

Workforce³One

Transcript of Webinar

Sector Strategies Organizational Capacity & Sustainability Peer Learning Group

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MR. COHEN: All right. Well, welcome everyone. My name's Todd Cohen. I'm the director of strategic initiatives over at Maher & Maher. We support the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration helping the system – project to really help the system build robust sector partnerships. This call is building their workforce development board to succeed in sector strategies, and it's part of a series of calls on really looking at the organizational capacity needed to execute sector strategy approaches.

So for those of you who are new to this group, we have peer learning calls. And these calls are – this group in particular are really looking internally at workforce development boards, the workforce agencies, career centers, and really what they need to do from an organizational standpoint; staffing, organizational structure, really behind-the-scenes type things to execute sector strategy work that's really sustainable over the long term.

And the premise is really this. As great as sector strategies or sector partnerships that you may have created – and I suspect many of you on the phone have created some really, really good sector partnerships in the areas – if you haven't figured out how to really embed the work deep into your board's committee structure, your strategic plan – that could be WIOA-related or otherwise – (inaudible) – culture of the organization, your partnership, the sector work that you've done may be short-lived. It will be tied to a grant that you've done; it will be tied to leadership that may support it; but leadership turns over, when the grant ends, for many of us the sector work might also come to an end.

So today, we're going to focus specifically on two interrelated areas. One, how to really build sector partnership and sector strategy approaches into your plans – and that might be WIOA-related or otherwise – and what that looks like, how to do it. But also, secondly, how might you organize your committee structure, and that's obviously for those of you who are of course, the board leaders, the staff so that the concept remains and sustains long-term. And so these calls, as you might suspect, we get into really the nuts and bolts of the how-tos on the sector work.

And we're going to look at – I'm really excited I think because we've got Scott Sheely, who's a former executive director of the Lancaster, Pennsylvania workforce development board, we'll be looking at what they've done with their sector strategy – (inaudible) – Lancaster, PA, they've been doing it for decades. It's really embedded and ingrained in how they do business and the fabric of what they do.

And Scott's going to share with us not only what he did when he was there, but he's now gone. He's going to sort of tell us – now that he's gone, this very mentality of engaging industry through a sector approach is still very much alive there; it's not tied to any – (inaudible). It's just embedded in how they do business there. And so we'll talk a little bit about how they've done that through committee work and planning.

These calls, as you know, those of you have been here, are supposed to be very interactive. So Scott's going to give about 20, 25 or so minutes of a presentation formally and then it should be open for back and forth dialogue questions.

Get your questions ready. You're all on mute, but when you're ready to ask a question when Scott's done, just press *6 and unmute yourself. That's how it'll work. We really encourage these calls, work well when you ask questions – (inaudible) – you all have some good stuff to share on this also that you might want to bring to this conversation. So we encourage that too. If Scott brings something up and you say you've done something similar, we really encourage you to share on this call. That's what these calls are all about.

So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to you, Scott.

MR. SHEELY: Great. Thanks Todd. Good to be with all of you today. I also I think want to add another dimension to what Todd talked about because a lot of these strategies that I'll be talking about have to do with engaging employers. And I know that that's on the list of many of you in terms of issues that you're trying to confront. And hopefully give you some idea of hopefully how to bring in this issue of employer engagement a little bit earlier in the process.

So Todd said, I'll be talking for about 20 minutes. Really, three big points that I want to make. I'll make those and then we'll kind of wrap up and then see what kind of questions you have. Just very, very briefly, I know everybody hates when everyone goes through their resume, but I was a board director in Lancaster for 14 years. I've done a lot of work on sectors on the sector skill academy with the Aspen Institute while that was up and running. And in many ways, what I've been most involved in is how do you get started? Like how do you actually move from the data to actually doing something, which is really the hard part. It's actually how do we actualize all this.

I mean, I think there have been many conversations about engaging employers. And my observation is that a lot of it starts at the point where those of us who are in the industry – that is, the workforce development world – have some idea what our sectors are, the industries that are a part of them, and really the needs. At that point, it's to bring employers to the table.

But today I'd like to suggest to you that there's really another strategic process of engagement. Which I think as I said earlier, needs to begin sooner and that really has some different purposes that are really foundational for sector development. I think that there's two pieces that you have to think about fairly early on. They can happen sequentially or at the same time. The point is they both need to happen. In essence, they spring from a lot of the early research that we do on our sectors.

One of the parts of the process involves sector development itself. How do we use the data and bridge that over to what we need as organizations? And then the other relates to how do we prepare as an organization to bring a sector mindset into what we do and actually into our organizational thinking and process.

