

Workforce³One

Transcript of Webinar

Supporting Sector Strategies Industry Engagement Peer Learning Group

Tuesday, November 3, 2015

*Transcript by
Noble Transcription Services
Murrieta, CA*

BRIAN KEATING: Got it. So I'm going to move us over to the content portion of today's event so we can kick things right off. I'm going to welcome everyone to today's ETA supporting sector strategies industry engagement peer learning group. And to kick things off content-wise, I'm going to introduce Patricia Maguire, our moderator for today. Patricia?

PATRICIA MAGUIRE: Great. Thanks, Brian. And good afternoon or good morning, everyone. Thanks for joining us today. As Brian said, I am Patricia Maguire. I'm the senior program manager with Jobs for the Future, JFF, and we're part of the technical assistance team for the ETA supporting sector strategies initiative.

And today we're kicking off the first in a series of four webinars in the industry engagement peer learning group. So today we really wanted to start more at the beginning, and our topic is moving beyond the hub and spoke model convening with the employers.

So what I mean by that is the hub and spoke model of employer engagement is where you have your root agency in the middle and individuals reaching out to multiple employers but the employers aren't coming in together. So one of the big core characteristics of successful sector strategies is convening industry at the same table. Get them out of their systems change and newer programs and kind of workforce needs out of that type of employer engagement.

So we're going to talk today about how to do that and giving some practitioner examples of folks that have done it to talking and their kind of longer-term partnerships that I've asked them in to talk about some of their beginnings and how they got that started. And then further in the year they're going to do kind of building on that and talking about developing the – (inaudible) – champions, establishing the shared work plans for that employer group, and sustaining long-term employer engagement.

So for the first – our agenda for today, we're doing the welcoming and overview, and we're taking a few minutes to talk about a really topical resource – (inaudible) – corporation partnerships and workforce development guide, which is a really long toolkit. But it's broken up and has a lot of very specifics.

So kind of in the theme of our year two activities to really drill down into the how-tos, give you simple agendas, contracts, best practices, and such. And they actually have it available. You got a link in the invite, and also on the bottom of your screen under the file share you'll see you can download the file share – two presentations as well as the guidebook itself. I'm going to talk a little bit about it more later.

And we have two great examples on practitioners who have really strong employer engagement, and we're going to share some lessons learned. So first we're going to hear from the Boston Healthcare Career Consortium in Massachusetts, and then we're also going to hear – next we're going to hear from a Multi-State Advanced Manufacturing Consortium. Then we're going to do – open it up for more discussion and Q&A.

So like Brian said, everyone's muted right now, but I really want – I'm going to be moderating the chat. So feel free as folks are speaking to type in any questions or comments, and then I may folks out to clarify or ask their question. And then once we get into the discussion and Q&A section, that's when I'm hoping folks unmute themselves and we can have a conversation. Then we'll just do a couple minutes of that at the next step.

So it's my pleasure to introduce my JFF colleague, Lisa Soricone, who is a senior research manager at JFF. And Lisa is going to give us a little bit of background on the CommCorp Partnership Guide. Lisa?

LISA SORICONE: Thanks, Patricia. And good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us. I think it seems that partnerships are being promoted everywhere these days, from private foundations to WIOA and everything in between, and I think partnerships are really exciting because they offer the opportunity to draw on multiple perspectives, multiple kinds of resources, and really increase the effectiveness and the reach of workforce development efforts. And also we – partnerships help us to achieve more together than we might have achieved on our own as a single organization.

But that said, while there are plenty of opportunities in partnering, establishing, leading, and managing partnerships is very complex work. And so what I want to talk about today are some highlights from the guide that Patricia mentioned. I spent five years working with Commonwealth Corporation, which is a quasi-governmental workforce development agency in Massachusetts that funded and managed sector projects in the state for well over 10 years. Probably going on 15 by now.

And so folks at CommCorp recognized the challenges of partnering, and so we decided to put together the guide as a way of sharing all that we were learning and working with partnerships to help inform the field and support the work of other sector initiatives.

So the guide, you'll find when you take a look at it, provides a range of examples, tools, and resources all related to partnering, and it focuses on some key areas like establishing partnerships, leading and managing partnerships, the processes required to run a partnership, and sustaining a partnership. So there's lots of information in the guide, but I wanted to highlight a few ideas that I think are really important as you approach partnering, whether it's heavily centered on employers or a real mix of employers, workforce development agencies, community-based organizations. These are just sort of good principles of partnering, I think.

The first is distinguishing between the idea of leading versus managing a partnership. These are two distinct functions that can be carried out by the same person or by different people, but it's important to kind of understand and consider the two roles. I see leading as sort of setting the direction for the work of the partnership, mobilizing and maintaining support for the partnership's work, and attracting and maintaining members.

