, which really aligned strongly with declining enrollments in two-year institutions. So we really focused on upskilling our existing employees, our incumbent workers, and those are the areas that I'm going to talk about today.

So some of the challenges that we faced were really about getting faculty on board. Under our grant we really worked at creating what we call core manufacturing curriculum, and we also asked our faculty to align industry credentials with all of our academic programs. So educating faculty on the importance of industry credentials and aligning that core across 12 different institutions was really important.

We also found that industry needed some development also as it related to what industry credentials are. The assumption that they understood the value of that was not clear, and so being able to work very closely with our industry partners and having them understand the benefits of using industry credentials not only in training but also as it related to our apprenticeship or work-based learning programs was really a key to our success.

So today I'm going to talk about a couple of tools that we put in place while we're focusing on engagement employment. I just want you to know all of these pieces are important as it related to creating pathways and bridges for our students to meet those employer needs. I want to first talk about our creative – our innovation as it related to career and guided pathways. I'm only going to talk about adult three, which is at the top of the slide, and how we created exit and entry points for our incumbent workforce.

We created what we call a credit for prior learning process as it related to industry credentials, and we set up test centers for students to be able to test out on a number of industry credentials, which gave them credits right into our academic programs. So all of these pieces in place are important, but, again, the ability for our incumbent workers to go through a guided pathway at a number of entry and exit points and receive credit was really important.

Industry credentials we really focused on were the MSSC CPT, certified production technician, which is a big part of our core curriculum, NIMS as it relates to machining and mechatronics, PMMI in mechatronics and AWS as it relates to welding. We created a guidebook, which you can find on SkillsCommon. It really is a process as it relates to aligning workforce on industry credentials and how we aligned the guidebook with our college policies and processes as a platform.

It's also demonstrating where colleges have supported transfer specialists to continue this work and an online credit for prior learning platform for students to utilize. We also worked with our faculty to align their programs with the veterans education transfer system. This is a wonderful system in the state of Minnesota, bringing veterans on board and granting them credit for prior learning and to enroll in a number of academic programs.

We provided three different learn-work opportunities, which we call apprenticeships. Some are registered and some are not. We have an academic program where our students go to school three days a week and can work two days a week. They are working toward an academic credential while receiving their work-based learning. We also have a customized apprenticeship program through our customized department where students can receive industry credentials, which are then direct pathways into our academic programs.

And we also created an online platform where we teach credit and non-credit courses that relate to industry credentials or academic programs. The beauty here was that we aligned these programs with funding that came out about the same time. So our stars really aligned. The Minnesota Apprenticeship Initiative funds and our legislators also provided funding through Pipeline, which is a dual training program that employers could seek grants to support the academic programs of their incumbent workers or new students that could go and work for them and receive training through our models.

Our online platform is called +Connect. You can see in the picture on my slide that a number of students up to 32 can be online at the same time. It's a virtual classroom with a live instructor. The beauty of this is that our incumbent workers can walk right off the floor during their week work. They go to training one to three hours per week.

We run eight-week sessions, and at the end of them they can receive an academic credential or work towards an academic credential or an industry credential. But we also use this training to upskill our current employees, working closely with our industry partners. We work with our workforce centers for those dislocated workers that need new skills, and all of them are committed to receiving a credential at the end of it.

So our strategies to sustaining really is about bringing industry partners in in the beginning, building trust levels with them, and having part of the development process as we move through the creation of new programs. Our colleges have committed to positions such as a learn-work-earn coordinator and intrusive advising model to sustain our students.

Our state system has created grants to help us build on some of our platforms, not just in manufacturing, to take the success and build it into other sectors within the state of Minnesota. And the grant itself was able to create a number of partnerships where we give the ability to employers to continue to meet with the academic institutions.

And lastly, I just wanted to share the benefits and differences. You can see that 44 percent of our incumbent workers received wage increases. We've had a number of faculty that were credentialed along the way, credit for prior learning grants that were given out, and you can see the number of registered apprenticeship or dual training apprenticeships that we were able to achieve. Thank you.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you, Anne. Wow. Another set of amazing things. We got four here. So great. I want to go to questions that – going to – whoops. Going to move to questions in general right now. Laura, I'm trying to move it to that, not to this polling question. OK. Thank you.

