**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Telling Your Story: Communicating Impact and Effectiveness to Stakeholders**

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LAURA CASERTANO: Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's "Telling Your Story: Communicating Impact and Effectiveness to Stakeholders" webinar. And I'm going to ask you one more time if you haven't done so already, to introduce yourself in that chat on the bottom, left-hand corner of your screen. If you're joining late or you just haven't done so yet, go ahead and take a second now to introduce yourself in the bottom, left-hand corner of your screen.

With that, I'm going to turn things to your moderator today, Greg Scheib. He's a workforce analyst for the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. Greg, take it away.

GREGORY SCHEIB: Thanks, Laura. I appreciate it. Good afternoon, everyone, and thanks for being on the webinar today. As Laura mentioned, I'm Greg Scheib. I'm the project lead for the America's Promise Grant. And we're certainly happy to have you all with us this afternoon. I think we've got a really interesting webinar for everyone about telling your story.

And as you already know, getting the word out about your program is probably one of the most fundamental things to being successful in meeting your goals and your targets for the grant, both to inform your potential participants, and also to let other community stakeholders know about the good work that you are doing along the way.

So we think you're going to get a lot out of this. We're going to offer you some tips and resources to help you better tell your story. And today we've got quite a few great presenters here: Our TA coaching lead, Erika Humphrey, is going to be leading the presentation. And we also have several guest speakers, your fellow grantees: Kristin Maccarrone, who is an outreach specialist with MiraCosta, a college in California; Haley Medved Kendrick, who is the program director at the University of Alabama at Birmingham; and Christina Bakewicz and Ann Kuhn, the project director at Monroe Community College in New York.

So between all four of those, I think we're going to get a really good overview and the indication of great points. At this point, I'm actually just going to go ahead and pass it over to Erika, who's going to take you through the webinar. Thank you. Erika?

ERIKA HUMPHREY: As Greg mentioned, this webinar is going to be very, very interactive. And what we want to do is as you – (technical difficulty) – do and you're getting ready to move into Year 3, it's really important that you take time to capture those accomplishments that your program is attaining along the way.

And sharing those achievements as your program progresses, it really puts you into a position, like Greg mentioned, when policymakers or other stakeholders are making decisions that will affect your program. So the more educated they are about your program goals, activities, all the successes that your participants are having, the more likely they're going to support your program in just really getting the word out.

So our objectives of today, we really want this to be very, very interactive. We have a lot of polls and there are some questions we'll ask you via the chat. But we want to distinguish between a program story and a participant story. Also, we're going to look at understanding the importance of developing a program story and why it is important. We're also going to highlight the components of a good program success story.

Down at the bottom where you'll see File Share, we have three success stories that we're going to be going over. I know that they were mailed to you early. But if for some reason you didn't get the e-mail, you're going to want to download all three of these success stories: Partnership, Performance, and Organizational Development.

We're also going to identify key audiences with whom to share your program success story. And then we're going to have three grantee presentations. And they're going to share their promising practices of how they tell their story and how they actually get it out to the community. So we'd like to have a poll right now. We like to always see who's on the webinar. So if you're authorized representative or a program director, manager, training partner, employer partner, service provider, or other, we'd like you to take this poll now.

OK. It looks like we have several program directors and managers. That's great. A couple others. We have a service provider – that's great – and a training partner. OK. Great. Thank you. So I wanted just to define the difference between a program story versus a participant story. So the program story describes the overall impact of your program – so overall, everything that's happening with your program; whereas, a participant story, that focuses specifically on the impact of the participant. So for this particular presentation, we're going to focus on program stories. So I want to define program stories for you.

A program success story is defined as a narrative highlighting the achievements, progress, and impact of the entire program and activity. So it looks at your whole program. It looks at how you're impacting your community. It looks at your partnerships. It looks at your organization. So it really – it takes everything into consideration when you're writing a good program story.

So one of the things that we're going to be focusing on, we're going to focus on three program stories, because you can be in different points with your grant. So we're going to be looking at performance. We're going to be looking at partnerships. And we're also going to be looking at organizational development. But before we do that, we want to talk about why these program stories are important. So here are just some specifics reasons for developing and sharing a success story. So again, capturing your progress all the time is going to be very key.

