**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**H-1B Scaling Apprenticeship**

**Implementing Grants in Times of Virtual Learning and Workspaces**

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LAURA CASERTANO: I want to welcome everyone to today's "H-1B Scaling Apprenticeship, Implementing Grants in Times of Virtual Learning and Workspaces" webinar and I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Cheryl Martin. She's a program manager with the Division of Strategic Investments in the Employment and Training Administration.

CHERYL MARTIN: Actually, I'm going to turn it back over to Zodie Makonnen who is the grant leader for Scaling Apprenticeship. Is that okay?

ZODIE MAKONNEN: Thank you so much, Cheryl and Laura. Good afternoon everyone. My name again is Zodie Makonnen. I work in the Division of Strategic Investments and I'm the grant lead as Cheryl said for the Scaling Apprenticeship grants. And then with me, she was introduced earlier, I have Cheryl Martin who is the program manager in the Division of Strategic Investments and oversees several grant programs including Scaling Apprenticeships.

And then with us we also have Chris Spence who's our Scaling Apprenticeship technical assistance coach and subject matter expert from Manhattan Strategy Group and he will be facilitating this session today.

So let's quickly go over today's agenda. We will first go over some guidance from the Employment and Training Administration regarding the COVID-19 crisis. We will provide you some information on the resources that are available to you. We will then do panelist introductions and then really launch into the webinar.

This webinar will allow Scaling Apprenticeship grantees to share their experiences with implementing grants in times of virtual learning and workspaces. We will address several questions and issues during this webinar session including what has been the impact of social distancing and stay-at-home orders on the SA grant?

How has social distancing affected employer engagement? Have you changed your student engagement methods including the provision of student services and/or recruitment of future students? And then we'll look at whether you have tips or advice for how your peers can best prepare for the future. And then we'll have a quick Q&A session at the end to answer any questions you may have.

I'll now turn it over to Cheryl to discuss the guidance from ETA regarding the COVID-19 crisis. Cheryl?

MS. MARTIN: Yes. Hi. Thank you, Zodie. And I'm excited about our webinar today and really excited to see each of you on joining us today. Before we get started though, we wanted to let you know that the Employment and Training Administration or ETA has received a lot of questions related to COVID-19. No surprise there, right?

We encourage grantees to continue to operate their programs under existing statutes, regulations, uniform guidance, DOL guidance and grant agreements. And you know, all of those contain some flexibilities that you can use. ETA has developed a series of FAQs which you may likely be aware of already as well as some technical assistance to address grants management questions related to COVID-19. You can see the FAQs there, the link to that on your screen and then you can see the link to the technical assistance resources that are more general that are available there as well.

And you know we are continuing to receive new incoming questions. It can take a bit of time to answer them accurately and consistently with other grant programs and sometimes we have to confer with other agencies as well. But please know that addressing your questions is a high priority for us and that we are updating these FAQs periodically as needed and please make sure you go back and check the website for updates. It will say these are updated as of a certain date and it should tell you in the questions which ones have been updated.

If you have questions that are not answered in the FAQs, please send them to the Scaling Apprenticeship mailbox with a cc to your federal project officer.

And by the way I just wanted to say that if you want to download the slides for today you can do that right now. In the bottom right corner of your screen there's a file share box that says today's PowerPoint, 4 MB. And if you click on that, something will show up that says you can download them and then you'll be able to click on those links and any others and just have the slides in general.

So I'm going to turn it back over to Chris now to facilitate our conversation today. Chris, thank you and take it away.

CHRIS SPENCE: Thanks, Cheryl. Hi, everybody. Just looking through the welcome chat and all the names that I recognize and hello to everybody that I know. I think this officially means that I have been around for a very long time that I am so familiar with so many names and happy to be joining this webinar with so many other people that I haven't met. My job today is facilitator and so I'll quickly go through this objective slide and then introduce our panelists and get us into today's discussion.

So this is the first webinar under Scaling Apprenticeship that has featured Scaling Apprenticeship grantees as panelists and so we're very excited about that. My role as a Scaling Apprenticeship coach had the opportunity to get to learn a bit more about how your grantees, the ones that I'm working with, have approached the rapidly evolving situation that has been encountered in the last few months.

And so what we want to be able to do on today's webinar is showcase the experiences for Scaling Apprenticeship grantees and give them an opportunity to dive into the strategies and emerging practices that they've implemented recently with special attention to virtual learning and workspaces. We intend the webinar to help Scaling Apprenticeship grantees learn more about delivering programs and how that's changed or how others have approached those changes, employer engagement, providing student services and/or recruitment of future students and preparing for the future.

