

ICF INTERNATIONAL, INC.

**Moderator: Ed Trumbull
November 4, 2015
12:00 pm CT**

Operator: Please stand by. Good day, everyone, and welcome to the ORR November 4th conference call.

Today's call is being recorded and at this time I'd like to turn the conference over to (Ed Trumbull). Please go ahead.

(Ed Trumbull): Excellent, thank you very much. My name's (Ed Trumbull). I'm a principal at the ICF International and the moderator of today's Webinar and the Webinar entitled connecting refugees to workforce development opportunities, promising partnerships and the new workforce innovation and opportunity act, otherwise known as WIOA.

We're very happy to have a great lineup of speakers today to discuss this important topic with you, and the - we, ICF, are actually technical assistance provider for the office of refugee resettlement, and we find this - today's Webinar very topical. As you know there's a refugee crisis in Syria and Europe, and the Syrian civil war has created about 4 million refugees, and the United States has agreed to take at least 10,000 of those refugees in fiscal year 2015.

And last year the United States resettled nearly 70,000 refugees, and the Obama administration has agreed to resettle 85,000 refugees in 2016 and 100,000 in FY2017. So as the number of refugees resettle in the United States it's critical to connect them to employment opportunities as

quickly and effectively as possible, and the workforce innovation and opportunity act actually provides more opportunities for local refugee providers to partner with workforce development boards to help refugees find stable employment.

If you move to the next slide, which is actually an agenda of today's Webinar, so we'll provide a very brief WIOA overview. We'll introduce our three speakers, our terrific speakers, and then we'll take questions and answers. So we have learning objectives, and that's essentially so that the individuals on the Webinar will have an understanding of the new workforce innovation and opportunity act and how it can enhance refugee services.

WIOA also has new performance measurements, and it's important to understand those, and then the third is the ability to apply WIOA and those best practices for the coordination with local service providers, and we've got an excellent example on today's call. Our speakers today, we're delighted to have three very knowledgeable speakers. Our first speaker will be (Jennifer Kemp), the unit chief at the employment and training administration for the United States Department of Labor.

Second is (Dr. Erica Boris), the deputy director of programs for the international rescue community in San Diego, California, and then the third, (Kathy Tran), the policy and advocacy administrative director for skills and workforce development for the national immigration forum. We're going to give you the opportunity to ask questions and so you can throughout the presentation, you can ask a question through the chat box in the lower left hand corner of your screen.

And we encourage you to ask questions and if your question is for a specific presenter or program, please be sure to specify that, and during the Webinar there'll be a series of polling questions that'll appear on your screen. Please answer by clicking on the radio button next to the

selected response. Doing so will not only help us guide the discussion, but also share information that may inform your area of interest.

I'm just going to provide a very quick overview of WIOA, and it was signed into law last summer by President Obama. The funding actually began this summer, July 1st. Federal rules are under development, the notification of public rulemaking, and they should be issued in January of 2016. State plans are due to the United States Department of Labor in March, and the full implementation and performance measures begins next summer, July 1st, 2016.

So there's substantial changes from the previous federal law to the current workforce law, and our speakers will go into some detail about that. The major themes of the new federal legislation, very job-driven, an incorporation of career pathways, targeting of specific sector partnerships, and cross-program data and measurement. The highlights, we won't go into these, but in detail, but you actually see that there's a strengthening of federal workforce legislation.

The local governing bodies are much stronger, the investments are actually to support both job-seekers and employers, and the alignment of goals and accountability information systems, so it can be far more transparent. I think we're going to - I'm going to introduce our first speaker and that is (Jennifer Kemp). And I'll do a quick overview, (Jennifer Kemp) works at the United States Department of Labor, employment and training administration as the unit chief for youth policy and performance.

Previously she led the youth policy team for the United States Department of Labor's office of disability employment policy. Past work experiences also include leading national, state, and local grant programs, state - staff on the United States House Appropriations committee, and special assistant to the chairman of the President's committee on employment of people with disabilities. She began her federal career through a workforce recruitment program internship at the United States Department of Defense.

In addition she's worked in non-profit university and corporate roles. She holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan, and a graduate degree from Vanderbilt. She lives in Washington, DC, with her husband, two sons, and family dog, and at this time it's my pleasure to introduce (Jennifer Kemp). (Jennifer)?

(Jennifer Kemp): Hi, this is (Jennifer Kemp). Thanks and I was sort of laughing because so often people don't read your bio, and it's like oh wow, that's a long time ago that I did some of that stuff. So I'm delighted to be here with you all, and if I could have the first polling question come up, so I think that will help inform our conversation, and the first question really is how much do you know about WIOA and workforce system?

And we're trying to get a flavor for the knowledge level on the phone, and I think that will really help us keep our comments targeted with what's of interest to you all on the phone, so take a moment and you can click on the answers, so if you know a ton, click on a ton, if you know some, not much. So right now it's some, it's kind of in the middle. Not much is winning. A few of you know a lot, so that's great. We're glad that those of you who know - oh wait, somebody just changed their vote. Now they don't know a lot.

Well, I completely understand that feeling of this is great, so this gives us a flavor of the knowledge level on the phone, and - but 3% feel like they know a lot about it, but a little bit less than half knows some, and the majority are this is new territory, which is great. It's great to have you here today to tell you a little bit about what we're doing at the Department of Labor with our partners.

So if the controller person can get to the slides and advance to the next two slides, I'll give a little bit more meat to what I was talking about. So to give you a little bit of knowledge about how the workforce system works, at the very high level the US Department of Labor oversees the public

workforce system, and we give out grants by formula in most cases to state agencies, state workforce investment boards, which are now called development boards under WIOA.

And then the states, again mostly by formula and I'd like to tell you why I'm saying mostly in enrollment, give out the money to the local level and then the local level distributes it to service providers. Most of the formula funds get distributed to non-profits, local community groups in your own neighborhoods. The reason I would say mostly is we also offer some competitive grants. They're focused on particular populations or particular interest areas, and those are not by formula.