Before I ask questions to Julie and Anne – and this is partly because Erin needs to leave at 5:00 and we've got 75 minutes on this webinar. So we will be continuing for about 15 minutes past the hour if there are questions, but I know that the question often comes up in terms of sustainability, even though we tend to think about sustainability as other kinds of things – excuse me – will there be new grants like these from Ed and DOL. So what's the word at Education, Erin?

MS. BERG: Thanks, Cheryl. All of our new grant programs are announced in the Federal Register like – (inaudible) – federal agency, but there's also a link that should be made available to you, which is for community colleges or career and technical education or adult education and literacy and also our correctional reentry education programs. Anything new in those areas will be announced in this newsletter, and the link will take you to a screen where you can see past issues as well as how to sign up to get notifications in the future.

We also will often host announcements from other agencies that community colleges or technical colleges or other stakeholders in OCTAE admission are might find interesting. So there will be resources from Department of Labor, but we also do things like financial literacy or other things. So the best way to find out about any upcoming opportunities – and there will be a few in the next few months – is to sign up for that newsletter.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Great. Thank you, Erin. And in terms of at DOL, the second link – or the first like that's up there actually, the one from doleta.gov, is we post our grants on grants.gov as well, but if you want to look specifically at the ones coming from ETA, you can find them there on that link.

At DOL all of our grants, like I said, are posted on grants.gov. There are grants open right now related to streamlining state occupational licensing requirements, national health emergency demo grants to states that are related to the opioid epidemic, and various other grants related to Indians and Native Americans. Reentry and YouthBuild are either out or upcoming. So you'll see more information on that on that website.

So let's go back now to asking questions to Julie and Anne, and I'm going to start with a question to Julie. "How difficult was it to convince the employers about transitioning to non-union environments? What did you find were the advantages?"

MS. PARKS: Well, I think they already had non-union environments. So they just thought – they were concerned that apprenticeships were just what unions did, that there were only union apprenticeships. And we had great help from our U.S. DOL apprenticeship coordinator at the state level to come and help explain, no. Apprenticeships are a different style of learning and working at the same time. It's not just a union strategy. And so once we did that and then when we had the two companies that really took this on, it became an easy sell because they saw, oh, it wasn't creating a union in the workplace.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you. Erin, you want to take a question?

MS. BERG: Sure. Anne, "Is the Minnesota program a member of the MSF funded 360 AT partnership for pathways? And if so, how did that support what you're doing?

MS. WILLAERT: Yeah. Great question. 360 is one of the center of excellence that we worked with under the grant. So they were one of the program partners under out TAACCCT grant. Nine of our colleges are members of 360, and we actually utilized the core curriculum that 360 was rolling out and was teaching to high school students. So what we did was on our end we created that core – that same curriculum as the core pathway in all 12 of our programs. So we created pathways working with 360 for high school students to go right into our academic programs and be granted credit for those through our credit for prior learning process.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Great. Thank you. So I know that Erin has to take off shortly. So I wanted to just pause a moment and tell Erin thank you for joining us and for co-moderating this with us and for getting the word out to the OCTAE crowd. I do have a few more questions here for Julie, and if anybody has any questions for any of our presenters or general ones, please, you can – we have a little bit more time. So please put those in the box.

MS. BERG: So thank you, Cheryl, and thank you, everyone else.

MS. MARTIN: All right. Thank you, Erin.

So coming back to you, Julie, "Is the local board now serving as the intermediary for your apprenticeships?"

MS. PARKS: Yes. Not for all of them, but for a great number of them they are, especially for the smaller employer, which is about 250 employees or less. They do – they hold the standard for those.

MS. MARTIN: OK.

MS. PARKS: So in manufacturing a lot of them they do.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Great. And then kind of – well, another apprenticeship kind of question. "Are these apprenticeships that you're talking about registered apprenticeships?"

MS. PARKS: Almost every one of them is a U.S. DOL registered apprentice. Out of the 800, there are only four that are not.

MS. MARTIN: OK. OK. Thank you. And another question for you, Julie. "Please explain the alignment between certifications and credits."

MS. PARKS: OK. So let's say you had an OSHA 10 safety card. Does the OSHA 10 safety card articulate to any class that we have on the credit side of our college? And it does. We offer a two-credit safety class that has the same outcomes. So if you come with a current OSHA 10 card, you can get the two credits right away for that safety class and not have to retake it. The same thing with AWS.