Management is really about getting the work done the partnership has set out to do toward meeting its goals, whether that be designing a program or pursuing some kind of larger systems

change. Management is about developing the processes that make the partnership work, gathering ideas, reporting, evaluating, that sort of thing.

These roles are then supported by a coordination function, which we all know we rely on those folks that send out the e-mails, put together the agendas, and send us out the meeting notes, which is also important. So listen. Sometimes these roles are all wrapped up into one individual. In other cases they're divided, but I think it's important to recognize that each of those functions require some staff time and effort. You'll find in the guide there's a table we put together that kind of outlines some of the activities related to those three functions.

The second point I want to talk about I think is really at the core of partnering, and this is a framework that comes out of interaction associates work on facilitative leadership. And this is the idea that good partnering really tries to balance process, results, and relationships, three elements that I think are really key. So when we think about results, this is really about what a partnership actually accomplishes.

A partnership needs to have clarity around its goals and some clear indication of and understanding among members and how to be achieved. And achieving the results really helps to reinforce the value to members and keep them engaged. The area of process is about the roles and responsibilities of members, plans for communication, governance, and decision making. How decisions get made and the clarity and transparency around those kinds of processes can really make the difference between a healthy, well-functioning partnership and one that hits too many bumps along the road.

The third area is one that I think folks often don't think about in partnering, relationship, but if this aspect isn't there, it can really sometimes derail partnership work. Relationship in this instance refers to the ways in which people interact and relate to the lead organization. It also has to do with how people feel about the decisions made by a partnership, whether they feel that their interests and contribution – (inaudible) – for example.

And again, failure to address these kinds of tensions can really limit the contributions that partnerships – that partnership members are willing to make. It can inhibit buy in and also may really prevent a partnership from achieving its goals. So that's a dimension that I think you always want to think about as you're working and developing your own partnership.

The fourth area that I think is important is sustaining a partnership. So often we think about sustainability as being a question of finding the money to continue our activities, and while certainly sustaining a partnership might require finding resources to continue working, to keep key – (inaudible) – or continue key activities, there are a couple of other dimensions to sustainability that I wanted to note.

The idea of value I think is really key in partnering. Maintaining the engagement of partners over time requires that they continue to see a benefit or value to their participation. Unless that benefit or value is greater than the cost of their participation, they're more likely to stay committed and engaged and then maybe more able to mobilize resources or convince others of the value of the partnership.

Another piece of sustainability that I think is really important is ensuring that the partnership can withstand transitions, whether there's a transition of individual members that may leave or drop or no longer be able to participate and certainly among the leadership of the partnership. And there's some ways to do this that we talk about in the guide, for example, helping develop leadership, providing leadership opportunities for different members. I think it's key to remember that sustaining is an intentional process and has to be considered early on.

And finally, as a senior research manager, I'm someone who loves evaluation. I just have to put in a – (inaudible) – for the value of using evaluation to gauge the health of your partnership, whether it's to understand how partners are experiencing their involvement, the progress the partnership has made, or the processes that are being used. It's important to your goal to really tap into and understand how things are working, and in the guide you'll find a couple of examples of single meeting evaluation as well as some examples that really get at kind of the larger work of the partnership and how things are going.

So I think with that I'll hand it back to Patricia. Thanks.

MS. MAGUIRE: Great. Thank you, Lisa. And actually, before I go forward, your points about leading versus managing really struck a chord with me because we talk a lot – if you've been in any kind of sector strategies conversation, we talk a lot about wanting to have the partnerships be industry led.

And so that conversation, whether that means by industry led, I like your distinction between the two makes sense. So obviously the employers aren't going to be sending out – (inaudible) – or something, that they're going to – that they should be setting – (inaudible) – direction and such. That makes a lot of sense. Thank you.

And just to highlight some – the guide is a really big document, but it's really organized well. But for a few things that are pertinent, I thought might be particularly good for the topic today – (inaudible) – page 15 there's four different scenarios on how a partnership gets shaped and kind of that beginning, the why, that catalyst there.

And then getting into establishing a partnership, page 21 has a really great list of questions to consider and key action steps. It's kind of getting into the what, the who, and who should do this. And then the next step, page 56 here – I think it's even 59 – talks about that meeting agenda and some agenda templates.

And this is actually a really good segue to our first speaker because you go on to their – (inaudible) – that the Boston – (inaudible) – has their sample agenda in there, so the Healthcare Career Consortium.

So without further ado I'd like to introduce two ladies on the Boston Healthcare Career Consortium, Alysia Ordway, pathways director at the Boston Private Industry Council, and Meredith Crouse, project manager at the Boston Healthcare Career Consortium, also at the Boston PIC. So I'll turn things over to you, Alysia.