And so the way that we have this organized is four questions. This is basically, these bullets are basically the outline of those questions, and then we'll rotate through with the grantees and give them an opportunity to speak on what has occurred at their institutions in relation to these topics.

So thank you to our panelists. Again, you're the first Scaling Apprenticeship grantees that have been featured in a panel like this and I'll quickly as each to introduce themselves in turn, starting with Audrey. Would you introduce yourself?

AUDREY WEBB: Thank you very much for inviting us today and my name is Audrey Webb. I'm the project director of the ALAMAP project at the Alabama Community College System. So our project includes advanced manufacturing, that's our focus and we're specializing in three apprenticeship options.

The first one is a quick-start pre-apprenticeship that leads to manufacturing skills, standards counsel certification and it prepares the student for in-depth apprenticeships or entry-level employment.

The second one is Alabama Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Program or ALAMAP, which are short-term apprenticeships imbedded in a traditional career and technical education program. And our third program is the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education or FAME apprenticeship which are 21 week long advanced manufacturing technician programs that leads to an associate's degree. Aaron, you're up.

MR. BURDETTE: All right. Thank you so much. So yes, I am Aaron Burdette and I am the faculty lead at the University of Cincinnati for the next apprenticeship program. And our program is IT focused. We're working at really upskilling individuals in the IT sectors and making sure that the next-generation workforce is prepared.

We do this by incorporating multiple education pathways with experiential learning components to provide industry certifications from Cisco, IVN and a number of other providers. And then we also provide pathways for enabling unemployment and underemployed minority populations by leveraging our co-op program, which we've allowed to grow and incorporate into the apprenticeship arena, allowing multiple employers to engage with any and all populations in our program.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Aaron. Next up is Dave from Columbus State. Dave?

DAVE COFER: Yeah. Thanks, Chris. Hello, everybody. This is Dave Cofer, project manager with the employer engagement and experiential learning office at Columbus State Community College in Columbus, Ohio. Our program also has an IT focus.

The Flexible Learning Expressway for Technology, more commonly referred to as FlexTech program offers two tracks for apprentices and it's the first that I'll really be focusing my comments on this afternoon, an emerging workforce and apprenticeship track that combines college curriculum and part-time paid employment in five semesters and an incumbent apprenticeship track that offers stackable credentials in data analytics, private security and software development.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Dave. Amy? Amy, can you hear us?

AMY MACKENROTH: I'm so sorry. Can you hear me now?

MR. SPENCE: We can. Yeah. Hello.

MS. MACKENROTH: OK. Good. Hi, everybody. Thank you so much for your time today. Good morning, west coast folks. And good afternoon, everybody else. My name is Amy Mackenroth. I'm the senior managing director for workforce development at Dallas County Community College District and I'm running the national scaling team for our DOL Scaling Apprenticeship group.

Our focus is healthcare and we are doing both registered apprentice as well as industry-recognized apprenticeship programs for the grant. It's called the You're Hired grant and our focus is offering clinical and non-clinical apprenticeships for major hospital systems. In the Dallas-Fort Worth area we've collaborated with nine employers and then anticipate launching apprenticeships at over 150 employers nationwide.

Our key partners are the American Hospital Association based out of Chicago and then we're working with the department vet and DOL vet to ensure that we can meet all of our targets for offering apprenticeships to transitioning service members and their spouses. And then we also have a focus on hiring women and those from underrepresented groups. Back to you, Chris.

MR. SPENCE: Thank you, Amy. And thank you again to our panelists for joining us today. So you should see a poll up on your screen. I'll take a couple of seconds and ask you to respond to this poll and then we will dive into our discussion.

All right. Thanks, everyone. I'm not surprised at all to see that employer engagement is the leading go-getter. Definitely been hearing that from the grantees that I've spoken with.

OK, Laura. Can we move forward? Thank you. The first question and we're going to lead off with Dallas as our first respondent. What has been the impact of social distancing and stay-at-home orders on your program delivery? I'll just click it forward and Amy, take it away.

MS. MACKENROTH: Thank you, Chris. Our local apprenticeship deployment in Dallas has been largely unaffected by the pandemic mostly because our industry of focus is healthcare for this grant.

In our case, COVID and social distancing have magnified the need to hire and train the healthcare workforce. Of course, due to social distancing requirements, most training has converted to an exclusively online model for the time being. But moving forward, we'll continue with probably something resembling a blended learning model for skills checks and pre-testers and supervisors.