So right now we're in Year 2, so I'm sure there's lots of things that you want to highlight, capture – how your organization is impacting the community as well as partnerships. And some of you may have some data right now as well. Also too, we want to look at educating decision makers about the impact of your program. That's another reason why these type of success stories are important. Also, demonstrating a responsible use of resources to the stakeholders – so how you're using the resources, how you're using your supportive services.

So that, also, can share a good story if you have participants who could not get to your training, but you provided these supportive services. And now that they're able to get to your training, they're able to complete the training and they're able to get a credential because of the supportive services that you provided on that and you worked with your partners on. That is a compelling story, and the community wants to hear about that. Also, sharing best practices with other funded programs, that's another way of recognizing why success stories are important.

Also, to attract new partners for collaboration – and so we're always thinking we're in Year 2, but we should always be thinking about sustainability and once this grant is ended, how do we sustain our program and all the great work that we're doing? So by you having these stories and placing them into the media or social media, it will attract new partners, and hopefully they'll be willing to collaborate with you and share some of their funding as well. And so also priming funders to continue funding your program – that's also very key. So those are just some ways of recognizing why success stories are important.

So I have a poll that I'd like to have you take. Which statement is more memorable? So I'll read it out loud to you: Grantee D works closely with employer recruiting teams to identify opening positions. Grantee A's MEP program trained 280 participants. Of the 280 trained, 240 individuals earned a credential and 180 were placed into employment. Or Grantee Z's on-the-job training program provided in-demand training for healthcare career pathway occupations across 26 counties in Central Wisconsin. So just think about it – which statement is more memorable?

OK. It looks like we have several stated that the second one – Grantee A's MEP program training 280 participants. And of the 280 trained, 240 individuals earned a credential. OK. And then we have a few who stated about Grantee Z's on-the-job training program how they provided that in-demand training.

"Can I get someone who shared why they thought Grantee A's MEP program was more memorable? Can you in the chat box just share what about that particular sentence, why do you feel was more memorable?" Again, we really want this to be interactive – not just hear my voice. I see Christian is typing and some others are typing. Great.

Allen says, it was specific and shows a connection between the training and the employment. That is correct. How the training builds individuals; after they got the training, how they were able to be placed. Kristin says, statistics help understand the impact it has on the workforce. Very true. And Mandy says this statement gives specific numbers of measurable goals, training, credentials leading to employment. And Roseanna says, impact statement that validates the training. Definitely.

And then I also had some who stated Grantee Z's on-the-job training program – because there was no right or wrong answer. So of the three, share about Grantee Z's on-the-job training, why did you choose that to be more memorable? So we have several who are typing. Haley says, I thought that Z had less jargon and communicated local impact. Interesting, Haley. Thank you. Greg says, it focused on in-demand training. And Jennie says, I don't think A is stronger with the numbers, but Z seems easier to remember. And so, great. Thank you all for taking that poll, but you're right.

So both of those – Grantee A and Grantee Z both can be very memorable, right? So Grantee A really focused on the impact of their training and they really shared how many people were placed into employment. Grantee Z definitely had less jargon, but you could see that they had healthcare career pathway occupations across 26 counties. So you can definitely see that in Wisconsin, that was a big impact. Great. Thank you all for taking the poll.

So when you're thinking about your program story, always thinking about inside the reader's mind, what's going to really be of impact for them? And then how am I impacting the community? So we wanted to provide a few good tips here.

So tip one. In choosing a program activity to highlight, remember that the most programs undergo varying stages of capacity, maturity, and accomplishment. So again, we're in Year 2. So in the early stages, you might want to provide a description of the proposed activities and the anticipated outcomes, so what you're going to anticipate. So sharing those different activities and trainings that you're doing presently right now and what you anticipate for those outcomes.

Also, when you're – right now Year 1, Year 2, moving into Year 3 – highlight the partnerships that we're creating and talk about how the partnerships and how you are both impacting the community. If you're partnership is providing support of services, share that kind of information. Also, document important policy changes achieved as a result of the program, or illustrate the population being served by the program. So that's very key. So if you're focusing – and we know we are focusing on the unemployed, we're focusing on Veterans – specific. What about also things that we can focus on women – women in advanced manufacturing. That's a great story to tell as well.