ALYSIA ORDWAY: Hi. Good afternoon, everybody. Patricia, thanks for the opportunity to talk about the Healthcare Careers Consortium. So if we advance to the next slide, I'll do that now. I just want to give you some context on our efforts. So the Healthcare Careers Consortium was officially launched in March of 2010, but I have to say that that was not the workforce board's first engagement with healthcare.

Healthcare is a dominant sector in the Boston economy. In fact, in terms of its percentage of employment, it's much higher as compared to the rest of the state. So of all the jobs in Boston, 19.3 percent are in the healthcare sector as compared to 14.2 percent across the state.

And the workforce board's experience partnering with healthcare dates even back to the early '80s during a nursing shortage, and then after that there were numerous state and federal-funded projects to deal with different skill gaps or changes in the industry. And there was the number of healthcare folks who were integrated into our governance structure around Workforce Investment Act resources.

So when we started the consortium in 2010, it was not starting from scratch. We were building on a lot of existing relationships, but it was really – I would say it was a moment where the needs of the collaboration took a different turn.

Another significant contextual element was that in 2006 Massachusetts passed comprehensive healthcare coverage reform legislation, which was subsequently amended in 2010 and in – 2008 – excuse me – 2008 and 2010 to comply with ACA. So there was a lot of conversation about what was happening in the healthcare sector. Clearly there were questions around capacity and outreach and getting people enrolled and access to care, and the workforce development conversation lagged just however slightly behind that.

So the real launch though in 2010 was when the ARRA Recovery Act funding was dispersed through the federal workforce system, and our state made a decision to fund some training specifically in the healthcare sector. And they put out a request for proposals that could only be responded to by workforce boards, and the RFP had a couple of goals.

One was to identify, train, and place unemployed individuals over the course of a 15-month period, and the second goal of the RFP project was to form regional partnerships. So at the time the PIC was working in the community college graduation area. We had the individual healthcare employers in the community had done a number of pilot programs with community colleges. And the colleges in general were looking for opportunities to connect more to employers. So there was a lot of things happening in the state at the time that we launched our project.

So the project began around this grant – request for grant – request for proposals, and we reached out to our partner employers and asked them the question, where do you experience a skill gap or where do you see a need where we could use these training dollars to get folks employed? At the time it was the recession. They had a lot of applicants, to be frank, but one of the areas that they said is, we're always hiring for positions like medical assistants.

So let's focus on that for our training component, and we dedicated some resources to support people through training. But there really was a lot of energy around this idea of forming a regional partnership.

So we applied for the grant in January. We were awarded it in March, and we began by bringing everyone together and did a visioning exercise. And we said, if Boston had a truly coordinated, best in the nation system for training and educating its healthcare workforce, what would it look like, and what elements would it have?

From that conversation we were able to consolidate the group's feedback and determine that really the first best step will be what's here in the stream, would be to really map our current state. And so, as is listed here on the slide, you can see the components of this report. What we wanted to do is make visible to everyone the important role that the healthcare sector played in Boston.

We wanted to lay out exactly who all the players were and all of the different subsectors and do provide some labor market information for people. And believe it or not, this kind of document was not assembled. All of these pieces of information, while somewhat available if you did some hunting around, were not in one consolidated place.

So we put this together, and then we began to think about our first year's work plan. So if we were to form a partnership and we had defined our vision of what we needed to work towards, it really broke out into these four areas, labor market information exchange, systems alignment, consumer resources, and promoting best practices. This really seemed to be the place where this group could play a pivotal role and becoming smarter about how we talked about the workforce needs of this sector.

I should add that a lot of people in this group had been part – had been asked to be part – employers specifically had been asked to be part of a number of initiatives locally and at the state level and to some extent nationally. And often I think they – at the time there was some frustration on the part of the employers because they felt like they'd been invited into a lot of groups, but they didn't feel progress being made.

And so if we were going to succeed, we recognized that we really needed to demonstrate progress right from the get go. And so that mapping exercise proved very useful to begin with a key question and have a tangible product within a couple of months of starting to convene the group.

I should say this – these four focus areas were also really useful because not only did they identify sort of our priority areas but enabled us to adhere to the group's priorities with some fidelity and keep it in balance. But it also created a nice structure for our meetings and decision making about what was and what was not within our purview.

Within each of these areas we identified an action plan that was a page for each area, and in it we had activities, the impact that we were trying to have in that specific area, how we would use

people's time in meetings, and then sort of our aspirations. And so we generated a list of things that could result from incremental investment, if we were able to get that, and if we could have whatever we wanted, what the idea situation would be.