One of the major barriers that we're experiencing is related to testing centers. Some of them have been closed and not reopened yet. However, because we're in Texas, we've seen some movements in that arena so folks who were not able to take their certification exams have been able to start taking them so we're gradually reopening. And last week, we had some apprentices take and pass a national certification exam so that was a big victory.

We're continuing to place apprentices at hospitals and are working to manage the entire grant team remotely. From a national scaling perspective, most of our work with team members around the country has been happening via WebEx or Microsoft Teams and so we're used to this model of work and we think that we will continue to do this moving forward as a national team regardless of the stay-at-home orders that are in place. Back to you, Chris.

MS. WEBB: Well our program has responded quickly by engaging our students and employers immediately upon mandated health orders. We conducted preparations to ensure student flexibility to create as well as bond up support to assist students with transition to online instruction and continuation of our on-the-job training.

Within a few days, our program delivery shifted to online curriculum and virtual lab programs. Our instructors did an excellent job shifting that to online very quickly. Our outreach recruitment and enrollment of students shifted to online and virtual methods to ensure next cohorts are ready based on these adjusted timelines. I noted that we've really been working hard to assist our students in this time.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Audrey. Next up is Dave. Dave in Columbus, how have your programs responded?

MR. COFER: Yeah. For us here in Columbus the spring would've been otherwise a very busy time period as our pre-apprentice candidates were beginning to find themselves in front of employers for consideration for apprenticeship opportunities. So first and foremost we needed to shift our employer engagement from in-person to virtual and one particular event that was significantly impacted by this was a scheduled in-person networking event.

We distribute an electronic resume book and then one week after that is an in-person networking event and then one week after that our employers get back to us to let us know who it is that they're interested in interviewing. We shifted that entire in-person event to virtual. It engaged 70-plus people. It included both pre-apprentice candidates, employer representatives and representatives of the college. It went off very well but it was a significant undertaking.

Another thing was that we wanted to make sure we maintained operational excellence. We didn't want to compromise any of the core elements of the interactions particularly between students and employers and we knew that by not having the networking event in person, even with exchange there would be an opportunity for that, that the employers may not be able to get a full sense for who these candidates were.

So in response to that we ask each of our candidates to create a 60 second elevator pitch that was recorded and then the link to that recording was imbedded as part of their resume that was included in the electronic resume book. It provided that much more insight again for the employers into who these candidates were.

And then the last thing was just an extension of grace. We knew that for everybody involved the shift to online learning was a monumental task and particularly for our students. And we wanted to make sure that fed lines and other reviews were extended. If employers or, excuse me, students wanted to have additional check-ins we did that. We wanted to make sure we could be as accommodating as possible. Back to you, Chris.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Dave. And we are noticing, Tamara I see the question that you posed in the chat. And we are going to take a couple minutes and go through some slides and then we'll come back and answer some questions and your will be first up.

OK. Next, Aaron in Cincinnati.

AARON BURDETTE: Yes. Thank you. So in response to COVID, we developed a number of different ways for apprenticeships to gain the professional skills and work experience. One of the things that we did was fully move our professional development courses online and created a number of robust online boot camps and opened up opportunities for our participants to engage in linked-in learning and course area opportunities so they can leverage their new skills and get some industry recognized credentials as well as we worked with employers to ensure that they understood the transition to remote work.

And one of the benefits of our program for the entirety of this apprenticeship program is we back in October launched our remote work center and that was a key part of our grant so that we not only developed opportunities for our participants in a remote form but we also knew how to educate our participants and how to successfully work in remote work. So we took that curriculum and not only trained out students but we also trained our employers so that those opportunities that they did have could easily be moved to a remote form.

And then we developed a really robust boot camp for people in our community who were affected by COVID who were laid off or furloughed and it's been a huge success and over we've been employing people over the last two weeks.

MR. SPENCE: All right. OK. So next up, as we're transitioning to the next question we have another poll for the audience which is asking which virtual platform are you primarily using to connect with your teams and clients. Great. Thank you, everyone. I see a lot of Zoom and a lot of Microsoft Teams, a little bit of Google Hangouts and then one other. OK.

The next question is, and this one starts with Cincinnati, is how has social distancing affected employer engagement?