Also, emphasize short-term outcomes with highlighting accomplishments in early-stage activities. So emphasize short-term outcomes when highlighting accomplishments in the early – you're early stage of your activity. So it's good to say right now, don't worry if in Year 2 you haven't met all of those goals. But you can highlight how many individuals that you've trained, how many have received jobs, how many have received certifications or credentials. So those – that kind of information is really important to share.

As your program starts to advance, start to share the lessons that you learned – all those promising practices. So you want your partners and funders to know about how their progress is going. You may also have some preliminary data from your programs to show that you are definitely making progress. You can also demonstrate how and to what extent your program is reaching or serving a specific population.

Again, always sharing your population and how many of those who have gone through your training, how many have received those supportive services, how many of those who have received certification, how many of those that haven't received employment – all that is going to be very key when developing your program story.

So I wanted just to provide an example of a grantee program progress. And so what this particular grantee does is they have a box where they keep all of their topics of their training. They put their name there. They put whatever the topic is – on-the-job training, apprenticeship, internship – so they put all of the topics. And then what they do is they put their short-term outcomes and then they also list the intermediate outcomes. And then as they further progress, they're going to put their long-term outcomes.

And so when you do something like this of showing the program progress, you're able to pull this information and put it right into your story. So this is just a tool that a grantee uses. I thought it was a great promising practice that I wanted to share with you.

Let's do another polling question. Program success stories are important because – that was an easy one. Everyone said, yes, all of the above. That is definitely true, because we do want to educate decision makers. We do want to attract partners. We want to share our best practices. We want to increase visibility and credibility as well. And again, we want to prime those funders to continue funding the program. And that's going to be key, just stressing it enough – getting the word out now is important to sustainability when your grant ends.

OK. So now let's look at components of a good program success story. And so what I'd like to make sure that you download, if you haven't done so already, it's called, Performance in the file share. So it says, Success Story Performance. I'll give everyone just a minute in case you don't have it just to be able to download it.

All right. So let's look if you had a chance to download the performance and it starts off sharing your program story. And so when you look here, our first story is focused on performance.

And so a good performance story has a headline. And a headline is just not – it's the headline, but the headline has a hook as well. It has a description of the grant program. It talks about the main partners and collaborators. It has specific goals of the program and current results against those goals. And it really looks at the impact on the community.

And so that first story, that's the performance story. And if you look here where we said headline, so we put the bubbles so that you can see exactly what we're talking about. And we want you to be able to use the stories that we're sharing today, use them as templates, because we're going to provide three stories. The first is performance. And then the next one we'll talk about is partnership. And the next one will be organizational development. But again, use these as templates.

So here's an example of a good program story. So the headline is titled designed to capture the attention of employers. So it says Brookdale Return to Work puts people back to work and helps businesses grow. So their Brookdale Return to Work Program puts people back to work and helps businesses grow. So that's a really good hook as far as it really captures the attention. And the hook is, is that first sentence in the story where it talks about Brookdale facing multi-facet labor force issues. So it shared a problem.

And so a lot of times when you're developing your story, think about is there an issue that is happening now in your region, in your community and how your program is going to be able to assist with that particular issue. And so again, for this one, they had multi-facet labor force issue, a rapid expanding need for advanced manufacturing professionals. OK? And what happened was they had limited capacity for training. So that is the hook.

The next part is the next paragraph where we're focusing on the grant program and the main partners and how they collaborated. So you see here Brookdale Return to Work Program partnered with Brookdale Community College, the local advanced manufacturers to establish the Brookdale partnership for advanced manufacturing. And then it shared – the paragraph goes on to share what they were actually doing. So they were increasing apprenticeships in on-the-job training opportunity.

So that next paragraph should really focus on looking at a description of your program and your main partners. And then we get into the third paragraph where you're getting down in the nitty-gritty of what are the specific roles of this program? And so for this particular one, to date, they have enrolled 650 participants into training; that's important information.

And then they go on to say, as a result, 400 of these participants have earned a credential and 375 have been placed. So if you have data, you want to put those into your story, especially with those performance stories because it really paints a picture of how your training can really impact in the community because it is employing individuals, getting them back to work.