At the same time we really wanted to keep this in check, with the fact that this was really only a 15-month project. So we wanted to set our vision high but be realistic about what this group could realistically achieve within that time period. And over the courses, we did a number of different things, and I'm going to pass the mic over to my colleague Meredith who's going to give you a sense of sort of where the organization is now five years later.

MEREDITH CROUSE: Great. Thank you, Alysia. So as Alysia told you, this group started with a 15-month error grant, and when that grant ran out, the group decided to go through a refresh after this mapping exercise. So the group held a recognition event and had a discussion about how to move forward. So as the group discussed plans for sustainability, they decided that they wanted to keep meeting regularly.

That was important to bring everybody in to the same room. Initially, this group was meeting monthly for 90 minutes, and at that point they decided to change the cycle to meeting every other month or about five times a year for two hours per meeting. So during this refresh the group said, what did we set out to do, and what have we accomplished in those four areas that Alysia discussed, the labor market information exchange, the systems alignment, promoting best practices, and consumer resources, to figure out where do things stand?

So it was clear that at this point employers were sharing news and information about their organizations. The education and non-profit partners were sharing information on their programs, and the group's practices were proving to be a good way to hear from different voices. The group was operated with limited staffing at the time, and so they decided to apply for a one-year planning grant, which led to a strategic planning project.

And in the midst of that, it led to applying for another grant to get a full-time staff person for two years, which is the role that I currently serve for the consortium. So under this grant the project manager position is half funded by a grant and then half funded by the workforce board.

So we went through the strategic planning. The strategic plan laid out who are we, what are we here to do, what changes do we hope to see looking forward, which included things like services for job seekers, students, and employers as well as that systems change, and it outlined the short-term goals and the planned outputs over the next two years. And the reason for that period of time was because that was the length of the grant that we got for the staffing. So I want to talk about the roles as well as the partnership agreements here on this next slide.

So this slide just kind of gives you a visual of how we've structured the Healthcare Careers Consortium and the model that works best for us. So this kind of answers the who are we and how are we going to work together. So you might have remembered Alysia saying earlier the required membership at the start of this group was one community college, two healthcare employers, and one career center. And this structure, this diagram is where things stand today. And I'll talk about the members in just a minute, but as you can see, it's really grown.

So the Boston PIC, which is the workforce development board for the city, does serve as the convener for this group and hosts the staff person. So that's where I work, and it's a good place to sit in terms of having those relationships with all of the organizations involved. So my role as the project manager for the consortium means that I have dual reporting both to the workforce board that I work for but also I report to the consortium leadership, the co-chairs.

And I can answer questions about this later, but a lot of people are always curious about the staffing for this kind of group, the organizing around it. But it involves organizing and staffing the committees, planning the meetings, and helping to maintain those relationships with partners and managing the project work. So we couldn't do what we do without strong leadership, and we have an executive committee set up to help do this.

So our co-chairs are served by who I would call employer champions. So identified two employers that can serve as the chair and co-chair and kind of head up that executive committee. But the executive committee is made up of a number of leaders from across different areas.

So we have written into our strategic plan that on this executive committee, we'll have a couple of employer representatives, someone from a community college, CBO, labor union, and then a workforce development system partner. So it kind of has the spectrum of leadership there. And the role of the executive committee is to convene between our regular consortium meetings to kind of provide input and shaping for the agenda, and they represent the views and interests of the sector and regularly check in with peers.

These are folks that are really involved in workforce around the city. And they assist with recruitment of members and help lead subcommittees. And just to kind of wrap it up, you can see here we have our consortium members and where things stand today. So we have a great representation five years into this group from CBOs, career centers, employer partners, and education partners. And it is an employer-led group, and that's why it's co-chaired by employers.

I think that's all. Tricia, I'll turn it over to you.

MS. MAGUIRE: Great. Thanks, Meredith and Alysia. And I can attest from firsthand experience that folks want to get in on the consortium meetings and get on the agenda because they're just really effective. They're well-run, and it's good for outside groups that have conferences or programs to highlight. It's a great way to get an audience and you do a quick blurb of why – (inaudible) – content in the meeting. So it's a time of a standing – (inaudible) – type of thing, and so it's great. Once you can get it rolling, it kind of takes on a life of its own in a good way. A good problem to have.

And before we move on, there's one question from Eric Sinclair for Meredith and Alysia. He's wondering, "In what ways did state-level government agencies help and impede your work in implementing the partnership?"

MS. ORDWAY: I'll take a stab at responding to that, and then I'll pass to Meredith to see if she has anything that she wants to add. But I think that's a great question, and in terms of assisting

with the formation, the key thing is that these were – the seed funding for our partnership came from state resources, that they made this a priority in identifying regional partnerships.