The majority of our money is by formula. And so as you can sort of here see that sort of convoluted state, local, even more local, and the Department of Labor sets a lot of regulations, we set a lot of ideals about what we want, but what really happens at the local level is up to you all, so I think it's really great that you're investing in these conversations so that you can help shape what happens at the local level to meet the needs of the folks that you're working with.

So let me go to the next slide, and give you a little bit more information. As (Ed) said, WIOA is relatively new. Two things I want to sort of reiterate is that state plans are due in March of 2016, so they haven't been turned in yet, which you'll hear a lot of conversation as we talk today about how you can get connected to those and then I'd also mention the importance of the performance measures.

And the performance measures don't kick in until the summer of 2016, so the workforce laws is kind of in this kind of quasi-state where they're serving folks and they don't know how exactly their performance will be determined, so that's just so you have that background. I think that makes some people uneasy, the role, and so there is some tension and some uneasiness probably around that.

I have a slide which we did not go into detail about and I was like, (Ed), you have great things on there, and maybe we can go back to that slide. It's the one that talked about the big changes in WIOA. It included information about the use of labor market information. This is a big change within WIOA, and really the new legislation focuses on thinking about the labor market information and economic development in a way that we didn't previously do under the workforce investment act.

A huge opportunity that we're really excited about here is the emphasis on career pathway strategies and industry sectors, and again I think for the refugee population this is crucial to the success of the folks we're working with. There's definitely higher expectations for people with disabilities. Lots of changes within the youth ((inaudible)), which is actually my area of expertise, so I'll spend a couple minutes sharing those with you and the opportunities there.

For one, under the new legislation youth or older, they can be up to 24, so there's a big focus on out of school youth who are between the ages of 16 and 24 and not connected to education or employment at the time, so I think that is an important thing for you all to know about. 75% of the youth funding has to go toward that targeted population, and there is some in some areas some concern about how they're going to find youth who meet that definition.

So if your program is focused more on connecting with young folks coming to the country, this is a real opportunity for you to partner with your workforce system and let them know that you have youth who meet their eligibility requirements who would be good success for them. Also increases the new legislation has a much I think more holistic approach to serving folks. One of the things that we felt really proud about the youth program is that it had really strong wraparound services that it did a really good job looking at where the individual was.

If you're a young person who comes into the program, we developed with the young person, young adult individualized plan. The youth get to participate in the planning process and really

map out what they need to succeed, and so what this means for a young person is that there's 14 very broad program elements that each individual local program has to have available to youth, they may include everything from you know, getting appropriate training education, offered in a contextualized setting, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, supportive services which could include child care or transportation or even the fees that you need to take certain certification licenses for certain professions.

It's a very broad category, and under WIOA the adult service component is matching that a little bit more, and there's not a required order of sequence which a person has to go in order to receive services, so again I think that's an exciting change under WIOA. And so I'm going to go if the slide person can go back, I - the next slide really focuses on the opportunities of partnership and rules.

At the federal level one thing that's been fascinating about WIOA in the last year is that we are really getting to know our colleagues in other departments, and I would say spend as much time with my partners at the department of education and the department of human health and human services, the HHS, as I do with some of my family members. I mean, we are spending so much time figuring out how to really make this new legislation work in a way that's meaningful.

So on this slide you'll also see other partners listed, including the department of commerce, justice, we're really looking at ways that partnerships can be meaningful, moving forward. So an example also of sort of forced collaboration and release the performance measures, because under WIOA we have to have the same performance measures across all core programs, and so early on I'd sort of listed how there's four different titles, two of which are really at the Department of Labor's head and two of which are education is really the leader on.

So we have spent a lot of time figuring out what those performance measures need to look like and what they should be to adequately check progress of participants as well as to keep the

agencies in line in terms of our shared goals and visions for the program, so that's really a great opportunity. On the next slide I talk a little bit more about the importance of these partnerships.

And so these partnerships are strictly - are not just at the DC level. We've been having a lot of meetings across the country with our partners and various regional offices. The Department of Labor has regional presence in Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, San Francisco, and Philadelphia, so we've been earlier in this process we had some hall meetings in all of those locations.

And we had in most cases partners with us, which I think makes for the more robust planning process which is what we're really entering into right now. On the next slide I - it talks a little bit about the planning process, and so we under WIOA, we have unified planning which ensures that the core programs are coordinated and complementary so that job seekers can get the skill they need to meet the employers' needs.

So in the next slide we talk about unified planning, a little bit more. It's still at the state level and the local level as well. Unified plans which again are to be delivered in March require the state secretaries of education and labor and others to work together and they're approved by the federal secretaries of education and labor, and they describe the state overall strategy for workforce development.

And the strategy is long and big and again a lot of this strategy relates to at least from our perspective the career pathways piece, which we'll dive into a little bit more, and then next slide, we also have the opportunity to do combined state plans, so unified plans are required for the core elements, but some states have opted to include other programs and here's a list of the other programs that could be included in the unified plans and the combined plans.

So if you have no idea if your state is considering unified plan or combined plan, you might want to look at this list and think about who you can connect with on this list to sort of get your presence known in the planning process. On the next slide, I tell you how to get connected, isn't that nice? You're getting all this information, and now you're going to figure out how can I find these people?

We have what we call service locator, which is as you can see the link is there, and this is a great way to find out who is responsible and in charge in your local area by typing in your ZIP code, you can find out who the workforce development board leaders are. If you're interested in this, you can also find out who is concerned about youth in your area, so this is I would say the one best takeaway from my presentation is to figure out the folks that you need to connect to at the local level or the state level.

The next slide talks a little bit about pathways and you know, I didn't include a polling question on career pathways and I kind of wish that I had included a polling question on career pathways, because we would have a sense of how you're all connecting to that right now in your own area, but we - career pathways operate at both the systems level, the program level, and the participant levels.

So within the planning process we're talking about at the systems level, but for you all I think a lot of times the rubber meets the road at the program or the ((inaudible)) level, and one of my colleagues is going to go a little bit more into detail about what some of those career pathways may look like for the refugee population, so I won't spend a lot of time doing that right now.