And then if you go to the next page in the performance story, it further lists what's happening with the impact. So here, this particular story they focused on sharing a quote from this director. Also, if you have a participant, that's when you can also maybe share one or two sentences how the participant had trouble getting to the program, but because of your supportive services, they've been able to – they received a gas card.

They've been able to now come to the program and they're earning a certain amount. And they went from being unemployed to employed. So that's where you want to share that information. And then you always want to give your contact information because that's going to be key for them to be able to reach you.

Are there any questions as it relates to the performance story? We went over the headline. We went over the hook. We went over the description of the grant program – main partners, who's involved, including your partners, the specific goals, the current data to the time frame, and again, the impact how it has on the community. So are there any questions that just based on looking at this particular story?

So for those just in the chat box if you can in the chat box, I actually have a question for the grantees. With having some data now, have any of you put together a performance story? And if so, you have put together a performance story, did you send it out to the media? How did you actually get the word out? So it's a two-part question. If you've created a performance story, and if so, how did you get the word out? I see a couple people typing. We'll give them a minute.

Jennie says, yes. We submitted to our stakeholders, and he posted it on the website and also linked it on Facebook. Great. Has anyone else developed any type of performance story? So Jennie, I just want to ask you before we move on to our next story, what was the actual hook? How did you, if you remember, the hook in your performance story? What was your strategy around that? Jennie says, training that saved jurisdictions significant money. That's great, because that's definitely something that people would definitely want to know and hear more about. Thank you, Jennie.

We're going to move on to the partnership story. So if you haven't done so already, if you can download the success story that says partnership. And I'll just give you a second or two to do that. OK. So for the partnership story, so a little bit different here. So a good partnership story incorporates the following: same as the performance, a headline, a hook, a description of the grant program. But the key here in the partnership story is that you're really focusing on the partners and their collaboration together and how that partnership is impacting the community.

So when we look at the partnership story – we won't go through all of them because we've done for the performance – but look at where we have the second paragraph – grant program and main partners, collaborators. So we're describing the program activity that was implemented, the project's partners, and the purpose of the project that's really clearly stated. So here regional workforce alliance and its partner Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board, they knew that they had to identify potential clients who would benefit from skill enhancement through on-the-job training.

So they really focused on how their partnerships, and then they go on to say how -- (inaudible) -- with this particular partnership. They started to work very closely with the sector group. So the partnership story really focuses on how you can enhance that. And so one of the things just real quickly in the chat box: If you've done a partnership story, how are you and your partners making impacts on the community and on your participants? So I guess the question I'm asking here is when you develop a story, how did you collaborate together? If anyone developed a partnership story, how did you collaborate together?

Did you, as a grantee, write the story and then ask the partner to look at it? How did you collaborate, if anyone did a partnership story? I see Jennie typing. OK. Great. Jennie says, I asked for specifics and wrote the story and then asked for their feedback. OK. Great. Because there's different ways when you're getting that story out with your partners. So that's a great way to do it as well. Thank you, Jennie.

And then our last story is the organizational development program story. These are all templates that you can use, if you want to just take a minute to download the organizational development story. That one has the headline, hook, description of the issue. And this one has a description of the benefits of the organizational change or the impact on the actual organization. And so I really won't go into this particular story just for time purposes. But you can see in paragraph 2 where they actually focused on what were some of the organizational development, really looking at what the staff had to say. Those are some key – definitely issues.

And so as we provided these three different stories for you to use that – don't always feel that it has to be a performance story. It could be a partnership story. It could be something within your organization that you want to be able to highlight. The goal is to really get out in the community and really allow others to see what you're doing and how you are impacting the community. Are there any questions in reference to any of the three stories that we provided?

We also wanted to share with you about the infographic and that a lot of grantees are starting to use infographics. And we do have a PDF infographic that you can download to be able to use as a template. But an infographic is another means that you can actually tell your story visually. And so this image can be a chart. It could be a diagram. And it really represents information data. So for example, this one, for America's Promise, it looks at all the industries that we are targeting for the America's Promise Grant. What are the targeted populations? How much of the grant was awarded? And it talks about additional funds leveraged.