Depending on the AWS certification you come in with, if that fits within our different classes, and each one of our curriculum classes are embedding credentials into those classes to make the articulation easier. And we use a system called TES, the transfer equivalency system. So a student could see what already matches. What national credentials already match to classes, and as every class goes through the program review process, then they'll be adding the credentials to make it very easy for that articulation.

MS. MARTIN: Wow. That's great. OK. Thank you. I'm going to go back to Kristen for a question now, and like I said, if others have questions, please keep them coming.

But somebody asked the question, "Can you please review the effectiveness steps?" We all want to be effective; right? So we're going to pull it back to slide 22, if – Laura, if you could pull that one up and, Kristen, if you could kind of briefly go over those effectiveness steps.

MS. KRELL: Sure. Absolutely. Get to slide 22 here. So we all know that these TAACCCT efforts were really implementing change into institutions, which is really not always easy. So the approach for doing that is critical. So here's – here's basically the training we provided our staff. First of all, prioritize what's important as you're implementing, and really pick your battles. So as you're moving forward and interfacing with others, there can be some difficult interactions. So you want to trust others, trust those you're interfacing with, and assume the best and you'll get the best, oftentimes.

Using reason and thoughtfulness. So there's many, many, many interactions that take place, hundreds over a year, and always striving to minimize the drama and be really thoughtful as you navigate the implementation of these efforts and your interactions with others because it can be threatening to some folks. Definitely approaching things seeking to understand the perspectives of others, and in doing that I'm going to jump to another bullet. When you're doing that, understanding where they're coming from, seeking the win-win. How is what I'm bringing to the table a win for the partners?

As you're proposing, propose ideas and then seek input from others, rather than saying here's what we're doing. It's like here's what we're proposing and then getting their input about how to even improve upon that idea. Requesting rather than complaining is a big one. It's so easy to complain. Things can be frustrating, and I've learned early on that if you rephrase what you're hoping for and put it into a request rather than a complaint, it's just so much more effective in moving things forward.

Approaching problems always with – from a place of kindness, and then this is one I said over and over and over is being persistent, being patient, and staying positive. I always talk about being kind of a gentle stalker, but that is really just continuing until you get what you need but being patient because it takes time and always approaching it with a positive attitude. But ultimately, if something just simply not going to go in that moment, letting go – just letting go.

And then I'd like to remind folks that, if you seek to bring sort of a sense of joy and tranquility to the situation and to the people around you, then people want to be around you and your staff and the people that you're encountering with, and it becomes contagious. And so this has been our approach, and it's really seemed to work well. But it takes an intentional effort because things can get frustrating. So thank you.

MS. MARTIN: Indeed. Indeed. Good advice for all of our change agent situations.

So I'm going to ask if any of the presenters have questions for each other, given what you heard from each other, or if you had any final thoughts that you sort of didn't get a chance to ask before that you wanted to mention now.

MS. WILLAERT: This is Anne from Minnesota. I would just like to make a comment that employers are a really important partner for community and technical colleges, and as they're manufacturing and the world of manufacturing is changing so quickly because of automation, having them at the table is really important for us to continue to change our curriculum to meet their needs.

And what we found is they're really excited to be at the table. You just need to really reach out and talk to them and invite them, and then they're happy to be there. But a lot of times they don't always know that unless you go directly to them and ask them that. We were able to work with over 550 employers in developing our programs, and without them we could never have done what we've done, nor be able to sustain the programs we've created.

MS. MARTIN: 550. Wow. How many did you start out with, Anne, to get to 550?

MS. WILLAERT: Our required employers, we have 12 colleges, and they each had about two or three of them, and we tracked our employers that were non-required throughout the grant. So just with our +Connect program alone, which is the online program, we have 92 employers that are utilizing that system.

MS. MARTIN: Great.

MS. WILLAERT: So yeah.

MS. PARKS: And I would just say for – with Anne, those employers can become your best friends and can help you so much with initiatives you need to move forward. So while it's time consuming up front, it's worth the time in the long run.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah. I was going to ask if others had comments to say about the role of employers because that is just so critical.