This career pathways approach is something that a number of organizations have worked on at the federal and the non-profit and state and local levels together. I mean, it really considers where people are when they start their search, and then where they might need to stop and then how they might need to get back onto it, so a lot of times when I talk to folks in person they tell them to

look at their shoes and to think about where those shoes have been, to think about the reasons they bought those shoes, the decisions that went into the purchase, and then to think about all the places that particular pair of shoes has taken you.

And oftentimes particularly with the refugee population, they probably couldn't even imagine the places that their shoes have taken them and the changes that their shoes have taken as they maybe veered off one job, one career and sort of had to think about how to get back onto the pathway that they would like to be on. So I think it's really important as we work and I'm also thinking of good ways for the refugee population to connect with the workforce system.

And to me the career pathways is a very key part of that conversation, because I think one big difference between who the workforce system typically serves and the refugee population is sometimes perhaps some of the challenges that come along with it is typically the workforce system serves lower skilled workers, but oftentimes the refugees who come to our country are not necessarily low skilled, although because of their English barriers in some cases they may be perceived that way.

So I think part of the dialogue that needs to happen is sort of reframing that viewpoint and at the same time helping the local areas get more experience in serving high skilled workers who may have other barriers including cultural and English language barriers, succeed, and I think career pathways is the perfect entrée into having those conversations.

So on the next slide we want to - we have a new career pathways toolkit that we just recently issued in the last month, and it's a guide for system development, and it's really kind of fun to have this come out, because we've been working on career pathways so it's education and health and human services for a number of years, and WIOA really codifies it and gives us opportunity to push it forward.

In this new toolkit we have several examples that really focus on an immigration population, and we also have this tool which I lifted from there which really helps you think about the resource mapping, the community mapping that you can do at your local level or the state level. To think about what services are currently provided and who provides them and where they're located, and then who reminds us sort of where the gaps in services that when you - I'm encouraging you all to approach your workforce partners and to get engaged with them.

And I think one of the - another key to doing that is to think about what you have to offer, that the current workforce system needs, and I think that in this age of partnerships when there's still you know, some finding going to workforce systems, but honestly not enough to meet all the needs, we're very much concerned about how do we engage with others who can complement our services so that the folks who are being served by our systems have more robust services and have better outcomes.

So I know there's a lot of talent and services that you provide to these refugees you work with who our system can complement those in working together with refugees, I'm sure we'll have better outcomes. So this community resource service mapping tool I think is vital to think about when you're approaching others.

I do - although I love policy and definitely live in a policy world, I'm also practical. Just talk to my kids, they'll tell you I'm very practical. So my next slide focuses on a resource that we have, and this resource is actually available in Spanish as well as English, and it's similar to what you might have done yourself a year or two ago with what we actually wanted to do where you can answer questions that sort of align with your personality type and your work preferences.

But it also is a very good tool in terms of indicating ((inaudible)) to the labor market information indicating what's available in your community, what certificates or credentials are required or needed to work in that area, as well as practical information in regards to how much a person can

make in an area. So this is a good tool that you know, it's something that even we all know very ambitious, eager to get settled and move forward, this is a tool that you can share with folks and they can really work on it on their own as well I think.

And then so finally almost, I have a list of lots of resources that we and the department of education have put out on the workforce innovation and opportunity act. There's lots of ((inaudible)) you can learn more about unified plans, state plans, local plans, what's just all these acronyms even mean, so that is a great resource. And then finally I conclude with my contact information, so if after this conversation you're like, wait, I don't understand this, you know, feel free to reach back out and I'll be happy to help you. So with that I'm going to turn it back to you guys.

(Ed Trumbull): (Jennifer), that was wonderful, and I love your enthusiasm. This is - that was a great presentation, thank you very much. Our second presenter today, also very enthusiastic, is (Dr. Erica Boris). (Erica) serves as the deputy director programs at the international rescue committee in San Diego, California. In this role she oversees all direct service programming at IRC San Diego.

This includes refugee resettlement, economic development programming, immigration services, youth programs, and food security and community health. As the deputy director she works to ensure that IRC San Diego is developing and implementing effective integrated evidence-based programs that help refugee and other low income families become self-sufficient thriving members of their community.

IRC San Diego is home to nearly 100 staff, delivering high quality culturally and linguistically accessible services to nearly 8500 clients a year. Prior to coming to IRC, (Erica) held positions with community organizations, higher education and collaborative public private partnerships, including working domestically and abroad in the Middle East and North Africa regions.

She holds a PhD in international studies from the University of Denver and she is author of several articles and books - several articles and the book, Complex Political Victims. At this point it's my pleasure to turn the presentation over to (Dr. Erica Boris). (Dr. Boris)?

(Dr. Erica Boris): Thank you, (Ed), and very nice to join all of you here today. I am here to kind of provide the on the ground perspective on partnerships between serving refugees and our workforce system, and so I'm going to spend a little bit of time just kind of giving you an overview of how the IRC in San Diego has approached that particular opportunity, because we really do see it as an opportunity.

As all of you who work with refugees know, helping refugees get their first job and get onto a career pathway that's going to help them achieve self-sufficiency is perhaps one of the fundamental challenges and goals of refugee resettlement. It's key to self-sufficiency, it's key to community integration, and so we really do see partnering with our workforce system as an opportunity to help those refugee families achieve that goal.

So just a little bit of information about the IRC in San Diego, as (Ed) mentioned we serve about 8500 clients a year. We resettle about 1000 clients a year. San Diego, for those of you from the refugee world, San Diego is a relatively large resettlement site, but what you see there is that we are serving a lot of refugees that are not brand new to the country, but in fact have been here for a number of years, and I'll talk a little bit more about that later.

We do have a very diverse staff with nearly 100 staff and more than two dozen languages on staff, and I think to (Jennifer)'s point when you think about ways in which there are gaps within the workforce system, I think one of those gaps is the cultural and linguistic accessibility of mainstream workforce services, and so that is really an opportunity for partnership and we'll talk a little bit more about that later as well.