MR. BURDETTE: Yes. So we have had a long history of working with employers. We started working with employers providing opportunities with our students back in 1906. So we've tried to look at our history and look at new ways of trying to make sure that those employers that we've had a long history with can still engage with our students in a very effective way. And the first one was developing short-term projects.

A number of companies and a number of students were impacted by not being able to go to work in the first place. And as the economy has opened up we knew that the timeline would be condensed. So we worked with our employers to develop these short-term projects and those including everything from consulting to design to programming to any form of work that could be done in a remote format that was considered safe and able to be done.

We also created a virtual innovation studio so that employers could engage with our participants in more of a free-thinking innovative context so that people could spit out ideas and kind of take business problems and solve them in more of a collaborative space.

We worked with our employers to really leverage our students' software skills and even their own experience working with technology. So the number of our participants prior to COVID have went through our remote curriculum, they were certified in doing remote work so that they were able to be mentors within our employers and those employers have since expanded their connections with our students just because of the ability for our students to work and teach their employees on how to work remotely.

We also made sure that all of our employers could still recruit students for any and all opportunities while making sure that they understood how to do that in a safe format that was remote. We did a number of presentations and webinars making sure that our employers were as up to date as possible not only with what our students were needing but with what they were needing themselves by making sure that they understood how to transition to online work, how to identify tasks that can be done remotely, how are they leveraging the universities' wellness office, making sure that they understood best practices and setting up an office at home.

We also created a distance by design television show. This was something that was very innovative and the first of its kind and then we made sure that all relationships were maintained in our virtual setting. Communication is key. The previous question was what time of format or what time of technology or communication platform are you using to engage with employers. We use them all: WebEx, Teams, Zoom. Basically anything that a company uses to talk, we make sure that we know how to use it so that we can engage them at their level and not make them use one of our tools, that we know how to use more.

MR. SPENCE: Great. Thanks, Aaron. And next up is Audrey. And Audrey we have a question for you. I'm thinking maybe we, could you answer it now so we don't lose too much of the thread since it was posed during question one and then present your slide.

MS. WEBB: OK.

MR. SPENCE: So the question was from, yeah go ahead.

MS. WEBB: Amber I think it was. So she asked what have you used to train people online and their employers really want people to have the chance to use the equipment and not just videos. Amber that is so true. Same here in Alabama. Hands on is always the best way to go, but I'm sure as you know too that during COVID it was really, we couldn't do that so much.

So we have different equipment manufacturers that we use. Some of the ones that our students use really closely in this project is Amatrol. They make robots. There's some POC manufacturers and so forth that they offer some virtual programs for the students to do the labs that go along with the curriculum. So we had students do those virtual programs until we could get them back in the classroom and into the lab.

So this week most of our colleges are transitioning somewhere between now and July to go back into the lab and small groups. And in fact if it's a 20 class lab or 20 student lab they're even splitting their time up and doing half of the class that one a couple hours and the other half a couple hours later to do the social distancing. So it was just used as a supplement until we can get those students back into the lab but they were really good programs.

If you have any other questions, I'll be glad to send you some information on that.

So most of our industry partners, especially our automotive manufacturers and their suppliers were shut down two or three weeks during the COVID time. One of our employers even requested assistance to provide work activities for our students while the plant was shut down. They developed a project and was able, the students were able to work on it remotely in small groups so that they could get that done during the COVID.

Colleges developed and promoted relevant simulated workplace activities and mentorship for those students to keep them engaged. We also developed some procedures on the equipment installations as well as troubleshooting guides for the equipment which students could work on remotely and be able to still be involved without being in close contact.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks. That was great. Next up, Dave from Columbus.

MR. COFER: Yeah. Thanks, Chris. In this particular space, wherever and whenever possible, we really work to have three guiding principles really inform our engagement with our employer partners. First, we wanted to engage wherever possible to prescribe process and communication, so this was all really more than I thought of. We didn't want to be burdensome if you will to our employer partners right now. They were going through a lot. And so when we knew we had scheduled communications, making sure that we leveraged those scheduled communications to add in extra messaging if you will that might've been brought on by the pandemic.

Ensuring mutual benefit. You know, you heard Aaron touch upon this a little bit. Some of the consulting and support that University of Cincinnati was able to provide to their employer partners. We attempted to do the same as well. Again, our outreach a lot of times is motivated by what we need. You know, we need to get demand. We need to ensure placement. Whatever it is but making sure that again our employer partners who are going through a really difficult time right now that they are receiving benefit from us as well.