My own experience as a board director says that we always start with data. I've never gone wrong with this because we really need to understand what we're looking at and let data drive our process. I remember coming in in Lancaster in about 2001 and asking people what should I be concentrating on in terms of the economy? And being told that really all you need to know is manufacturing, hospitality, and agriculture.

The more I got into it, the more I found that that was not the case. We needed to have a lot more detail on that. And actually beginning to pull the data together, what we found is that it's really not the data itself, but it's who we have at the table that's interpreting the data and that's helping us to make the bridge to the – essentially policy questions that arise out of that.

And I'd put before you the idea today that that's a great place to begin to get our employers involved because these are the kind of questions that are meaningful for employers. And in fact, that's really the kind of thing they want to do when they're hooking up with us in terms of board activities and that sort of thing.

So I mean, I think that the question becomes here's what we know from the data, but tell us how you see it from your perspective in the industry. So I have a great story here. I'm not going to take too long with it, but I think it illustrates what I'm talking about.

We'd done some research in terms where the key industries – particularly, where there are competitive advantages within industries in the Lancaster economy. One of those that came out of the data was that it appeared that we had a very, very large woodworking industry. Many, many companies that are making custom kitchen cabinets, and literally as many as 50 in our one county and selling those literally all over the country.

So we had the data, but it occurred to me as a young board director, new board director, that it might be a good idea to go out and actually see some of these companies. And as we went out and we met with the companies, we were talking about the data, but we also asked what are your problems, what are your issues, where are you running into complications in some way or another?

And the interesting part was we kept hearing about something called wood finishing. That we didn't have enough wood finishers to add a second shift; our throughput is slower because we don't have enough wood finishers. And over and over this kept coming up in the course of about 15 visits to the companies.

Well, we did a focus group and we invited all those people, all those employers to come to the table. And I remember basically saying so what about this wood finishing thing? And what I got back was – and if you've been in meetings with employers many times you're met with silence. – what I got back was kind of an explosion of comments. Basically from people representing the employers saying but that's the essential part of who we are. That's what makes what we do here in Lancaster County different from many other areas; because for us, finish in the wood's actually the competitive advantage.

And at that point for me, the lightbulb went off. This is the industry defining its competitive advantage. What did we do better here than any other cabinet maker around the country? We took that ah ha experience which was essentially the reality of the industry and basically asked some other questions about so how do we train these wood finishers? We found out that in many ways, it was all on the job, it was kind of haphazard, every company did it differently.

But when we really pressed on it, we found that we heard this story about this guy down in southern New Jersey who when we really want somebody to kind of finish them off in terms of their abilities as a wood finisher, we send them off to him and he has a pole barn where he does training for about a week. That's how we really do it.

That became then kind of the prompt we needed in terms of program planning. That actually set off a whole variety of things that the workforce investment board did in terms of putting training together for wood finishers. We did that training in conjunction with the guy from New Jersey for about three months and trained about 60 wood finishers in about 15 companies.

And then the interesting part was that then we stopped doing that because the industry told us that that was enough. We had filled their situation; we'd worked with the local schools to get this training program into what they did; and basically the workforce investment board moved onto some other things that they were interested in.

I tell you this story to kind of illustrate that if we wouldn't have asked for the employer input and gotten them engaged in the discussion, we wouldn't had the kind of targeted results that we had and be able to put the programming in place that we needed.

This is precisely the kind of conversation that our business partners want to be involved in. It provides us the direction that we as educational workforce planners need to develop programs and curriculum based on the need of industry. This makes employers happy. And it makes them even more happy when we listen to them and give them what they want in a timely way.

So again, the takeaway here I think we need to involve employers earlier. Let them engage the data and ground it in the reality of what they do every day and not ground it in the reality of what we do every day. I've never been led astray by the employer group that comes together. And we have really over the years, gotten to the point that we're very much trusting what they tell us to do.

So I think that's my first point, my first takeaway. Get the employers involved. Engage them. Use what they tell you and really act on it. So I think the other observation I had is that as you start having these conversations as you build up your sector work, one of the other things that will happen inevitably is that you'll begin to see that there are some champions that emerge.

These are business leaders who really get what we're trying to do. They typically not only have a good knowledge about their business, but they understand the wider context in which their business operates. They also get workforce and how important it is in the years to come in terms of keeping their company competitive. And they're the ones that are often very enthusiastic and the ones you can turn to to help interpret what you're doing to the press and such.

Again, I have a really strong feeling that if a staff person's leading an industry sector discussion or a group, you pretty much fail to engage. We need to have our business customers involved in the leadership. They're also important as intermediaries.