Again in looking at who we are at the IRC, we are a resettlement agency, but in many ways we function as a community-based organization here in San Diego, and so the population that we're serving is extraordinarily diverse, and we are serving refugees and other low income families kind of side by side. So while 77% of the clients we served last year originally came to the US as a refugee or as an asylee, many of them have been here three, four, five, ten years, and we also are serving about a quarter of our clients are other low income American families who have barriers to self-sufficiency.

I do want to just highlight again because I know we have many refugee service providers on the call that our client population that we are serving here is very diverse, very low income, and we have a lot of that diversity in sort of basic skill set that again (Jennifer) mentioned in her presentation. One of the unique things about the refugee population is that we have everything from you know, adults who have had no formal education and have no literacy skills and maybe no formal work experience, perhaps an agrarian background, all the way through to you know, college educated engineers, doctors, and dentists.

And so the IRC San Diego has thought about employment programming and workforce programming. We really had to take into account that we have an enormous diversity, not just in English level, but also in skill sets and work experience and so I put some information up there about that. All right, so I wanted to just give everyone the context of kind of some of the programs that we have that represent partnership with our public workforce system.

So I highlighted three of them on this slide. The first is we have a connect to work program. This is a WIOA youth program, as (Jennifer) mentioned, the WIOA youth program has a broad definition of youth, and so we serve 16 to 24 year olds, main eligibility criteria are that they are low income and at risk, and there's kind of a long list of barriers that help qualify for - them for that program.

We also have what was known as the health professions opportunity grant. This is actually funded through HHS but with a partnership with our local workforce investment board, and that program was focused on helping people enter careers in allied health. We also have a third program which is in partnership with our state workforce board and is focusing on really helping refugees to access mainstream employment, particularly subsidized employment programs as well as workforce training funds.

And so I think what you see here is kind of the diversity of ways in which you can partner with your workforce system, and the other thing I want to point out about these programs is that in all of these programs, refugees are being served side by side with non-refugee populations, and we'll talk a little bit more about that, but for those of you who are refugee service providers and are very accustomed to having your matching grant program or your (Wilson Fish) program, which are employment programs that are only serving refugees.

In partnering with the workforce system we generally are serving other community members as well, and so that's kind of a key point of distinction. I threw in a few pictures because I figure in an hour and a half long Webinar, always great to see some pictures. This is one of our refugee clients who is participating in our connect to work program, and we have five career pathways in that program.

One of them focuses on the health care industry, and it's a picture of some of the work they're doing around career exploration in careers in healthcare. All right, so kind of one of the questions that I think is important for all of us to ask ourselves, especially refugee service providers, is why the need for this partnership. I think these are pretty obvious, but they're probably worth stating.

So first and foremost, most refugees are unemployed and underemployed. We work very hard to get them that first job, as a part of some of the refugee employment programs, but fundamentally

the refugee population typically does need support to transition into a living wage job. Second, the one of the challenges of refugee specific employment programming, programs such as matching grant, is that they really only focus on the first few months post-arrival.

And as we know for many of our refugees that might help them get a first job, but it probably is not going to help them really move into a career and a living wage job. Partnering with the workforce system allows you to engage in that longer term programming. There are additional resources that exist within the workforce system, in particular funding for on the job training programs as well as funding for additional training and credentialing.

And those can be very valuable to the refugee population. Finally as I mentioned, typically when we are talking about a mainstream workforce program, there will be other community members, other low income community members typically who are participating in those programs side by side. The picture of the young woman that we just saw in that program, in our connect to work program, she is sitting side by side with you know, 19, 20 year olds who have lived in America their entire life.

She's sitting side by side with recent immigrants from Mexico, and that kind of community integration is really critical I think to refugee families' success in the long term. Here's another picture. This is - we've heard some talk of career pathway programming and sector specific programming and we have very much adopted that approach here in San Diego. One of our tracks is a culinary arts vocational training program.

And this is a picture, these are all Iraqi refugees, we have a large Iraqi refugee population here, who are participating in a culinary arts vocational training program. All right, so the how, and I'll be very brief here, but as (Ed) has mentioned, we do have the opportunity to answer questions later. I think one of the most important things that if you're just new to this and you're just

beginning to think about partnering with the workforce system, it's very critical to understand how that system works at your local level.

And (Jennifer) provided you with some resources, but I think it is indeed very true that the ins and outs of the workforce system vary in different cities, in different states, and it's important to begin to get to know that. It's also important to look at the clients that you're serving and figure out what is it that they need. Are you - you know, if you're a refugee service provider and you're serving a population that is 80% preliterate with very few formal work skills, you're probably not going to launch a biotechnology career pathway program.

And so that basic needs assessment of who you're serving is very important. Obviously identifying your strengths, most refugee services, agencies are already doing employment programming so there are probably already things that you are good at. There are probably already employers that you're working with. There are probably already classes that you know how to teach and really kind of doing an inventory of that.

Finally I would definitely encourage starting small. We here at IRC San Diego have been doing this for a while and we've been able to grow into larger programs, but those initial partnerships, I think it's good to pilot and test and see what works and what doesn't work. One final picture here, we have another career pathway program that focuses on the transportation and trucking industry, and in particular what you see here is a group of refugees who went through a contextualized bridge program and then were able to earn their class D commercial driver's license.

And then we have a partnership with one of our local - it's kind of a public private partnership to help them move into careers driving our local city buses, so that's what that's a picture of. All right, outcomes, I just put a few up here to kind of I guess whet everyone's appetite around the

idea of what happens when you have a refugee serving agency partnering with the workforce system.

So a couple things that I want to highlight, as I've mentioned a few times already, one of the kind of important outcomes I think that is critical is that in these programs we are serving refugees alongside non-refugees, and it depends a little bit on the program, but for us typically 30 to 40, sometimes a little bit more, percent of clients in these programs have been refugees.

That's really terrific when you think about the mainstream workforce system. If you look nationally, historically less than 2% of the people accessing mainstream workforce services have been limited English proficient, so what we're doing is we're helping a lot of clients engage in these mainstream workforce services in a way that they had not been prior to these partnerships, specifically focusing on youth.