One example of that was just passing along resources related to onboarding new employees in a virtual environment. You know, not only are these employers playing host to our students for meaningful workplace-based experiences, but they're also trying to maintain basic operations. Their hiring associates are bringing them on board, this is new to them as well.

So again, trying to provide that mutual benefit and then exhibiting flexibility. The reality is, right, we're all optimists and the clouds will lift and when the clouds lift we need to be able to respond right then and there. It's not going to be ready, set, wait. It's going to be ready, set, sprint. And we're prepared to basically stand up processes to meet our employers where they're at even if it means doing it one-off, right, and we wouldn't otherwise do that.

We wouldn't otherwise say let's hold a separate hiring event for this employer. You know, we would do it as a collective but as we look over the coming months in hope and expect that our employers will make their way back to the table, we want to be able to meet them where they're at and again stand up those prophecies real time in response to their need. Chris, back to you.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Dave. And then last on this question is Amy in Dallas.

MS. MACKENROTH: Thanks, Chris. So we focused on an agile response that allows the team to keep different paces while still working towards our goals. This flexible approach is critical to our success since employers and team members employed outside of our institution all have different abilities to participate at different speeds.

So we have had success in gauging with our specific hospital employers virtually, especially after the first two to three weeks of COVID passed and everybody realized that this was sort of our new operating mode, our new normal. We were able to support them in a variety of ways to make sure the apprenticeship programs continue and that everyone is benefitting. We've been flexible to meet employers where they're at as well and they've all been different for sure.

Our main partner for national scaling, the American Hospital Association, they had to take a major step back in regards to their participation on our project development and also away from pursuing what they're calling the socialization of apprenticeship with their employers. AJ (sp) and the rest of our team we agreed that we didn't want to overburden the hospital employers with new information about apprenticeships in the middle of a crisis.

In areas of the country where the curve is flattening, AJ will be able to reach out to new employers sooner rather than later. But another complicating factor from the last couple of weeks has been the highly publicized death of George Floyd and the related protests and riots. So now employers are focused on that, making sure that their employees are supported so they have both that and the COVID response to deal with in the meantime. So working with them on new apprenticeships will have to wait yet again as we navigate all of these issues nationwide.

So once the dust settles we'll be able to fully engage new employers in the national scaling of these apprenticeships. In the meantime, I've noted previously, local placement of apprentices in Dallas-Fort Worth has been maintained because of those existing relationships with employers and the existing registered apprenticeships. Back to you, Chris.

MR. SPENCE: Thank you, Amy. All right. So we had a question on employer engagement, and so this next question is on the topic of student engagement. How have you changed your methods around student engagement, the provision of student services and/or recruitment of future services? First up on - oh and we have a poll related to that.

So the first respondent on this is going to be Columbus, and so Dave we'll get to you in a moment and we'll pause for a few seconds so folks can answer the question. Great. Thank you everyone. A lot of Blackboard, a smattering of others, Canvas. OK. Thank you.

OK. Dave, how have your student engagement methods adjusted?

MR. COFER: Yeah. No. Thank you, Chris. Of course they have and probably like a lot of the folks on the phone it was about helping adopt alternative modalities to replicate our "normal" processes. First and foremost, virtual information sessions.

Again, probably not unlike most of us on the phone today, spring would've been a very busy time for outreach and recruitment efforts for future students. This would include community outreach and engagement, outreach and engagement into the K-12 space, and of course we would typically be doing that via in-person stand-up delivery supplemented by external or I should say electronic delivery and having to convert all of that to virtual.

Also, what is spring usually? You know, kind of the hallmark of spring is graduation and coming together in person to celebrate our graduates, doing that on campus as part of our cohort and programs, of course we weren't able to do that this year as well and this was the one visual I have is a photo here of a congratulatory graduation pack that was sent to each of the students who graduated this past spring who are part of our cohort and experiential learning programs. Just again, we even had talked about hand delivering them and logistically it just became too difficult to do that but just something to say hey we celebrate you, congratulations and again a mail packet educator packs.

Again, continuing to grow familiarity around these programs means getting out there and having conversations with administrators, guidance counselors, classroom teachers, CTE instructors and we would typically be doing that in person, building those relationships. So we created a pretty comprehensive electronic collateral pack if you will that was distributed out to K-12 partners and has been really well received.

And then the last thing really looking ahead that's under development for us is a virtual summer orientation program. We have in the past conducted a separate orientation program for our cohort program participants that serves as a compliment to the college's broader orientation. This year again not being able to deliver that in person, what would typically be a day and a half to two days.