And again, let me just tell you a brief story. I was talking to my board of directors about this whole thing. And people weren't quite getting it, but I saw the guy from the hospital who was one of our key actors. I think he was vice president of the board at the time. And he said I get exactly what you're talking about. And he said, you know what, there are about 10 of us who are the HR representatives from hospital who actually meet every month. And then he said – this is the million-dollar question – he said, would you like to come to that meeting?

Of course, the answer was yes. And I did go. That was one of our first really, really successful collaborations where the group at that time was dealing with a shortage of nurses. And this collaborative group ended up putting together a very dynamic and dramatic media campaign that got a lot of people into the nursing schools in the area to address our workforce shortage.

In a similar way, after the hospital guy piped up, the long term care provider who was a representative on the board basically said the same thing. We have a group that meets; I'd like to introduce you to that group and to about 30 other nursing homes that are in the area. So my point's that these people are important intermediaries. They have people that can put us in touch with lots of other people. And just as importantly, will vouch for our credibility as we seek to enter this kind of local community practice around an industry cluster. We need these people.

I also have this little note to myself. Not only do we need them, but everybody else needs them as well. So one of the things that we have to make sure that we do is we find the champions, we make this work easy for them in terms of good staff work to back them up. We have to be sure that we don't require too many meetings out of them, that we find ways to engage them otherwise, and that we really don't bug them all the time.

So my second takeaway, find your champions. Engage them in the work of the sector project. Let them lead. You stay in the background making things happen. And once again, you do what they tell you to do. And normally the outcome of that will be pretty good.

So my third point's really to go back to the other comment that I made in terms of we need to find ways organizationally to be ready for sector strategy. My recommendation's that we think sector in terms of everything we do as organizations. That we consider putting that into our bylaws, consider putting it into our strategic planning, into the operation plans.

We should have a sector strategy that's embedded in the organization. So again, just to be a little more specific, I think we need to acknowledge the sector approach as just a key organizing principle in everything we do. Organizations need to live and breathe sectors, integrate it into their everyday thinking.

The problem's that if we make sectors an appendage that we attach to the rest of our body at work, that's all it's ever going to be. It's just going to be a sideshow with a resulting limited impact. If we bring it in and we think about it in terms of what we do day in and day out, that's going to be a much better and a more impactful kind of flow pattern.

The other part's I really encourage people to bring champions onto your board of directors. In Lancaster, we had seven priority industry clusters. We literally wrote into our bylaws that each

of those industry clusters needed to be represented on the board of directors by at least two people from the industry. And we were very much concerned about that constantly. We made sure that when we had vacancies, we applied that principle as we moved along. This is a way that you keep sector focus at the table in terms of policy making and all the rest of it.

And to actually do it where it's in your operating documents where you're reviewing it on a regular basis just keeps it in front of people constantly. And again, I think you also need to put your sector strategies into your planning. Be specific, talk about your ongoing planning program development and evaluation goals with your industry partners.

If you do that and begin integrating that into your planning and operating documents, what happens is that I've seen this sector approach flow into all kinds of other conversations that are happening in the system; things related to your One-Stop and how it operates, your youth programming. Again, if we pool together this general approach and think of it kind of holistically, it really can be pretty effective for an organization.

So my takeaway's to acknowledge the sector approach in the documents that define our structures as an organization. And then keep reinforcing those connections because one of the things that will happen sure as heck's that the personnel will change, people will rotate through. But if we have these in our organizational documents and we make a commitment to reinforcing them with people over time, we should keep the sector focus alive. Sectors die because of lack of attention. We need to keep the vision in front of people as things change over time.

So again, my thought here's really today's that these are pretty basic things. It's not rocket science, but we do need to keep these kind of things in mind as we do our planning. In particular, what I've noticed in some of the groups I've been working with is that the first generation's turned over and now the second generation's ready to think about sectors and we're going back through, we're reinventing things.

There's nothing the matter with resetting in terms of that, but it seems to me that we need to have the vision piece pretty well figured out and we need to stick with that. That I think's is really the source of sustainability when people start talking about the sustainability needs. We need to keep the vision alive.

So Todd, I think my 20 minutes are up. Let me turn it back to you.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Scott. Yeah, this is great stuff. Again, *6 to unmute yourself. So get your questions ready. Let me ask, follow up on – you mentioned a couple of really key things here.

Let me go back to the idea of the bylaws. That really gets – that and the committee structure really gets to the heart of what this group is all about. Can you give us, Scott, a little bit more about when you say set your strategy work in the bylaws, what does that look like? Is that just that there's a commitment to the approach of sector strategies or something else?

MR. SHEELY: Well, I think that the bylaws is where you'd actually hit your question about board membership. In other words, everybody had private sector requirements. We made private sector line up to the sectors that we'd identified. So our board was about 28, we had 7 sector strategies, so we had 14 which was half. And we had a couple of regular private sector people as well.