And you can use something similar, look at what industry you're targeting. You can talk a little bit about your training program. You can also talk about your partnerships right in this infographic as well. But it's a way to convey your program outcomes and impacts in a visual way. So use this as a template that you can tell your story, to get the word out when you're going to speak for recruitment at any of your local chamber of commerce. These are great tools to use.

Let's look at one other smaller story. And this is we're asking what's actually missing here. So if you could just take a minute to read the story. And in the chat box, you can just put what's actually missing in this particular story. We've gone over different templates. And we broke down each of the paragraphs. I see a few people typing.

Haley says, no headline, definitely. Because we talked about the headline really captures the attention. Anyone else? Is there anything else missing? Mandy says no specifics, like numbers. Good. Greg says, no details on employer or jobs. That's definitely correct. Christian says, what the core program does and what are the skills needed. Good. Thank you all for participating.

So when you're looking at your program stories making sure that you're mentioning the impact that you're having, if you have data, you want to put that in there. It doesn't have to be – it can be small numbers. We're in Year 2, so you can just share what you anticipate or what you've done thus far with your training program. Again, getting the word out and looking for avenues of ways that you want to be able to tell your story. So it can be organizational, performance, different other stories, but take time out to meet with your team and look at what stories that are happening.

So last thing before our grantee presenters: Identify key audiences to share your program success story. So before you write your program success stories, just think about who is your primary audience? What's important to them? What do they care about? What type of outcomes will be meaningful to them? How will they use your program success story? – which is very key. What is the goal of the story? So when you're talking with your team, what is the goal of this story that we're creating? And is the story, which is important, is the story timely? So if it's something that's happening with apprenticeship, this is a great time to do a story if you have an apprenticeship program.

Or if the unemployment rate is low, you can talk about or tie in whatever region you have, you can talk about how your program is meeting that need. OK. So who are some of your audience? If we can just take one minute, type in the chat box. Who are some of your audiences that you feel within your region that you would share your program story with? I'll give you an example as in the partner agencies, funders, economic development agencies.

Jennie says, workforce board, because they'll definitely need to know what you're actually doing, definitely. Probation officers, Christian says. Alice says, employers, funders, potential participants. And then Roseanna says, manufacturing associations. Yeah. Because those are your audiences in getting the word out – Veteran organizations, school districts, definitely. So we provided those three templates for you so they can help to meet any of these when you're developing your program story to be able to share your story with these different agencies that you guys have listed. So thank you very, very much for participating.

So I'd like to turn it over to our grantee presentations. And our first presentation is coming from MiraCosta College. And Kristin Maccarrone – she's an outreach specialist – and she's going to share some of her strategies of how they get the word out and how they create their story.

KRISTIN MACCARRONE: Hi. Good afternoon. OK. Just making sure you can hear me. So we actually have been really lucky to have the media being involved in lots of our programs. We've had things on television. We've had stories in the newspaper. We've had stories in different publications around the city and locally.

We feel that getting your story told in the media and to local community is an important element in increasing the effectiveness of your program, because if people know what you've achieved and what you do they're more likely to support your program. And then the more support you get, of course, the more likely you are to have the bigger impact. So readers, listeners, viewers who find out about something or read or hear or see something in the media automatically, we find, place a greater value of credibility than if they just a saw a paid ad that you had put in a local publication.

So there are a couple of different ways that we do that. One, we have a really, really good, talented public information office on our campus then – and they tend to do public press releases or put anything in the media that we ask them to do. So if we have a story or something, we send it over to them and they create a story and they can get it published in newspapers, etc.

And I know that press releases can tend to be kind of boring. They can be exciting. And that's really what we try to do is try to grab their attention in the subject line in the first sentence so that maybe somebody from the press will pick it up or somebody from the media will do or a certain reporter will find it for us.

We also target specific reporters to increase our chances of having the story covered, especially social and community affairs reporters who've been in the bigger news outlets. So for example, if I see a particular reporter who wrote something about manufacturing in San Diego, I will contact them directly, because I know that they're interested in manufacturing and how we can tie into their story. So that's one way.