We're going to look to do something over about a five-hour window on a single day. Do it virtually, do it such that there's small group interaction and engagement. We are even going to do some virtual employer tours as part of that, so those are just a couple examples of how we've had to shift in response to a lot of our student-facing delivered programing. Chris?

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Dave. And Audrey in Alabama, how have your student engagement practices changed?

MS. WEBB: So with our students we used a lot of the online services such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, e-mail. We held a lot of recruiting activities, interviews and end-of-semester presentations virtually. We had several really good end of the semester presentations. Those would be typically in person and easier to model and show what they've done but the students have done an excellent job in holding those activities virtually and doing a presentation to show what they had worked on all semester.

We also held virtual meetings to help students with their financial aid and scholarships, just our student support services would be able to go in one-on-one and help them apply for financial aid or scholarships and just stay really connected with the students. That was the big objective there.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Audrey. Aaron in Cincinnati?

MR. BURDETTE: Yes. So first and foremost our engagement with students, it changed drastically from being able to meet with in person to going remote and going online. We knew that our students were very stressed, so first and foremost we overcommunicated with our students and that was with daily e-mail updates making sure that they understood what was going on within the program, the university and the state.

We also made sure that they were fully prepared to take opportunities that they now had time, time that they would have allocated to going out to dinner, going out, we made sure that we partnered with industry recognized credential providers and software companies to upskill our upskilling and micro-credential trainings online so that our students that may not necessarily have been interested in the IT arena, now they have the time to upskill themselves, learn Microsoft Excel, learn a little bit of C++, any form of training.

And we even created an entire database for industry-recognized credentials so that students could explore on their own on what type of credentials they have and full links of credentials that that entails.

We also did an extensive outreach to our community-based members for those furloughed workers to make sure that they understood that in this new normal, this new working environment that there's an opportunity of them being laid off or being furloughed they could take this time to upskill themselves.

So we leveraged the same industry recognized credential database that we created for our students and made sure that those furloughed workers were accepted into our program and made sure that they had access to that.

And knowing that one of the things that we've resolved from going remote, a lot of students utilized our university resources like computer labs almost exclusively for their technology needs. And when they lost that, they lost their connection to learn. So we immediately put in place within three days if it being announced that we were going remote that we bought hundreds of Chrome books and made sure that our students that needed them could indeed have them and we would ship them to them or they would come to a designated safe spot on campus to pick them up.

And then we made sure that we over-advertised our virtual project-based OJT opportunities through even more areas like non-profit. We discovered that a lot of non-profits were the most impacted because they were the ones who were getting the tax incentives and different funding that the state was providing but they had to cut budgets to we made sure that we leveraged grant resources to partner with non-profits so that talent-based work could still be done in leveraging the student talent in a remote format. So we made sure that there was even past that there was the design challenges, virtual hack-a-thons, made sure that there was something for somebody at any given time.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Aaron. I'll just pose this question now that came in through chat from Nancy Legas (sp) from West Virginia. Where can we find the industry-wide database your students use to explore?

MR. BURDETTE: It is currently on our next apprenticeship website, uc.edu, and I can send that to Chris to share.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Aaron. And then Dallas, you're next up.

MS. MACKENROTH: So we had a rapid response team put into place here in Dallas within a week of the shelter in place orders and that team was able to quickly address access issues for students and apprentices that needed help. So we issued laptops, hotspots; we arranged for discounts with internet providers, those sorts of things.

Our apprenticeship relationship managers have been extra hands-on during this time and have been communicating more frequently than they would have otherwise done before the pandemic. In a way, COVID has allowed us to interact with them using approaches that may not have been as welcome in the past, especially when it comes to text messaging and we've even been using platforms like WebEx and Microsoft Teams.

So as of today, our local employers are mostly back on track to recruit and hire apprentices as planned and again, I think we can attribute that to the fact that we're in Texas, we're reopening and we're in healthcare. Our apprenticeships are in healthcare. Back to you, Chris.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Amy. And then moving on to our final question before we transition into Q&A is do you have tips or advice for how your peers can best prepare for the future? And so we'll start this with Alabama. Audrey? Audrey, can you hear us?

MS. WEBB: Sorry about that. Yes. Thank you. So one thing that we'd suggest is just to think outside the box while maintaining the integrity of your program. And just ensure students continue to receive quality training and education and of course that leads to your gainful employment.