But that's really where we defined that. We actually said here are the sectors, we need to have two people from each and that they'd be the primary contacts for our sector strategies. All that enumerated in the bylaws.

MR. COHEN: Excellent. And now let me ask about the committee structure. I know because we're working with a number of boards now and I think they're trying to figure out, do we set up committees or task forces that are sector partnerships? Or I think as you've done is more – you didn't do that necessarily, but you more sort of weaved the sector purpose throughout as you said, into the youth and One-Stop committees. So what's your advice or things to think about when it comes to that?

MR. SHEELY: Yeah. My advice with sectors is to concentrate within the sector and have your employer-led committees that actually run the sector project. And then have some kind of liaison that will carry back. Typically I'd have a liaison from the wood staff, but we also had project managers who would liaison back to the One-Stop staff. I mean, that was in the days when there was a little bit more money and we could afford more people.

But the principle's the same. Embed sector into your whole organization. And then let the specifics of the running of the sector project actually be in the industry-led partnership committee type of thing. I think it's just cleaner. It keeps the – it keeps the organization thinking about the broader aspects of it. It keeps it more strategic, but then the partnerships can actually be more operational. And they actually focus on doing the sector work by each sector.

MR. COHEN: Great. Thanks. Anybody – I've got more, but anyone who wants to jump in with a question, *6 to unmute yourself. All right. I'm going to ask you – (inaudible) – we need to keep going here.

So Scott, just back to this idea of championing, when did you actually – how did you leverage them? Like give them some specific steps. So you identified you mentioned folks that were in the private sector; they seemed to sort of get what it's all about. What did you actually task them with doing? Did they have to go out and find 10 of their best friends? How did you really use them strategically?

MR. SHEELY: Well, I think with champions, again, getting them engaged in the process early is pretty important. I think finding the right person in terms of the organization, I think there's a tendency to go out and find the CEO and want to bring them in and then you find after two or three meetings, they don't come. So that's not the right person.

There's probably somebody in the organization that's much more in tune with the regular operation. It may be a chief operating officer. It could be a production manager. There's a

variety of people that you could look for. But what I've found is that if people are willing to engage you with the data, then you've probably got somebody you can work with. If people can't sit still and think because they've got other things going on in their minds, then maybe we need to find somebody else in the organization.

So first I try to find people who will talk data and then will talk specifically about the needs of their company. And then if they have at least a bit of an overview of the industry. So again, that's not necessarily the CEO, and sometimes, it's not even the HR director.

A lot of our champions have been people who are, as I said, kind of next level down. They can bring the CEO in when need be, but they're not necessarily that person – a little bit more of an operational-oriented kind of person.

We ask the champions to speak for the industry. And typically they're chairing the industry partnership committee. They're the front people, but again, the caveat's you can't overload them. You have to find a way that they can be involved, but it doesn't take an incredible amount of their time. But I think that's good staff work that keeps it in balance.

MR. COHEN: Great. Thanks. Who wants to jump in? Come on. Every time we have these calls, this is a lively group usually.

MR. : Yes. I have a question.

MR. COHEN: Please, go. Just identify yourself and where you're from too.

MR. : Sure. Michael – (inaudible) – from the impact investing program called Helping Communities Work. Wondering if the new WIOA legislation lends itself to attaching the pay-for-success strategy to sector success strategy and if other forms of impact investing are also being considered?

MR. SHEELY: Well, I'm not an expert on that, but one of the things that I can tell you is that sector strategies allow you to transcend the regular wheel and begin to think about other funding mechanisms. What we've found is that sometimes the restrictions of government funding doesn't allow the industry to do what it needs to do. And so in my involvement, I've seen organizations that basically spin off and find other ways to find things.

I mean, the general answer's I think it offers a lot better opportunities and I think it would be interesting to explore it.

MR. : Yeah. Just one follow-up question. If the investment community were to take a look at investing the amount of money to give a social impact whether it be recidivism reduction or jobs creation or skills cap reduction, but's also looking for a financial return, are there any models underway that would bring both the financial return and social impact to the investor? There's a lot more money out there for this type of thing than there are investable opportunities.

So I think this might be an opportunity for the en masse workforce system to take a closer look at impact investing.

MR. SHEELY: It would be an interesting kind of thing. I'm thinking it's a matter of who's going to bring the money back in. Typically, public funding flows one way, out. I think it would be – you've got to talk to some people about it. Todd, do you know of anybody that's doing any work in this area?