We find it's also really important to build relationships with journalists and to meet them face to face whenever possible. I find that there's less chance of the story getting misrepresented. We give them facts and information to take with them so that they have it and they can see a picture. We show them videos.

We really also try to contact our local media – and not just the big media outlets – because the message is more relevant to our local audience, which is actually where we get students. But we use – like, examples of that would be local newspapers, city papers, local business journals, regional economic development newsletters, reports, those kinds of things are very impactful for us.

Another thing we do is we get really involved in large local events. Every year, the manufacturing day is a huge event – it's a nationwide event – that celebrates everything that's manufactured. And we do that locally as well. So we celebrate everything that's made in San Diego or we celebrate everything that's made in North County San Diego. So for example, this year we are attracting, we've got over 1,000 students coming to a manufacturing event at one of our larger campuses here in one of our main colleges in the area. And we are inviting industry – in manufacturing industry – to show what they do.

And we're trying to get the cool factor out there so that students that come to the event can see and start thinking about careers in manufacturing. It's one of the best ways that we find to get younger students interested in manufacturing or thinking about careers in manufacturing.

We also invite people who attract the media, so public figures, mayors. Last year's event we had five different mayors from local cities common. So that always attracts the media. I think that because the mayors see it as a worthwhile event, then oftentimes, so does the media. So that's another option for us.

I know that we've kind of discussed using our local data or our data in our programs, but we actually use local data, San Diego data that helps tie what we do in making it important for what San Diego needs. So examples would be, we would say – like blue technology, for example, which is water, ocean technology is one of the top six growing industries in San Diego County and it produces about – we've got about 46,000 jobs in San Diego in blue tech. A lot of people don't know that that even exists.

So putting it out there, turning it out there when I go out and do presentations and then informing the public or kind of educating people helps them go, wow. That seems like that's really relevant and wow, it's one of the biggest up there with cyber security some of the biggest, fastest industries growing in San Diego County. So that's one way.

Another example would be a local statistic that we use is, like one of the fastest growing segments of the San Diego labor market is becoming one of the hardest for employees to fill. This is the segment of educated workers which needs more than a high school education, but doesn't need to go as far as a four-year degree. And we call these middle-skill jobs. These jobs garner nearly 39 percent better pay than the median pay for jobs in the region. So these are the kind of things that our local industry, that media, that people who are looking to get into the job market want to hear. So that's another way we use the local statistics and how our local statistics can help us promote what we do in our programs in what we're doing here.

Another thing that we find is so important is to get out and build relationships and do presentations with companies, industries, schools, organizations, nonprofit organizations that work with the populations that we're trying to reach. So for us, that would be Veterans. We're a very high military community. We have lots of military in our city of San Diego. We work with formerly incarcerated students, youth, women, Native Americans, unemployed, incumbent workers. So what I do is I go out and I try to reach out to all those industries and offer to do a presentation to the people that they are trying to get employed or they're trying to get trained.

And when I go out and do the presentations, I try to find why is what we do relevant for them? Obviously, know your audience. We kind of talked about that earlier. And then why it's news right now – why did they want you to come and talk to them? Why is it relevant for them? We also find that it's – a picture is worth a 1,000 words – a video is even more exciting. We've done some videos so that people can actually see what we do without them actually coming to our location and seeing our labs. We have real exciting state of the art labs in some things for people. But they can't see them. You can only explain them so much.

So showing them a video of what that looks like, how it looks like with students in the lab working, creating – what it looks like as a student, for example, in our labs. The right videos get people excited and leave them wanting to learn or see more. Oftentimes, those videos, people will say, oh, we want to come and see your location now. Can we come and can we bring a group to you? Can we come and see what you do over there? Can they get the firsthand and see what your students are doing? So we find that's really, really important.

And then we also put those videos on our website. We put them on social media pages – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. We find that that's a good way to get students to see what our labs look like without actually coming to see it. So we leave them wanting more. And then the last thing that I want to just discuss today is that we pitch people. Finding the human interest element in your story and highlighting it, that's really one of the things that gets media excited. They'll call you.

They'll hear about something that someone had took your – we had a Native American who was not successful in school, and did our welding program and is making great money. He's making over $20. He's making $22 an hour right now, almost directly out of our program. And so they tend to really enjoy the human interest part of it.