And also, just work on developing innovative strategies to recruit students through virtual solutions and social media, but this is one of the most important things that I'm seeing more and more as we continue to move through summer semester is really work with your secondary partners to determine creative ways to engage their students also. Our secondary partners just have been really great to help us with recruiting with helping out with programs and labs for students. Those are really good ways to help get through these times. Thank you.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Audrey. Woops. Excuse me. Dave, Columbus State, tips for the audience.

MR. COFER: Yeah. I think some real similar themes to what Audrey just touched upon. You know, first and foremost, have a clear sense for what your process non-negotiables are and look to pursue new and innovative means of achieving those desired outcomes. I often like to talk about what versus how and those whats are really the non-negotiables if you will. And at this time, it's really about exploring new and different ways to go about it.

You know, jettison and completely remove from your mind those thoughts of we've always done it this way or that's not how we do it. If you hear that mentioned in a meeting, if you hear that mentioned with conversations with colleagues, that's really an opportunity to challenge them because we've absolutely got to think outside the box as Audrey was just talking about.

Embrace a culture of innovation. Continuously eliciting customer feedback and leveraging that feedback as a source of processing is our students are our customers. Our colleagues across the college are our customers. Our employer partners are our customers meaning we've got to be relentless about being in touch with them and getting their feedback about the system because we're throwing new and different ways of doing things at them and it's important that we are continuously getting a sense for their reaction to that.

Where and when possible, anticipate the change and the best way to do that is by continuously engaging the employers in the industry not to be caught off guard or blindsided by the next big thing. Not that the employers would've necessarily been able to predict a global pandemic, but other things that may be going on in their business within their industry sector that you wouldn't otherwise know about unless you're in ongoing regular communication with them.

And then take a position of offense. You know, try not to be reactionary but based upon that feedback that you're continuously getting, based upon the information you're gathering on an ongoing basis with those conversations with your employer partners, bring to them recommendations and enhancements around how you can partner with them and doing the same with other stakeholders including your students, right?

If you're continuously in conversation with them, continuously eliciting feedback from them and taking to them their thoughts about their experiences they're going to have, you're bound to have much more of a successful process in the long run. So thanks, Chris. Back to you.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Dave. And Aaron, what about your other institution?

MR. BURDETTE: Yes. No. I will restate what Dave just said embrace flexibility and meet people where they're at now. And we've got to be innovative and we've got to think ways of how to we embrace this new normal and make sure that whatever we do we create opportunities for flexibility and innovativeness. And that could be new ways of supporting employers.

One of the right now we are making sure that all of our employers understand how to best go remote and work efficiently in a virtual context. You know, and we are doing that. Almost, I've probably done this at least four times a week for over the last eight weeks just meeting with employers, creating remote work plans and making sure that their employees and their supervisors felt supported in this new arena.

We made sure that we updated our own calendars. So as a university we are very set on specific dates and times of doing things. We threw that out the window the first day and made sure that everyone else understood why. Another one is making sure that everyone right now, there's going to be a new arena of work moving forward.

A lot of jobs will never come back to an in-person setting and a lot of companies, especially in the tech space. You have companies like Twitter and Google who say if you want to go remote, stay remote. And you've got other companies doing the same, pushing out what was something that you had to be in the office for like HR or any time of management role, that's going remote now.

So how do we make sure that our students and our people that we are re-training are able to be successful in this new work? And that's the best way for us to do it is be educators. We are innately educators so take our trainings and put them online by teaching students how to do work online through classroom instruction. We will be more successful and it creates more flexibility over the coming months and over the coming years as every day is a new day and what we planned for today hopefully tomorrow but making sure that contingency plans on contingency plans are always made available.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Aaron. And then Amy in Dallas, tips for your peers?

MS. MACKENROTH: I think that the most important thing we had in place before COVID was a framework for how we planned to develop our apprenticeships for nationwide implementation. And one major piece of this was identifying what the industry disrupters will be. So we never anticipated a pandemic but in healthcare there are many, many industry disrupters especially as related to technology. So that's something that I would recommend everybody take a look at.

We've also learned numerous lessons at the CCCD about the federal grant rules and guidelines as they relate to our own institutional policies. And I would say it's been a real internal battle to do this and COVID has magnified some issues but it's also given us the time to work through them. So I think that that's definitely an upside for us is just being ready to learn and innovate and look at why we do things the way we do them and if there's room for change and flexibility.