MR. COHEN: No. I know the National Fund for Workforce Solutions has done a lot of work around bringing the local community foundation voice to sector strategy work. And so I don't know how it's gone in this specifically, but clearly they keyed in on funding and opportunity. So yeah, we might explore that. It might be a good topic for future conversation.

MR. : OK. Thank you.

MR. SHEELY: Thank you.

REBECCA HUGHES: This is Rebecca Hughes at the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. I'm a project manager in workforce development and I'm working on a sector strategies approach for our program finally.

And I just wanted to respond first to that previous comment which is that there's one organization, Green City Force, out of Brooklyn, New York who's doing some work around social impacts with funding from the department of criminal justice and reduction of recidivism through clean energy workforce development. So that's something you can look into that's underway.

MR. COHEN: Thank you.

MS. HUGHES: Sorry, I think it was Michael who commented previously. But one of my questions on sector partnerships is I'm trying to segment our market here in New York into clean energy and to really identify industry champions.

I think that perennial issue of dealing with a highly competitive environment and trying to find industry champions who are willing to sit down at the table to work together to come up with positive solutions to the shared problems. I guess it's just – I'm sure it's something that everyone working in this space has encountered, but I just wondered if you had any tips or tricks for dealing with that.

MR. SHEELY: Well, my own personal experience is that it typically becomes a problem when you get people to do training together. One of the things we always heard from competitors was I couldn't possibly sit down at the table with my competitor because I have so much proprietary knowledge that they'd certainly want to see that.

What we found is that there are certain early adopters that will come to the table who don't have maybe quite as much fear. And if you can get a couple of companies to work together initially,

what they eventually find out is where they thought in the beginning that 80 percent of what they'd be involved in would be proprietary, in reality, they find out it's probably more like 20 percent; and that basically what the collaborative training that happens can do is basically can deal with the 80 percent and everybody seems to be pretty happy with that.

We've had partnerships with as many as 50 companies together doing training. And many times they're actually doing training in each other's locations. Now that doesn't happen the first day, but if you can get some people to try it and you can get some leadership who's willing to share, that's usually the first step. And again, this isn't rocket science. It's really just a matter of finding the right people who will come around the table and trust one another, which sometimes it's easier in some areas than others. But you know that already, right?

MS. HUGHES: Yeah. Thank you. That's good though. I do think there are a few smaller ones that may be willing to come together, so maybe we can start out with a demonstration there and try and capitalize on the larger market.

MR. SHEELY: That's simply a case of two or three, and that's how you get to 50. Starting with two or three.

SHAWN GOMEZ: My name's Shawn Gomez. I just have a comment on that.

MR. COHEN: Go.

MR. GOMEZ: Yeah, Shawn Gomez with New Horizons Computer Learning Center. You made the comment that it's hard to get trainers to come together, but one of the things that we've realized is that this is such a big issue. I'm in the state of Ohio and we were one of the first adopters. Partnering with media partners actually makes perfect sense. It's a big enough pie, there's certainly enough diversity in what we do, and quite frankly, where there was physical and continuous different locations which again I cracked up at.

Case in point. We have 300 locations across the country – or across the world, excuse me. We have over 120 in this country and many of those have empty classrooms that are just waiting for people to collaborate in and do the training on. So we're definitely trying to get that word out.

So again, thank you all for the contributions that you've done. I've learned so much from these sessions. And that's all I'm going to share.

MR. COHEN: Thank you.

MR. SHEELY: Thanks Shawn.

COLLEEN LAROSE: Colleen LaRose here from the Northeast Regional Employment and Training Association. Scott, thank you so much for the information today. Really very helpful. A couple of questions for you. One is do you – we're talking about the workforce system now under WIOA developing these industry sector partnerships. But this isn't a new concept. Obviously, this has been around for a very long time.

Michael Porter with the Competitiveness Institute has been talking about this all over the globe. So one of the things that I'm concerned about when we go out to start to do this is collaborating right within our region with economic developments, chambers of commerce, higher education, who already may have some of these industry partnerships that they've been working on.

And how are we moving to create a more collaborative environment with our partners in developing these partnerships? And how did you do that there? I know you probably are aware that we're developing a summit. It's April 27, 28, and 29 in New Jersey on this topic of getting economic development, workforce development, and higher education to collaborate in developing these industry partnerships and cluster development projects.

MR. SHEELY: Yeah. I mean, I think your question's a good one. I think people in the public system, it's been reinforced by the way grants get done and that sort of thing. People believe that they always have to be the one to start a project and lead a project.

Some of the best collaborations I've ever been a part of are ones that I joined after the fact. Somebody else started it, somebody else was running it, all I joined – I was basically making a commitment to be a good partner and to replicate things that had already gotten done. This is something that – I mean, it's just not said enough, that there's many, many best practices that are out there.