And we've talked kind of about that today, about finding and telling stories of students, that it's important to do that. And really using all of your resources and developing relationships with everybody is really, I would say, the most effective thing that we can do as outreach and as far as trying to get our programs heard to media in our local community.

MS. HUMPHREY: Great. Thank you, Kristin. We're going to leave questions at the end for our grantees. We're going to next turn it over to Christina Bakewicz and Ann Kuhn. Christina and Ann, are you ready?

CHRISTINA BAKEWICZ/ANN KUHN: There we go. All right. Well, we want to mirror a lot of what was already said, what Kristin said. We have, as you can see from our slide, partnerships that are essential. One of them has been – or a couple of them that have been very effective are our partnerships with Rochester Works, which is our local one force one stop and career center as well as local Department of Labor. They're a great source of referrals. And they tell our story for us, because when we have information to share they post it up on their website or their social media site. So that's been extremely helpful.

And leveraging existing partnerships and community presence – similar to what Kristin was saying – getting out there in the community and telling people about what it is that we've done, the success that we've had, how it can make – what we do can help them to make an impact in their lives. Our students also do a really great job of sharing information with their friends and family and other potential students. So being able to tell them the success they've had and how that can – how they can take advantage of the programs that we offer.

Collaboration with industry experts has been important as well. We have put on a few different events. And this leads to the last point, trying to get people excited about these industries. Here locally, we've called them Inspire Monroe. Monroe is the county that we're in. We've partnered with actually our local government, Monroe County, as well as other organizations and industry partners to tell potential students not only the story of what we can offer, but really promoting the statistics and the jobs and support that's available in these industries and in the training programs that we offer.

So we don't lead with, here's what we can do for you – we typically lead with, this is a great program that has a high percentage of employment afterward, or here's a great event where you can come learn more about our three industries – our IT, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing. And we don't even tell the story. We bring in industry experts that can say, here's how I got where I am today. And here's how you can do the same. And that's been really effective.

I think that our potential participants or the community overall likes to hear directly from industry experts as opposed to maybe program staff, because they've lived it. They experience it. They can even tell them what they look for in an employee and how they can get there. And so they promote our programs as well as America's Promise just by talking about how it might have helped others on their road to success.

And I know I'm trying to keep it to five minutes, so that's really it. Again, we do a lot of the same things – those partnerships. We need to work with others in the community because they help us to reach those target populations. And they already have those relationships built with those target populations. They trust them. So when they refer them over to us, we've already got half the battle completed because they will listen to them in terms of being able to trust us and knowing that we are here to help.

MS. HUMPHREY: Great. Thank you, Christina and Ann. We really appreciate you sharing those insights. Our next presenter is from the University of Alabama. And that's going to be Haley Medved Kendrick, and she's going to share some of her strategies.

HALEY KENDRICK: Great. Thank you. I think all of the other presenters have shared a lot of great practices, so I won't go into the details there. But I'll take the opportunity to share some stories and how we've done those things here at Innovate Birmingham. I think both of the other peer presenters mentioned how important relationships are. And that is my biggest take-away from this webinar is how important it is to build those relationships not only with reporters and the news media and traditional media, but also community partners, employer partners, and then your staff and students, how others have mentioned.

We've really leveraged the storytelling and networks of our staff and students to tell our story better. And so throughout the rest of my points will be that relationships are really critical to that. We talked a little about how having some program success stories in mind can be really helpful. And we've identified a few program -- (inaudible) -- statistic success stories that have been really exciting to tell, have gotten a lot of positive feedback, and really are just exciting and easy to remember because they are that human interest piece where it's students that have great stories to tell.

I'll share one now. We have an alumnus named Alante (sp) that had gone to college at our university. And midway through he had to drop out due to financial reasons. And he was working as a cook. When our grant became available, he was able to tap into the funding and now is working at the university as an IT support specialist and is able to complete his degree for free as an employee. So that's kind of a great entire story that wraps around someone's entire progression through our program and back into their goals. And so we love to share that.