Another takeaway for us is the importance of aligning the teams to the same vision and goals for the development of grant deliverables. It's not rocket science but it still took months to make sure that all parties were on the same page with the who's-doing-what piece and ultimately what the team dynamics are. And this is because the team is so large and we kept adding team members along the way in the first year and whatnot.

But then you add in COVID and I would say that I was extremely grateful to have spent time building solid relationships since those have been a critical mechanism for keep the whole entire freight train moving in our case and during COVID during unexpected times. So back to you, Chris.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Amy. OK. So we will, we only have a few minutes left. Perhaps we can get to a few questions. I'm transitioning into a Q&A and then we'll save one minute at the end to turn it back to Zodie.

OK. So we have a -- let's see. I see a question in the chat here from Casey Clinn (sp). Has anyone had difficulty with employers unable to honor their LOS, I think that is letter of support, due to laying off employees and not hiring? Is there anyone who has experienced that?

MR. COFER: Chris, this is Dave Cofer in Columbus. Not that it was necessarily in violation with the letter of support, but just employer partners who had hired apprentices historically were unable to do so this year and I suspect most if not everybody on the phone has experienced that and there's not a whole lot you can do there.

You can obviously attempt to be creative and supportive and find out of the box solutions but a lot of it goes back to a point Aaron made, which is just being there for those employers when they emerge from the storm so to speak. And that's what we're hoping to do is that as we project out over the next 90, 120 days plus is that again the dust will settle, the clouds will lift. And when those employers come back asking to be at the table, we'll absolutely be ready to meet them there at that time.

MR. SPENCE: Thanks, Dave. And Aaron, Cheryl Martin asked. She would like to learn more about the distance by design television show.

MR. BURDETTE: So distance by design, so this show is an interesting new take. So the University of Cincinnati was historically known and is nationally known for its design program. They're well known in architecture design and interior design, fashion design through our college's design and art and architecture and planning. What we took from that is taking that reputation and mixing it with our IT focus of next of our programs and showing employers that those companies, those faces that they're working with can be utilized for innovation.

So when you're looking at the success of a company, those companies that could easily go remote or even be a hybridized model of having that remote workforce actually helped make that company more successful. You know, a key player in this and those shows of great success is Dell Computers.

They have for years had a belief of having two days a week for their employees to work from home and they were able to quickly transition that work dynamic and move it 100 percent to a remote landscape almost immediately. So we highlighted how they designed their work day around that.

We talk about different things and we highlight different pieces of work. What is work and what is technology to make sure that you know, creativity, design, efficiency of work and all the tasks that people are paid to do to get for a paycheck can still be done in some form of a virtual or remote setting.

MR. SPENCE: Great. Thanks, Aaron. All right. So we are almost out of time and I want to see if we can squeeze in one more 30 second question and Audrey I'm going to see if I can put you on the spot here very briefly. I'm struck by all of the heavy lifting that everyone has done to continue to engage employers in the virtual environment. Have you experienced a shift in the types of occupations or the types of employers that have remained most engaged? And again, we need to be brief.

MS. WEBB: Well you know, in Alabama we have a lot of manufacturing, automotive manufacturing with their suppliers. And so they're still heavily engaged with us even though they were off for a few weeks. They thought they may or may not get to hire apprentices. You know, this fall now they are. And of course, healthcare is real big all over the U.S. but in Alabama also.

So that's kind of where we're seeing the students are mainly going. We haven't seen a trend in changing necessarily so things are going well even though we have COVID and but we're getting back to work and things are looking bright. So as some of the others said earlier, when the cloud's lifted I think that we'll all be going back to work and get these students back in the labs and on-the-job training.

MR. SPENCE: Great. Thank you.

OK. So I just before I turn it back over to Zodie I want to say a thank you to all of our panelists. Much appreciated for your thoughtfulness. I know that they've all volunteered to have anyone reach out to them if you have additional questions or want to discuss anything that you've heard.

You can find their contact information on WorkforceGPS. There's a Scaling Apprenticeship contact list and so you'll find our panelists there. And okay. I'll pause and hand it back over to Zodie for closing comments.

MS. MAKONNEN: Thank you, Chris. And again, thank you to our presenters for taking the time to share their experiences, their innovative strategies and their expertise with us. I hope all of you found this discussion helpful and engaging. I've mentioned before, please make sure you send your questions to the scalingapprenticeship@dol.gov mailbox and we will be sure to respond to any of those questions.

We look forward to speaking to you again soon, and I guess we're out of time so have a great rest of the afternoon. Thank you so much for attending.

MR. SPENCE: Thank you, everyone.

(END)