And as a grantee I should mention that at the time my role at the workforce board was working primarily around implementation of Workforce Investment Act and working with our WIA administrators and the One-Stop career centers and, to some extent, doing some industry work but really not that much until we were able to get these additional resources, which freed us up in some respects to dedicate more time to really focus on this sector exclusively. So in that respect the state was really instrumental at making this a priority and giving us that seed funding.

I would also add that the ongoing support that we received through our grant management program, so the state funding went – oh, sorry. The state funding flowed through to the Commonwealth Corporation, which is a quasi-governmental arm of our state government. And the grant management flowed through to them as well, and they were really helpful in connecting us to other resources, other practitioners who were doing interesting things. And so we were able to learn from our peers and other regions.

So in terms of providing that connection across regions, so I was learning about things that were happening in the – (inaudible) – the western part of the state, and vice versa. And so the state was very helpful in that respect.

MS. CROUSE: Thanks, Alysia. And I would just add that with changes in WIOA, that now they're calling for more employer-led sector initiatives, and so today, now that this group is a little bit more established, we have been working more closely with the state, with the Department of Labor, the Department of Higher Ed, and the relevant offices that are interested in this kind of partnership work so that we can sort of align our interests. Tricia.

MS. MAGUIRE: Great. Thank you. And I see another question coming in, but we're just – we're going to hold on to that so that we can get to our next speaker. And I'm pleased to announce that we have Scott Jedele, program manager for industry with the Multi-State Advanced Manufacturing Consortium. So, Scott, I'll turn things over to you.

SCOTT JEDELE: Thank you, Patricia, and good afternoon. I noticed in the participant list we have several participants interested in advanced manufacturing, and this one's for you. We are practitioners, and we represent 13 colleges in 10 states. We also have several national partners and hundreds of industry partners, but primarily the industry partners listed on your screen currently serve on our executive strategy board.

And most of these OEM or tier one suppliers have national industry representatives and are really interested in improving manufacturing education alignment. So our grant is a TAACCCT grant that's all about that and I notice that also several of you are workforce colleagues and I think you will find this – kind of the strategy that we're going to share will be beneficial for you also.

We're going to talk this afternoon primarily about common performance-based objectives, and Patricia mentioned up front that we are practitioners. So this is a ground level tool that is kind of

an unexpected success for us, and I'll try and explain why that is. We actually had originally kind of looked at the same thing that was mentioned early, a current desired state.

If you look at how education works today, mostly as colleges we approach industry and try to establish a need, and they'll say, well, we need training. It might be in troubleshooting or another area, and we say that's perfect because we provide training in education. So what specifically do you need? And they say, well, we need maybe pneumatics training, and we say, excellent. That's what we do.

And they say, perfect, and send us students. And our students are trained. They receive good grades and they go to the workplace to perform their tasks and many of you know what happens next. The skills that we taught in the classroom and at the college don't match the skills that they need on the job, and industry begins to provide training hands on or otherwise that give the people the skills that they need.

So common performance-based objectives are a different way for us to communicate with our partners. On the right-hand side of the screen are course outlines that are hidden by a couple of title blocks that shouldn't be there yet. But these course outlines are built by colleges and are perfect for college catalogues, but they don't provide the necessary level of detail needed to understand industry skills. They're often very general.

While on the other side, industry is producing list of work skills and task. In colleges we call those optimum results of a DACUM process. But industry uses these for work instruction and QS 9000 documentation. Most often those are very detailed and still don't provide good communication. We see common performance-based objectives as the right approach to discussing the needs that an employer has for skills, and common performance-based objectives actually discuss the skill at a level that's just right in a concise way so both partners understand what the need is.

We have an example for pneumatics, but I can't see it. My guess is you can't either because our title blocks are in the way. But basically, the performance-based objective lets industry say this is exactly what we do. The instructors, this is exactly what we teach, and students, this is what I now know, especially in competency-based education.

We have 22 topic areas currently covered by performance-based objectives that are common. They've been rated by priority by 3,000 industry reviews, and they're available online, both the colleges, workforce colleagues, and anybody else, including industry, who has a need to use them.

They're actually found on our website, which is at the bottom of this slide, and it's www.msamc.org and then MSAMC.org, like Multi-State Advanced Manufacturing Consortium. The best use of these objectives we have seen to date are in the case of engaging a new partner, reengaging an existing partner, or energizing an advisory board.

And the steps in that process as we see them, in pre-meetings we share the relevant objectives from the list with partners. The next step is that we use a survey that's done online to determine

their priority and need and also create a skills checklist. The performance-based objective is easy to understand.