That leads to my next point of you don't have to go it alone. One thing about having those success stories in your back pocket is when you know those and they're very close to your heart, you can share them with your team. Our entire team kind of knows the pitch deck of the stories that are really exciting and easy to share. And so if I'm not able to make it to an event or don't meet a reporter at a another event, anyone on my team could share what we're doing and share that real human impact component that is interesting for others to pick up and move with.

We've also really leveraged our students. We have quite a few who have been interviewed by local media and who also tell their story independently with their peers and friends and have been a constant source of press for us by being great examples in the community. And I'll wrap up with repeating what another presenter said in the main presentation about knowing your audiences. We have identified several different audiences based on what our goal is, and the two biggest that we treat very differently are recruiting participants and working with employer partners that are looking to hire.

So examples of how we treated those differently to engage potential participants, we had a big effort this summer to have a presence at the large music festival here in Birmingham. So we met a lot of young people, a lot of people considering new careers there. And that was very different than how we engage our employer partners where we look at publishing in our local business journal and other publications that we know our employer partners are reading.

And then we try to make our story as easy to share for any of our partners and others who may want to tell it. We keep in mind what is in it for them. So for our partners, particularly, we highlight the effort that they have shared and given to make our work possible so that they want to share that as well. And we are working to continually collect photos, ideas, and other visually appealing media that can be shared on social media and other platforms and even creating things like banners that other organizations will put in their newsletter that'll be easy for them to latch on and make that story a part of their story.

And lastly, we've taken the opportunity to leverage any events or natural occurrences in our community to tell our story. So we do a graduation for each of our cohorts. And we've had our mayor, our university president, and others speak at that; which as another person mentioned, having the mayor at our event to show how they find the program valuable helps communicate that value to others.

And also, our program is focused on IT and particularly in that we have a lot of news about the change in the IT industry here. And it's always an opportunity to latch on of what we're doing and how we're providing the IT workforce that's been a huge need here in Birmingham. So with that, I'll wrap up and let us move on to the final bits of the webinar.

MS. HUMPHREY: Thank you so much, Kristin and Christina. And Haley, thank you so much for sharing. If you girls can just stay on a minute or two, we just wanted to – in case you had any specific questions for our grantee presenters, you can type those into the chat box. We appreciate you participants staying on a few minutes past. Simone says, how do you engage participants via social media? So anyone can answer that. Haley or Christian, how do you engage participants via social media?

MS. KENDRICK: This is Haley. One thing that we found to be one of the most successful social media efforts is we've done some things like give away to the music festival that I mentioned and others that create opportunities for people to engage and comment and tag others and get that grass roots type of engagement.

And then another piece that is really personal is we post pictures of our students that have been hired. And we have a little stamp that goes over their photo that says hired. And we highlight where they're starting. And so we are able to tap into the student's network those ways by them sharing it with their community.

MS. HUMPHREY: Great. Thank you. Are there any other questions for our grantee presenters? Also too, if you think of a question as you leave, you can always post your question on the America's Promise COP, and grantees will answer those questions for you. So we really do want you to use that.

So I just wanted to sum up for my grantee presenters that relationship was the key. Bring in industry experts. Partner, if you can, with your local government. Send out press releases. Have your students tell the story, because all of this will really help with your outreach and recruitment, as well, and also help you to gain additional employer partners, so again, getting that word out, especially as we're moving into our Year 3 of the grant.

Just want to share really quickly our next webinar is going to be in October, and that will be on innovative supportive services. We'll be sending something out to you in the next two weeks. Again, that will be on innovative supportive services. Grantees will share what innovations they're doing to work with those supportive services. And then, again, America's Promise Community of Practice we can't stress enough, please go to – we have lots of online resources. We have the infographic there we've actually downloaded. And we have different blogs.

And then here's another resource. It's called the Story Telling Network. In the Story Telling Network, they look at how different practice and success stories are – how to actually create them and give them platforms of your practice, how to really tell your stories, how to tell those successes and challenges. You can just hit the link there as well.

And again, if you have any questions with your grants, you can always e-mail the America's Promise mailbox. We also ask that you always copy your FPO as well. We want to thank you participants for staying on a few minutes after, and I greatly want to thank our grantee presenters – that's Haley, Kristin, Christina, and Ann. Thank you for sharing those insights.

MS. KENDRICK: Thank you.

(END)