We have a pretty large youth program. We have high school graduation rates that exceed 80% and more than 75% have been placed in college or employment, so we're really helping these refugee youth get onto a successful path for their future. Adults, I wanted to just highlight in particular our health care workforce program. You'll see that we're helping people get into jobs that pay over \$13 an hour, which with a minimum wage of \$9 an hour here in San Diego, that's meaningful for us.

Importantly more than 80% of those people were placed in jobs in the field that they trained for, and we've seen very significant increases in their wage based income and net worth, so again kind of a picture of a refugee client moving towards self-sufficiency, moving beyond that minimum wage job and moving towards the lasting family self-sufficiency. Okay, all right, so that is it for me. I will turn it back to (Ed) and let him continue from here. Thank you very much.

(Ed Trumbull): (Erica) that was a wonderful presentation. Thank you. That was terrific. Our third presenter today is (Kathy Tran). (Kathy) is the policy and advocacy assistant director for skilled and workforce development at the national immigration forum. The forum builds broad coalitions, including the businesses that advocate for policies and programs that provide new Americans with the opportunities, skills, and status so that they're able to thrive.

(Miss Tran) brings extensive knowledge of workforce policies and programs to this role, having served in several leadership positions at the United States Department of Labor employment and training administration for the past 12 years. Most recently she was the deputy administrator for the office of workforce investment, which is responsible for providing national leadership and oversight to the public workforce system.

There she helped lead implementation of the workforce innovation and opportunity act including coordinating a national technical assistance strategy to help state and local leaders prepare for and implement WIOA. (Miss Tran) has also served as the acting administrator of this office as well as the director of the division for policies, legislation, and regulations. (Miss Tran) received her Master's in social work at the University of Michigan and her bachelors of arts at Duke University.

She enjoys rooting for the Washington Nationals who just received a new manager and the Duke Blue Devils with her husband and three children. (Kathy), we're delighted to have you as a presenter today.

(Kathy Tran): Thank you so much, (Ed), and I am just so delighted to be here. Many moons ago I spent a summer with the international ((inaudible)) committee in Boston at a time when we were resettling Kosovar Albanians, and just have very fond memories of the relationships and that experience during that summer working with those refugees, primarily adults.

So I'm really excited. I think if we can move to the next slide, please, oh thank you, and the next one. That's our idle slide. So the national immigration forum, if you are not already aware of us, we are a national advocacy organization that works to promote the value of - oops, I'm sorry, should be immigrants, that's a typo, including refugees and immigration to the nation.

We build coalitions and develop policy recommendations and programs to ensure that all new Americans have the opportunities, skills, and status that they need to achieve their full potential. I think that the conversation today is really timely and interesting, and I think my role and as the last speaker is to help tie it - tie some of these thoughts that (Jennifer) and (Erica) and (Ed) have shared with us.

Clearly you know, we've been talking about implementation of the workforce innovation and opportunity act and while that - the effective date was this past July, I think that there's still a lot of work and opportunity to provide and to be a part of the implementation and to provide good feedback and insights and partnership ideas. I think we're also all aware of the national discourse on immigration and immigrants and also on refugees as we look at some of the international events in those conversations that are happening between the administration and Congress around resettling new or additional refugees.

And I think that there's showing the power and the contributions that immigrants and refugees add to our country, both our culture, our communities, and our economy, is really important. And I think also there's been a recent spotlight on immigration - I'm sorry, on immigrant integration and the White House this past spring published the recommendations from the President's task force on new Americans.

And it included discussions around refugees and strategies that the federal government can take to help better integrate immigrants and refugees, as well as in September in observance of the anniversary of the immigration and naturalization act of 1965, the national academy of sciences

issued a really compelling report on the status of immigrant integration that included some discussions also on refugees.

And I think that there's just been a lot of wholesome conversations around ways that we can make sure that the new Americans who are coming to our country have what they need to be successful. I'm just going to - next slide, please - just give an overview of 2013 data that I found online. Sometimes it's good to take a step back just to say like - when we talk about refugees, who are we talking about?

I know you know exactly who you're serving in your local communities, but across the country, and it's good for us here at the national level as well, so there are 69,909 refugees admitted to the US in 2013, 58 - over 58% were ages 18 to 54, which is working age. And the top 6 states of residence were Texas, California, Michigan, New York, Florida, and Arizona.

I think what's really interesting is that the top 6 states in 2011, there were some changes just in 2011 to 2013. In 2011 Pennsylvania and Georgia were included in the top 6, and so you know, they've fallen out. And those percentages were tiny differences, but I found that to be really interesting. But I think across the board you are working to make sure that your local areas and your states are aware of the needs of the refugee populations.

But also if you are gaining more refugees, I think building - there's probably a bigger sense of urgency in terms of building that awareness and those relationships. Next slide please. So I tried to do something fancy and make a word cloud, and so I think a lot of this has been captured by (Jennifer) and (Erica) in terms of why workforce development, you know, and when I look back at my time in Boston at the IRC and I look at - I think about the committed staff there and the work that they were really trying to do day in and day out around housing, around transportation, around health care, around making sure that - you know, addressing mental well-being and family issues and all sorts of things, why workforce?

Why spend your time and your limited resources, both staffing and like capacity to focus on that? And I think there's been a clear discussion today around the importance of skills and education and training and then how integral it is to kind of to successful integration and successful resettlement, right? And so (Jennifer) talked a little bit about the youth services that are available to the - through the workforce system.

And I really want to emphasize, and it's really a multi-generational opportunity, and I think of that both from the youth all the way through the adults and older workers and such, so it's not just a you know, one age population type of focus, but there's services for kind of the range of ages. There's also a focus on careers. I think that you and the refugee resettlement programs do excellent jobs in making sure that refugees are able to get immediately into employment.

But also you know, if those are sometimes the - sometimes they are survival jobs because they're the jobs that are available, and sometimes they're able to match a job with kind of the refugee individual's skills and their expertise. But I think also when we're looking long term and the effects of making sure that we're on career pathways and have the training and the skills we need to be - to get into the workforce in the US, that the workforce system really offers some of those supports.