They're actually created so they can't be misinterpreted, and the way that they're listed makes an idea skills checklist, whether the skills are checked in the classroom lab or in the plant. The third step in the process is this meeting where we review and discuss the data and the proposed changes or the needs in the program. The fourth step takes place after we meet, and it enables colleges to justify changes to programs or decisions about whether the instruction will be provided in the plant or in a classroom.

But the key thing is that data is a result of the process, and we can use that to support the changes. What we usually forget, lots of times we do this in our colleges and most often industry's the expert here. Continuous improvement is a result of using the checklist, realizing what's been accomplished, and more importantly what's missing as we look at these skills that are needed.

And to close the loop we improve the objectives by providing feedback to the college and the industry partner, and their favorite is when they can see that their work and their skills currently needed impact our program immediately. The result is a satisfied partner.

Thank you, Patricia.

MS. MAGUIRE: Thanks, Scott. You actually wrapped up just as I was typing a little note to say one more minute, if you need it, but that was perfect timing. And thank you. I was trying to look here too to see we had some questions that popped up during your presentation. Let me see. I'm going to throw out one that Joe wrote. "What have been the experiences of the partnership – (inaudible) – regarding obstacles such as employers not releasing workers to attend training and the cost of training beyond what workers can afford?"

MR. JEDELE: So thanks for the question. That's an excellent question and a pretty common challenge. The key to getting the workplace to release the workers for training is achieving the right objective. What we notice using the performance-based objectives is that when you both agree – and I couldn't show you the sample, but if you go to the website and look through them, you'll see that it will explain exactly what the student will learn. And a lot of our work has been around integrated manufacturing systems troubleshooting.

So today's workforce needs to be able to troubleshoot a system, not so much a component of a system. For example, we used to repair motors. Most often today those are replacement parts, and it's a matter of determining whether the motor is good or bad. So when we offer the right objectives in the training, they're much more likely to release the student. And I'm sorry, Patricia. I missed the second part of the question.

MS. MAGUIRE: The second part was – let me see – another obstacle is the cost of the training is beyond what workers can afford.

MR. JEDELE: So we point them through the objectives to value and that the skills that are necessary have an impact. I'll tell you the data around what is the highest priority in performance-based objectives shows that the integrated systems troubleshooting skills pay for themselves, and it has to do with the amount that it costs the company for downtime, especially in advanced and manufacturing partners.

MS. MAGUIRE: Okay. Great. Thanks, Scott. Now, I'm going to move to a question that actually comes up a lot, and I know a lot of folks on the webinar here, when they registered – (inaudible) – have put this in there. Everyone wants to know how do you get the employers to the table? What letter do you use? What's the carrot? If you don't have a grant, how do you do that?

And I'm going to link that into another – (inaudible) – our question earlier, and then we'll start – well, both of you – groups that you started to get some advice. But starting with the PIC, someone had noted that it sounded like that you used kind of your street cred as a – the workforce board to take the leadership space. Alysia, Meredith, if you have some comments on that?

MS. ORDWAY: Yes. Actually, and this is the part I didn't get to speak to earlier which is really important. I do think the organizational – organization's credibility with some of the employers was important in terms of engaging in that initial conversation and being able to call up a number of healthcare employers and say, hey, there's this great opportunity; are you interested? Because that opens the door.

But what really sustain – what really drove the development of the group and I think which – what has sustained it over the years is the fact that our employer community was anxious to have this conversation around system design. I think that there were – there are a number of players in the education and training space, whether it's the K-12, community college, four-year college, community-based organization training.

A lot of different entities were coming at them. And in the five years prior they had received – our community foundation had given a number of employers grants directly and said, rather than fund a training provider, we're going to fund you, employer, directly and you can take it from there.

I think what a lot of employers learned by being the grant recipient as they were supporting their employee – their incumbent employees in pursuing more credentials and increasing their capacity was that they learned a lot of the barriers that their employees were running up against. And they thought, well, how do we as a community get together to talk about these systems?

And so what was referenced earlier was this differentiation between leading and managing an initiative. And I would say that a couple of employers in particular really emerged as leaders on this issue and took the reins and ran with it. In the development of our grant response, it became apparent who those leaders were, and we immediately jumped and said, hey, would you be interested in sharing the group? So they have – the employers have really led this initiative from the very beginning.

MS. CROUSE: And, Tricia, I would just add at the start you can't really mandate a lot of expectations from the employers. And building those relationships is really key so that you can start to bring more folks in. And one way that we've really tried to engage employers and keep them coming back is we find a common issue, and then we ask those employers to speak to the issue at the meetings.