MS. KRELL: Yeah. I will echo what Anne said. This is Kristen from Santa Fe Community College. This has been such a tremendous opportunity to really align all of our systems and bringing employers to the table – in healthcare it's more common, but what – what has been unique is across the state and across disciplines so that employers from large hospitals and smaller organizations can come together and really address a need and work together and share resources. So it's been – the impact will have really long-lasting effects. So we're really thankful for the opportunity.

And I did want to also mention, for us in New Mexico, we had very limited opportunity and access to simulation centers, and the TAACCCT grants have allowed us to create simulation centers across the state, and they – there's been about a team of 60 experts – subject matter experts who've come together and done class training in medical simulation across the state. That has been really invaluable as well. That's no doubt going to have a lasting impact, and colleges have all institutionalized their simulation centers and staff as well.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you. Other thoughts on that or related to this? Can any of you speak to the role of employers or other excellent partners to focus the college leadership on sustaining an effort? Sometimes that's where the message needs to come from. Do any of you have examples perhaps of how that might have happened at your college?

MS. PARKS: Well, employers are huge. This is Julie in Grand Rapids. Employers are huge in that regard because they give direct feedback to your president and your board of trustees. But I'll tell you by having the non-profit partners be there to do some of the wrap-around services, they were just as vocal, if not more vocal, and churches and those groups that really I think swayed especially trustees who are up for reelection every few years.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Other thoughts on that? Thank you, Julie.

MS. WILLAERT: I think – this is Anne from Minnesota, and our employers really have the ear of our leadership, especially our Economic Workforce Department on building trainings and are now understanding the value of the industry credentials and how they align very well with academic programs to create opportunities for their existing employers to continue to upskill their current employees so that they can continually move them up and backfill with new employees.

So we work with our employers and our leadership in our college and all the colleges in Minnesota work very, very closely with them because those are our main customers, our students and our employers.

MS. MARTIN: All right. Any other comments on that from Kristen or Christina? You don't have to, but I don't want to cut you off either.

CHRISTY: This is Christy. I would just say that students and employers alike are the lynchpins in terms of feedback that boards and higher administration listen to. And in terms of employers, as an example for our program, we started a retain management CBE program this year and signed on two new employers that had never worked with Sinclair before.

And one of the things they liked the most about the program was that students could schedule around the busy seasons of retail so that they were not in classes during, say, the holiday season. And that really struck a chord with both our board and our president that we could really configure delivery in a way that works not just for students but that employers like it as well.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah. Great. Thank you. OK. I want to go back and pick up a couple of resources here. For one thing, I wanted to mention that in the file share selection there that you've got, besides the SkillsCommons overview and today's PowerPoint, you also have from Minnesota the CPL guide there, the thing that Anne mentioned. So that is right there in the file share box, if you want that.

And then on this resources slide that we have here, we have a TAACCCT sustainability toolkit that has been used for TAACCCT grantees, but it's a way of thinking through questions that I think are relevant even if you're not – it's relevant to any situation, not just TAACCCT. And some of the examples are TAACCCT in there, but the kind of questions that you need to ask can be used for any situation.

And we also have guidebook, the link for that is on this resources slide as well as in the file share box. There are some examples of sustainability plans from TAACCCT that are at the link there that you can see on your slide, if those would be of use to you. And then I also wanted to make sure to mention a new resource that we just came out with called Powerhouse Partnerships, and it's a great report that describes the activities and strategies of a really wide variety of different partnerships between community colleges and workforce boards.

And just a real diversity of things that they're doing to partner because we talked about the value of employer partnerships here but the value of partnerships with your workforce board as well can be – and of course we talked some about that, Kristen and so forth. But that can just be another really important partnership to take advantage of. So take a look at that, if you will.

And then I just wanted to remind us that – remind everybody that we have another webinar next – in two weeks about apprenticeship and work-based learning, and we also have a – like I said, another webinar that's coming – or Erin said – up on June 6 that is about the powerhouse partnerships that I just mentioned earlier. So we'll get that link out there, and please join us for the rest of those.

Thank you so much to our presenters today, Kristen Krell, Christina Amato, Julie Parks, and Anne Willaert. You packed so much into a short time here to tell us about what you sustained. It's just really exciting.

We really appreciate your time, and thank you to each one of you too who joined us here today for this webinar. Back to you, Laura.

(END)