There's also some opportunities for social and professional networking development, and one of the - a recent report by Imprint of 4000 skilled immigrants found that those who are able to find jobs more related to their field was because they had very strong, healthy social networks. That includes you know, people to help them refer them to jobs, things that you're able to do as well, but just kind of building on that.

And I think that that's one of the complementary pieces between your work and the workforce system is that you know, working with job clubs and with other community based organizations

that helped bring those job seekers together, that's another opportunity. There are also some other really strong connections to employers and the LMI piece, the labor market information piece that (Jen) talked about in terms of just trying to make sure there's a good understanding of what the growing jobs and occupations are in your community and in your region and making sure that people are aware of that and finding those jobs and being prepared for them.

Before my next couple of slides talks a little bit about the opportunities, but I have some polls that we would really be interested in your input. You know, earlier a lot of folks said you knew some or not much about WIOA, and hopefully you have been able to learn a lot more information but I was interested in knowing if you partner at all with the workforce system, so if we could post the poll, the question is my organization currently partners with the public workforce system.

And when you think about that, you know, you're thinking about the one-stop career centers but you're also thinking about adult education programs, youth programs, older worker programs, all sorts of things, and if you can write in the chat window exactly how you partner, it would be really interesting for us to know. I don't know if I can see the chat window, but oh, it looks like there's a lot of frequent partnerships, which is really exciting to know.

And so let's see, who - we're going to try to see on our computer if we can find the chat. Oh, here we are. I don't really know how the chat works. Anyway, sorry, (Jen) and I are sitting together. We're not technologically advanced, but if you could it would be great for us to know on the back end and if you get, that's just really good information. So about half of you frequently and I would say 75%, some frequently - sometimes to frequently partner with the workforce system. That's fantastic.

The next question I'd like to ask polling wise is I have already met with my local workforce board about WIOA and to talk to them about how it can improve services to refugees. Okay, and so the

results are coming in. I think that the majority of folks have not. A couple of you have and I think that's fantastic. Yay for the one person who has a meeting scheduled, too, that's awesome.

So I think here the pieces, there's both - and I'm going to get into this in my next couple of slides. I think there's two opportunities, clearly the ones (Erica) spoke a lot about, which were the services and partnerships where you can make sure that either through different referrals or complementing services that your clients are able to access the services that are available through the workforce system.

But I think if there are concerns about the services that are being provided, this is also an opportunity for you to provide input and to be able to say hey, you know, we have a population of folks that you need to either be paying attention to because we're in your local area or you're doing some great work in this area and we'd really like to think about some of these other aspects.

So let's move onto the slides. That's great, thank you so much. My next slide, all right, so opportunities in WIOA, ways to influence division policies and services, and so these are some ideas, and I think you'll hear or see, one of the things we talked about earlier before the Webinar started was how we individually developed our power points based on our perspectives, and we had very similar conclusions.

So we're - it's good to be on the same main points with others, but the first things around division for customer centered workforce system, you know, when (Jen) mentioned and what (Ed) did was that WIOA really has a focus on being customer centered, and what that means is looking at who the customers are, both the job seekers and the employers, and developing a system both physically and service wise, like how you provide the services and partnership wise that focuses on the customer.

And when (Jennifer) had that flow chart of how the money flows, you know hopefully from that, you're aware then that it's not the federal government provides the framework for the implementation of WIOA, but it's going to happen at the local, or local local level as (Jennifer) described it, so the customer really is who is in the local area.

And if you are working with refugees and you're referring them to the one-stops or you want to, then they're potential customers and the conversation around making sure that the needs of the refugee participants or clients who are coming to the one-stop is - that the workforce system's paying attention to it. So now that there's that vision. The departments of labor and education are really pushing also for the vision that's in WIOA around the customer centered workforce system.

So it's not a foreign concept I think out there for the state, for the system. The second piece is around governance levels at the state. I think this is where when (Erica) said earlier about ways you can get involved with the workforce system and she said start small, one of her points was start small, I thought that was really helpful to me, because sometimes I'm like, oh, go and change everything.

But so if you have the capacity and if you're already involved, the state is kind of where - you know is the higher level step, and maybe I should have put that second, but we'll start there because it's on my power point. But the state planning process that (Jen) talked a lot about, and really the state plans is that opportunity for the state to articulate its vision for an integrated workforce system and while the refugee resettlement programs under ORR are not included in the unified or combined plans.

So it's not like the state has to include you know, you're planning, the planning around refugee services, nor can they. They don't have that option, while that's true, you can still be a part of an informed state planning process, right? We just talked about the customer centered-ness of the act and as states are thinking through the design of their workforce system and you have the

really strong - if you have, you know, you want them to be paying attention to the needs of refugees that is the place to really start thinking through that.

And so you can help inform that conversation. The other piece is that states really need to focus on continuous improvement, and I think that they will be - I can't remember the word, there's a one-stop certification process, so helping to inform how you can always continuously improve the services to the refugee population is really another opportunity for you.

And at the local level, local areas have to engage in local and regional planning, so once the state plans are accepted by July 1, you know, even if they're submitted, then they're accepted by July 1, the locals will begin a planning process as well and the states also have to identify regions and they will have to put together a plan about how multiple local areas can work together.

That's another opportunity for you to help inform the process, and I think if you were going to start small, I might start there because it's much more immediate to your community, but it's just the same idea is what is the vision for the workforce system locally, and these - you know, and this is - and how are we going to provide the services to the job seekers within our region to meet the needs of employers within our local area or region?

The other opportunity I think is around local workforce boards, and the - in a very weedy piece of it is that the memberships for the state and local boards have changed. They've been streamlined, so the one opportunity to help provide input is through standing committees, so a local board can establish a standing committee to focus on like any number of areas, whatever the local board wants. It could be like administration.

It could be we're focused on just connect to youth, it could be, you know, whatever it is. And so I think having that conversation with the local board and talking to them as well as your locally elected official who appoints the board members about what standing committees and what issue

areas you think are important and that if you want to participate is another way to make sure that you are able to inform the workforce policies in your community.