And so we ask will you – if you're worried about this issue going on at your organizations because others are seeing this too, and it sort of draws them into the conversation more and more. And then – and I did mention this earlier, but as you grow and progress over time, that's when you can start to set up more clear expectations about what you want to ask of the employers, what you want them to bring to the group, and formalize the membership.

MS. MAGUIRE: Thank you. So it takes some time to kind of get it started, and then you can kind of deepen it and move on. But a big take away is try to find the pain points that the employers have and be the solution. So great. Thanks, Alysia and Meredith. And I know, Scott, – (inaudible) – too about some tips on how to get employers to the table.

MR. JEDELE: So I think maybe a key for us has been visit them first at their location. Study their operation and make sure they understand their needs. We actually take a list of performance-based objectives, the common ones that other partners in industry rated as high priorities, and especially if – I'm not an actual electrician or a technician, but when I have the list with me, I can at least lead them or facilitate an excellent discussion about their needs and then quickly they tend to realize that you are interested in helping. So those work well for us.

MS. MAGUIRE: Great tips. Thanks, Scott. Now, I'm going to jump to – we had a two-part question from Gloria in California, and the first part of the question was, "What elements or tools would you suggest – (inaudible) – when an entity/awardee is looking to develop new partnerships with other organizations?"

And I invite you to just jump in and, again, recommend that CommCorp Partnership Guidebook that has some great specific tools and samples. That's also in the file share here, and the link is in the slides as well. But, Alysia, Meredith, and Scott, any other tools that might be helpful that we haven't mentioned?

MS. ORDWAY: One thing that I found useful in terms of engaging new partners is to have a clear orientation document that – as Scott said, its important to go out and meet people at their location and in their context. But I always – whenever I would do that, I would bring with me an overview of what the group is about, what was accomplished, samples of anything that might be relevant so that when they do join the group, there's no mystery and there – (inaudible) – on the history about where the group has been and where it's going.

MS. MAGUIRE: That's great. Scott, do you have anything to chime in before I move on?

MR. JEDELE: You're going to get tired of me saying that, Patricia, but we would definitely recommend looking at some common objectives. And it is kind of an unstated need. I can't tell

you how often we miscommunicate with an industry partner by not understanding what their needs are. And we just see such a kind of a surge in appreciation for the partnership when we begin to talk their language.

So for people who actually do – and really the first step is making that visit. They're going to respect the fact that that happened, but then I think maybe even in the comeback, if you're not comfortable to do it the first time, really look at and analyze carefully what their needs are. Speak their language is the key.

MS. MAGUIRE: Yeah. Speaking their language is awesome. That's one of the things too. It's funny. I've done exercises on how to kind of pitch and talk to employers, good pitch, bad pitch, and we all want to go through so many industry acronyms, talk about all the grants we have, and you want the employer. So it's good to get really industry terms and to be informed and kind of have a career elevator pitch too once you have looked into employers first. And I see – and Lisa noted in the comments here too we had a great suggestion, another tool that you are familiar with, Lisa.

MS. SORICONE: Yes. John – (inaudible) – suggested that folks check out his blog where he – (inaudible) – talk about some work by a man named Arthur T. Hemmenwen (ph) who takes an interesting approach to partnering and thinks about sort of the level of collaboration and cooperation sort of that groups can often start at a point where they're coordinated.

They're kind of – they know what each other is doing, but as they work together they can deepen their connections and move through some stages of collaboration until they get to a point where they're really – their work is really shooting off and supporting each other and moving to another level.

So I think that's a great thing, and if I can dig up something actually, we used to have a tool that we used at CommCorp to help partnerships evaluate where they were on that continuum. So I'll see if I can follow up and get something to Patricia so she can share.

MS. MAGUIRE: Great. So yeah. If you find that, I'll send that out to everyone too so you can have that. Thanks so much for that suggestion. And I wanted to go back – (inaudible) – if you can unmute your line if you wanted to ask your second question that you had. It was about folks advice. It was advice on seeking new partnerships and then, Gloria, are you still on the line? You want to pose your question?

MR. KEATING: And, Gloria, the way to unmute your line –

MS. : Yes.

MR. KEATING: Oh, sounds like you've figured that already. It's *6. Go ahead.

MS. MAGUIRE: Thank you.

MS. : Thank you very much for all of your advice. And being on the project management side and of course coming in contact with a lot of innovation that's available throughout the state of California, I know that some of the questions that I am prompted with is how do I get on board? How do I get involved?

And this is what we have available. And I'm like, great. I mean, it sounds fantastic, but in terms of being able to direct them, of course here from my standpoint is just visit your local areas, your One-Stop centers, and ask more information, especially if you want to be involved on a local level.