And to your point, some of them are right in our own local areas. I think part of – it behooves us really to know what's going on in the economic development world and the education world. You know, we can – if there's gaps to be filled, then we can look at ways to fill that.

But I think I've been hearing a lot more lately about what people have been calling business fatigue. It's like the employer community's getting sick of so many of us calling on them, and it really points to the fact that we really need to collaborate better. It's not really a good idea for 15 different entities calling on a single employer and offering our services. We need to figure out a way to do that better and I think that's on the agenda for a number of the projects around the country.

But it's a good point. We don't have to invent everything. We can be – it's just as good to be a good partner as it is to be a leader at one of these entities.

MS. LAROSE: Are you familiar, Scott, with the work that TCI's been doing with the competitiveness institute and the leadership out of Harvard University throughout the country and do you employ any of those strategies?

MR. SHEELY: I'm familiar with them and you know, we do – I mean, I think there's kind of a common base of knowledge of practice about employer industry partnerships and that sort of thing. And what I see's that there's a real proliferation, there's a lot of groups. But the institute for competitiveness is still the mothership in terms of a lot of the knowledge. And everybody's always interested in what they're up to.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Scott. Let me just drill down this question just for – because it's a good question – (inaudible).

So if you're a local workforce area, you recognize there's an industry partnership in place, say, around healthcare. But you're committed to this approach; you're trying to figure out now the role. I'm talking specifically about a local workforce area. Take us through what you might do. What would that collaboration look like? If another group is the so-called convener, what might the local workforce area do to add value in that regard?

MR. SHEELY: Well, I think whether you're the organizer of a partnership or whether you're a partner, you have to ask the question of how does all this impact what we do? For example, in the One-Stop system, how does this – how do we actually make this hook up to the groups we're most interested in and how do we make it relevant in terms of the workforce world? The public workforce world?

Many of the partnerships that I've worked with did not get started in the workforce world. It was meeting employer demands that was essentially incumbent worker kind of tasks. The first thing that employers wanted when we talked to them was we needed to deal with technology, we needed to upgrade the technology, the abilities of our current workforce, we need to deal with the fact that we're going to be losing many of our supervisors and managers, so we have to work with supervisory training and advancement and that sort of thing.

I mean, that's not normally the world we work in in the One-Stop world. Sooner or later, as you develop a relationship with industries, it's inevitable they'll come to you and say that school that you're working with is going to come to work here so we don't want to stop that. But we also need to – we need to develop a way to have better entry level workers.

When the employer community comes to that point, that's the time for the conversation about the One-Stop and how did we get people hooked together. And it will come. It's just a matter of building the relationship until you get there.

But I think that we can – there's a lot of career pathway work that's going on. If we understand career pathways into industry, we can develop some of the early steps in career pathways in the One-Stop system. We can do the assessments, we can do WorkKeys; we can do basic skill training. There's a lot of interest right now in micro-credentialing, apprenticeships. These are all things that the public workforce can bring to the table in the sector conversation. And again, sometimes that will be primary; in other cases, that will be – that will be a piece of another agenda that the industry had. But it has to be led by the industry.

MR. COHEN: Yeah. That's a great point. I mean, not to just come out swinging on a lot of that stuff. But like you said, to learn to see, let it come out – (inaudible) – tease out as critical. We can probably do a whole other call on just that piece.

MR. SHEELY: If you're willing to just ask the question what do you need and then listen to it and follow where it takes you, that's going to give you a pretty good insight in terms of where you need to go.

MS. LAROSE: What about strategic goal setting between – making a determination of where the community wants to go rather than kind of following the lead of the employers? Do you know what I'm saying? Like how should economic development, workforce development and higher education kind of work strategically in determining we want to increase XYZ industry in this region and then going to employers and talking with them about how we can participate in helping to grow that industry?

MR. SHEELY: Well, I'm pretty simple-minded when it comes to all that because again, I always start with the employers. If you're talking about growing and economic development strategies, you're always going to do better with people who are already there. So I mean, I'd rather talk about this industry has a huge local competitive advantage. How are you going to grow? What's your next step?

Where you going to take the – where's your expansion? That sort of thing. I think that once you do that, then you can certainly have the conversation about things like supply chain for example. What are the needs in your supply chain that might make targets for business traction? How can we bring that main supplier that you have out of state, how can we bring them here? It's a different way I think of communicating. It's really more grounded in what we have now and how we can grow it.

There's a tendency that you can be myopic in that and not see all the trends that are coming. But I think that if you push hard enough in terms of the partners that you do have that you'll get to the point of them seeing things that need to be done in the future. And then there's other social goals that we may want to bring in in terms of wage fairness, other kinds of issues like that. Once we have a relationship, then we can talk to people about it.