Okay, can we - okay, next slide, thank you. Okay, so career pathways and sector strategies, I think that (Jen) and (Erica) talked a lot about them and hopefully you are already engaged in some career pathways in your local area. The one thing I do want to say is I would really encourage you to push kind of around the career pathways piece and sector strategies piece as what are the appropriate models for immigrants and refugees?

I think sometimes you know, it's around - there might be depending on where refugees are coming from and their skill levels, there might be literacy issues in their native language, or they might be coming at it at a point where you know, they just have some English literacy issues, but they have lots of really great skills. Or you might have somebody who knows a lot of English and is a skilled professional and needs a toehold into the American workforce.

So what is an appropriate model, and can we test them? At the same time I think it would be really interesting to see how career pathways and sector strategies can open up career opportunities for refugees in kind of non-traditional industries and occupations and things that have where you haven't been able to place or train individuals as appropriate, so how can we be innovative with that?

You know, when we refer to title 1 under WIOA it's the formula programs that (Jen) talked about, adult dislocated worker and youth. In title 2 is adult education. Adult education previously was really focused on kind of adult education and you should know that ESL is the fastest growing component of adult Ed. Under WIOA the titles have to be - there's integration between the programs, and because they share the same performance there's an expectation that the ESL programs will also have kind of the workforce outcomes still.

But with the integration of title 1 and title 2 I think that if you have clients who are in adult education or ESL classes through title 2, you'll see a lot more and better hopefully services through the one-stop and help in terms of employment. And there's also a new priority of service to individuals who have barriers to employment. One of the barriers is English literacy.

And so that might just be you know, that's another opportunity to make sure that your clients are getting services. And then the last is that there are - I think that there's really a focus, I don't know if I would say strong but there is a focus in terms of serving limited English proficient individuals in WIOA. State passed a report in a number of different categories than the information around participants who are English language learners.

And so I think that that's really interesting in terms of the accountability piece and just to - just for you to know that that's there. Okay, and before I go to the next slide, I'd like to ask my last polling question, is I am or plan to get engaged in my state and local area's planning process.

((Inaudible)) (Jen) and I did a good job on that one. Yay for the definites.

So I just want to really emphasize that the state and local areas are really supposed to make their planning process transparent, and if you don't know kind of what's going on in your state let's make sure that you get connected to your state workforce agency who should be able to let you know that, and that service locator Web site (Jen) shared would be a really good tool.

You know, even though the Department of Labor has not issued the guidance around state plans, I've heard that states are starting to plan because the plans are due in March and so they want to make sure they have enough time, so don't wait for the guidance to come out. Pick up that phone, check the Internet, reach out now and see what's going on and how you can help inform that process. That's really fantastic.

All right, okay. My last two slides, actions you can take. One more, please. Thank you. So you know, how can you inform division policies and services at the state and local level? If you haven't already, connect with your workforce system leadership, the chair of your local workforce board or your state workforce agency, connect with your local education, adult education providers. They have lots of great ESL resources that can complement the services that you offer. Next slide.

You could participate, review, and comment on the unified or combined plans at the state level and the local and regional plans. And I'm so - I was just really heartened to hear how many of you were interested in getting involved in the planning process. If you were starting small as (Erica) had said you know, think about your capacity, if you're not able to do that at least when those plans go up make sure you read them and submit your comments.

Like I said, the process is supposed to be transparent. And then also you know, thinking through innovative partnerships and client referral, (Erica) shared some really awesome examples and think about what makes the most sense for you and your organization in your capacity. And at the federal level, the next one, if you were really gung ho and all into it - oh, my formatting got all funky - there are opportunities to provide input into the federal policies.

There's going to be, you know, the final comment period for the planning requirements are coming out. The performance and the performance reports are as well, so those are TBD, but hopefully soon and if you're interested, and then I thought this was really interesting. I actually have not been able to access the survey yet, but the HHS annual survey of refugees, the form ORR-9, is up for renewal.

And what that means is that HHS has to - has published a draft and you can review it, and it's - I'm sure you know much more than I do, but it's an annual form that one of the questions asks around you know, around kind of the employment services and ways that we can make sure that

refugees are getting connected to the right workforce and employment services and what their thoughts are, and what their - where they are and their employment, how's it changed, that type of thing.

So you might be interested in that. So last one, that's it for me, and this is my contact information and that's if you have any questions or if there's any additional thoughts that you would like to share with me, please reach out. Thank you, (Ed).

(Ed Trumbull): Excellent, (Kathy), that was wonderful, and I want to thank all of our presenters who provided a wealth of information that we can all use as we work with refugee families. We're now going to - we've already opened the session up to questions and we've got questions coming in, so - but just to remind people you can submit your questions using the chat box feature and if you have a question for a specific presenter please state so in your submission.

So here's our first question. I have a question about access to workforce funding. I'm going to open this up to all the speakers. I have a question about access to workforce funding prior to receiving a green card. I don't believe Arizona will provide funding to refugees that do not have it yet. Any insights or clarifications from our presenters?

(Dr. Erica Boris): (Erica) here, I'd be happy to provide some basic information on that. In general with our workforce programs individuals do have to show proof of work authorization, so not necessarily the green card, and so all of those documents - that document work authorization from their very first day in the US, those will generally work for eligibility, for workforce funded programs.

I will say that if your workforce system hasn't had a lot of experience working with refugees, that might be something that you need to just kind of educate them about in terms of you know, I94s and the role of EADs and those kinds of things, but we have not had any issues with as long as the person is work eligible, they are generally able to be eligible for workforce programs.

(Jennifer Kemp): This is (Jennifer) and I could just add to that, yes, from the federal perspective, the work authorization in particular the different tag ways and I94 are what need to be marked and certainly I've done a little bit of work in this area and Arizona does have some state laws that are very strict in this area, so it may vary slightly state by state.

(Ed Trumbull): Excellent, excellent. Here's our second question. Does workforce help others to create new non-profits, NGOs focused on refugees? I'm thinking about creating a new organization to help LGBT refugees and asylee's to integrate them into the US and prepare them for work.