However, but there again being able to maybe give them some available resources not directly connected with where I'm at right now but just being able to guide them because I – there are a lot of individuals out here in the state of California that are passionate to try and assist the workforce community but don't really know how to get introduced and get engaged with everything that's kind of going on right now.

MS. MAGUIRE: Scott, Meredith, Alysia, any suggestions?

MR. JEDELE: I don't think I have anything to add. Thanks, Patricia.

MS. ORDWAY: I just think given the structure for WIOA, the workforce development boards are sort of positioned as coordinators and as entry – hopefully as entry points to the system and can make the right referral, whether it's to the system partner, as appropriate, would be my best guess.

MR. JEDELE: Maybe I will add something, Patricia. I mean, if the question is the potential partners seeking opportunities – right – I mean the partnership is about the only way it works today, and everybody recognizes the need. I think once you establish the relationship, it's important to take it to a progressively deeper level so that you continue an engagement strategy that brings value to both partners. And that may be part of the key.

MS. MAGUIRE: Great. Thanks so much, and great question. And actually, there's a great question from Fred. I think if you can unmute yourself and ask the question, it looks like you're maybe probing at the PIC. Why don't you press *6 to unmute yourself?

MR. KEATING: Yeah. Fred, if you'd like to verbally ask that question, *6 will do it.

Q: Hello. This is Fred Henry. Can you hear me?

MR. KEATING: We sure can. Go ahead, Fred.

MS. MAGUIRE: Yes. We can hear you.

Q: Yes. My question is you talked about an executive team, a committee putting together for the sector or the industry group. And I know the buy in from getting large employers is

important as along with small employers, but what minimum level leadership would you require to be on that executive team?

MS. CROUSE: Sure. So for our executive team, most of those folks are workforce development directors at their respective organizations. I think that HR and organizational effectiveness types of roles with employers can be good participants for these kinds of groups as well, but we don't require any certain level.

We just want to ensure that we have representation not only from employers who are kind of heading up that executive team but also non-profit, CBO, career center, the workforce system, and education so that we have a voice from each area at the table.

And these have to be folks who are willing to kind of regularly converse with their peers and know what's going on in their respective areas so that they can speak to that. And this committee meets regularly to talk about it, and in between meetings we converse regularly when there's any news or policy updates or anything going on so that we're sort of keeping up to date in between regular gatherings.

MS. MAGUIRE: Great. Thank you. And point of another question here that I'm so glad brought that up. It is Michael was asking about the difference in engaging large employers versus small employers, and I guess in his area they're having some trouble engaging big business. Small businesses seem to recognize the benefits and are very eager. But he was wondering if either group had any suggestions on how to bring big business to the table.

MR. JEDELE: I could speak on that. Bringing big business is – basically follows exactly the same approaches about relationship, but it requires an additional level of persistence. So you need to kind of have a strategic plan, and you got to start early and stay late. So it's about continuously trying to better understand what they're looking for and work your way to the right executive level participation.

On our national strategy board we have the executive and launch leaders from many of the large OEMs, and that didn't happen overnight. It's a four- or five-year strategy about achieving the right level of engagement and continuously providing value so that they recognize we're listening and we're paying attention to their training needs.

MS. ORDWAY: Yeah. I absolutely support that. That was our experience in healthcare as well. The largest employer really wasn't part of the group for a couple years, and we would just keep looking back, checking in, see if there was something that might interest them and engage them. And then eventually there was something that they didn't have a solution for and brought it to the group, and then they became regular participants.

MR. JEDELE: I might add that whatever level is available to you is a great place to start. When you're engaging industry, start at whatever level is available and work your way up or down either to the skill sets necessary by workers or to the executives levels needed for support. If the task on the table and the discussion points are right, it will bring the right people to the table. So maintain your strategy.

MS. MAGUIRE: Great advice, and I just see we're just at 3:29 and want to be mindful of everyone's time. Thanks so much to our practitioner speakers. Great advice and lessons learned, and thanks so much to our participants on the webinar today and great questions. And hopefully – I think we got through most of them. I'll go through and see if there's others and try to maybe – if I can follow up to help with folks. But also too on the slides that you can download, there's all of our contact information.

If you have a follow-up question, feel free to e-mail. And also just another reminder for some next steps on the peer learning – in this peer learning for industry engagement we'll be setting – those are just general month. So hopefully, as soon as possible, get specifics. So stay tuned, and if you have any comments or feedback on those topics or for presenters, feel free to e-mail me, Patricia Maguire, or – (inaudible).

But you can definitely – those are still flexible, but we're trying to just have general topics that are building off of each other. So now that we're at 3:30, I'm going to say thank you and have a great rest of your day. Bye, everyone.

(END)