But again, my simplistic answer is start with the employers, see where they're at, and see where they want to go. That's just me talking.

MR. COHEN: Yeah. Thanks Scott. Who else we got?

CAROL BROOKS: Hi. This is Carol Brooks with Baltimore County Department of Workforce Development in Maryland, and I was just curious as you talked about data. What I find is that we all know that we need data in order to prioritize the key industry sectors and things like that. But there are a lot of providers of data, there are a lot of consultants that work with data, there are a lot of industry groups that are collecting their own data.

So how do you come to I guess a consensus as to which data to use as a group. And also how do you establish a platform because data's always changing so as soon as you develop programs to meet the needs of the first data sets that were collected, there's a new set of needs. How do you create a good platform for that ongoing study of the trends and the needs of employers?

MR. SHEELY: That's a really good question. I mean, I think –

MR. COHEN: Scott. I think – I know, you didn't say it; I know you love this stuff. Scott loves the data piece. You could go on forever on that – (inaudible) – make sure because I know you love it so much you could go on for hours. But I want to make sure you get to some other questions. But go for it; it's a great question.

MR. SHEELY: I have a simple answer. The simple answer is to keep it simple. To your point, the proliferation of data and all the rest of it, I mean, typically what I've done is to try to look at three main variables. Is the industry growing? In other words, look at some projections in terms of growth. Is it competitive? And there to look at what's called location quotient, which is a measurement of the concentration in the industry locally compared to nationally. And then what's the average wage in the industry? Those are the main lenses that I've looked at. And if you set that up, all that is available publicly. You don't have to hire expensive data providers.

The key thing is, to your point, once you establish your baseline you have to keep looking at it because things do change over time. So if you can kind of settle on that – and that may take a few policy-oriented people that actually come up and settle on those criteria – but once you do that, then my advice would be stick with it and keep looking at it year after year after year and notice the changes. So good question.

MR. COHEN: And I'd encourage you, whoever just asked, I'd encourage you that we actually have another group that deals solely in data. So if you hit reply just to the email that you got for this meeting, and we'll send you the information. I believe there's a call maybe even this week. So you should definitely be a part of that group.

MS. BROOKS: OK. Great. Thank you.

TOM HOOPER: Hi, Scott. This is Tom Hooper from Jobs for the Future. Thank you so much for your information. I'd love to hear more about how you staff the sector partnerships, and you talked about this a little already. The types of individuals that you have staffing those partnerships, are there other responsibilities besides working on the partnerships, the kind of skills you're looking for, and any information would be really great.

MR. SHEELY: Yeah. And again, just to be brief, I think what I found is that when you have the money to do it, I've found people that are engineers to be wonderful project managers. And one time, we had three engineers that were running about six partnerships. They're not cheap, but we typically were hiring people who were consultant types so you didn't have to bring them on full time.

And they were able to get up and running very quickly, especially if you hire people who are actually subject matter experts in the industry that you're working in. That's a great way to get going. When you get tight and you don't have the money, then you have to figure out some other way to do it. Sometimes, you can get help from within the industry itself.

Sometimes when you can't get your overhead funded by public sources, the industry will step up and fund your overhead. There's a variety of strategies to do that, but it has, I mean, since I began doing this in 2001, it's gotten increasingly more difficult. But on the other hand, I just saw

one of our partnerships just actually incorporated as a private nonprofit just this week. So I've seen that kind of success as well.

You've got to have a multifaceted strategy. And you have to go with the punches. Sometimes you have money and sometimes you don't. You have to plan for the downtimes when you actually have it. That's a short answer.

MR. COHEN: Very nice.

MIKE BAKER: Hey, Todd, this is Mike Baker from Illinois. First of all, I agree with everything you've said so far. You're doing a great job. But to the question about data, I actually am presenting a webinar in this series this Thursday that speaks to making use of this data and some of the questions you need to ask. So since it was mentioned, I thought I'd just tee it up to let everyone know that it will be this Thursday.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Mike. You might want – that's a good way to get it out to the group for folks to participate if they want. We have time for a couple more. Scott, let me ask you this one. Take us, if you would, into one of your board meetings. How did you discuss such a partnership? Give us a sense of, like, did you just report a little on each one? How did that conversation come out? What were people responsible for sharing? What does a board actually talk about and not talk about? Can you just shed a little light on that?

MR. SHEELY: Yeah. The way we ran our board meetings, we really didn't – we tried not to be into a reporting-for-reporting-sake type of mode. If there was news to share, we brought it on the agenda. It was typically the project manager who would bring it. We had one board meeting a year that was devoted just to the industry partnerships where everybody presented.

But other than that, it was pretty much as there was news to report, it was reported. In many cases, the board members were involved in the work of the partnerships, so we found that even if it wasn't on the agenda, they were excited about it and they would bring it, so all good.

Again, we tried to keep it pretty much open. And our board meetings were really designed to ask people for their input and not so much to talk at them. So that kind of determined the character of reporting stuff. Does that make sense?

MR. COHEN: Anyone else? We've got a little time left.

MR. BAKER: Yeah. This is Mike. I'd add onto the question. I totally agree with Scott that you want to set it up so you can go back and look at this data again and again, so that leads to publicly available BLS data that anybody can go get at any time. But also the government's data takes you only so far.

You have to have some certain amount of local knowledge, so the BLS data can be the start of the conversation, but you need to make sure that people understand that we're not saying that we need to base everything that we do off of this. This is a conversation starter. And if you all have

information at the local level that was either missed by the BLS or miscategorized by the BLS, we need to know that too and factor it into the situation.

So it's very easy for three or four people to show up with their own data set and then the whole thing becomes a data war. And you can avoid that just by saying, OK, we have this data, you have that data. Let's see where we agree. And we're now on very solid ground and for some of the data that we don't agree on, let's affirm the discussion to figure out what the reality is. But people will shut down if you think that they have data that's not being used. So that's something that you just have to finesse and it depends on who's at the table how you go about it. But it's a very important process.

MR. SHEELY: Yeah. Just to add to that. I mean, we try to do it. I don't know that that happened this year now that I've left. But we tried to do an annual workforce summit which was sort of the time we had each year that we'd report the data. So that set us up on a schedule to bring all the different data groups together.

And I think by having that annual schedule which was roughly the same time every year, it was a real help in terms of getting us prepped to do the interpretation piece. And I know that's true what you just mentioned about the data, but I think you can handle that if you can build a kind of schedule of how that happens. And once again, you stick to it.

Mike Baker: Yes totally. That's been our approach and it works very well. That's a great point.

MR. COHEN: Thanks. Any more? All right, Scott, let me close on this then. Can you say a little bit about the local state relations? Because I know at one point, Pennsylvania had invested quite a bit of resources to sort of – (inaudible) – sector partnerships. Then that's gone sort of up and down.

But I mean, tell me a little bit about what you've done at the local level and how the state supported what you were doing or in the past, you didn't maybe need the state so much, you knew what you were doing, it was embedded in your organization, so it didn't necessarily matter that much, the state's role in funding? Just a little bit about that relationship if you would.

MR. SHEELY: Yeah. I mean, I think that all we really wanted was for these entities to become self-sustaining. Public funding is what it is. And I think the industry cares enough about what you're working on, the industry's really – they can fund it if they have a will to do it. If they have a will to do it depends on whether you're relevant and you're giving them what they want.

You know, we've had several partnerships that have pretty much transitioned into being supported by the industry. I mean, I think the day you start a project, you need to be thinking about sustainability. And it will come upon you just quicker than you think if you don't do that.

And I think the same thing's true about foundations and all the rest. I mean, they're wonderful in terms of seed money, but you have to really look for a sustainable model that will keep this thing going. The other part is that partnerships when they develop typically develop around training. And that's when we find the connections with public workforce systems.

But partnerships can do a lot of other things other than training. They can be advocacy groups. They can be oriented to trade types of issues. I've seen groups go in all different directions. And it's all relevant if that's what the industry wants and needs.

So again, we tend to – those of us in the workforces, we tend to think of partnerships as one way. But they're not. I mean, they're bigger than the workforce system. It's the economic development piece. It's the education piece. It's the industry that's really driving it forward. You have to keep that in mind and again, I just – public funding will be what it will be. And we actually have a way to kind of firm up our whisk and have our sustainability continue.

MR. COHEN: Great. Thanks, Scott. We really appreciate you doing this. Great model. Great conversation today. So thank you, Scott. And thank you all too on the phone for engaging in the discussions. We appreciate it. We'll be back – this group will be back next in January for the next call, so stay tuned for that.

As I mentioned, there are actually three other peer groups. If you're not part of the others, you might consider it. Another group are data related. Another group's industry engaging very specifically, we had some of those, but you get really more in-depth on engaging industry. Then the other's really more focused on state relationships. What's the state's role? State workforce agencies' role in – (inaudible) – sector partnerships. So again, if you're statewide, that might be of interest to you.

If you need to know more about that, you can go on Workforce3One and ETA's website. (Inaudible) – respond to the email that you got here and we'll send you that information. So thanks everyone, appreciate your time and happy holidays.

(END)