(Jennifer Kemp): So this is (Jennifer) and the funding that's available at least through the Department of Labor's workforce investment opportunity act is at least for the youth programs is - the local areas put out requests for proposals of what services they - how they want to target their funding in the local area, so in terms of creating a new non-profit that's focused on the LGBT community in a particular area, I would not recommend the - to expect all of your funding from that funding source.

However, in some areas such as in Los Angeles there is a non-profit that focused on LGBTQ population and they do receive some - they did receive some WIOA funding, so I would - I don't think it's a standalone funding source, but it's not prohibited use of money to - depending on what the local area decides in their contract.

(Ed Trumbull): Excellent. Here's our third - here's the third question. There is a lot of discussion about serving people with limited English proficiency. Are there provisions in WIOA that require or allow for language interpretive or translation services?

(Jennifer Kemp): Yes, there is funding connected to that, and this is supportive - a supportive service. In addition I do want to say that the department of education just last - late last month put out a letter

to the state directors of education. You all hadn't ((inaudible)) assistant secretary put that letter out, and one of the first things that he encouraged folks to do, recognizing that the guidance isn't out yet and the final rules aren't out yet.

But similar to the message that (Kathy) was delivering, you know, it's a good time to ask. Don't wait for everything to be final. And in that he surely recommends that adult education state directors established strong partnerships with necessary community partners to successfully serve adult learners. I'm quoting the letter there.

So there is definitely resources from the adult Ed side as well to focus on the English language learner population. So the survey came out in October 22nd and I'm sure if you go to Octave Web site you'll be able to see it. And we - I can share that actually afterwards if you want to share that with folks who are on the Webinar.

(Ed Trumbull): Thank you, (Jennifer).

(Kathy Tran): Can I just - one thing I'll add is just education has just published recently a couple of different toolkits around serving English language learners that are on their Web site as well. And I'll just forward those to you, (Ed), so that you can share them with all the participants that might be of interest.

(Ed Trumbull): That's wonderful. Thank you, (Kathy). Our fourth question is what is the view of placing refugees in seasonal type jobs? We have many in the hospitality sector.

(Dr. Erica Boris): (Erica) here, I guess maybe I can provide a first answer to that. You know, I think that one of the things as a community based organization serving refugees, one of the fundamental kind of things that informs our programming is that we know for many of our adult refugees, their

first job is probably going to be a minimum wage type job. It might be a seasonal job. We're here in San Diego, so hospitality's a huge sector for us too.

And I think in terms of our - what we do with that information, that is the reality of who we're serving. It has really pushed us to make sure that when we think about employment and career pathway programming, that we recognize that that is a first step. I think (Kathy) used the term survival job, and that is really our job to help make sure that that is not the last step in terms of employment services for someone, because those are not living wage jobs.

They're not going to contribute to lasting family self-sufficiency, so you know, I think it is not feasible nor practical for a lot of reasons to completely write off placement in those entry level jobs, because that really is the first step for most refugees, but it doesn't have to be the last step, and I think a lot of this career pathway programming, you know, is designed specifically to make sure that that's not the end all and be all of our assistance to refugees around employment.

(Kathy Tran): And (Erica), I think that you said that just in such a lovely way. I think I would - I just want to emphasize that I think that's where the workforce system can help is with some of the - with the career pathways, with kind of more longer term skills training, and also you know, if there are any relicensing questions and things like that, they might have that information as well, so it's a resource for kind of thinking through after you're able to you know, be in that head space, right, in terms of like okay, now that I have work I can provide for my family. What's next for me career wise?

(Ed Trumbull): Excellent. And this has been a very provocative discussion. I think we have time for maybe two or three more questions. The fifth question, what have been some barriers to refugee resettlement agencies in forming partnerships with state and local workforce development boards?

(Dr. Erica Boris): (Erica), here, I'll take a first stab at that. You know, I think probably one of the biggest barriers is simply not taking some of those first steps. I think you know, refugee resettlement obviously has a long history here in the US, and you know, refugee resettlement agencies have been engaged in workforce type activities since the very beginning.

And you know, all of the resettlement agencies across the US, we all offer employment services, and I think that it's interesting. I think it has taken a long time for refugee resettlement agencies and the workforce system to sort of come upon this common language of oh, we are all doing workforce services even though we may be called them matching grants and employment services and those kinds of things.

But it all falls under the umbrella of helping people get jobs and move onto better jobs. I will say because of the timeliness of WIOA authorization, in the previous version of WIOA, so the workforce investment act, I think there was a specific challenge or barrier in the workforce system wanting to partner with refugee serving agencies, and it had a lot to do with the specific common measures that were required particularly among the adult service providers.

They were quite ambitious and quite high in terms of really wanting to see clients who were accessing those workforce services complete credential programs, complete degree programs, move into middle and high skill jobs, and I think because of that pressure to have you know, clients really hit these kind of very ambitious outcomes, the workforce system at times was quite reticent to serve clients who had a lot of barriers.

So refugees but also others as well who were seen as less employable who perhaps needed more time to get to the point where they would be employable and those kinds of things. I think that has been a barrier. I think WIOA offers opportunities to have the workforce systems serve more people with a higher number of barriers.

I will say though as has been echoed throughout the conversation that making that transition, changing the culture within the workforce system to really see these clients as you know, refugee families as part of their client population I think is still going to take time and a lot of local level conversations to help workforce systems also understand that these are clients that not only should they be serving but they can serve successfully and still meet the outcome metrics that the Department of Labor is requiring of them.

(Kathy Tran): This is (Kathy). I think that was really well said, (Erica). I'd like to just add a couple of things.

I think that knowledge is power, so if you're meeting resistance you need to know some of the technical pieces of the - of WIOA in order to be able to say, right, like, you know, I know that you have - like you negotiate your performance local area with the state or the state negotiates it with the federal government.

And so states can say you know, we really want to serve this population within our state or the local area can say the same and we really want to focus on the refugee population because we have lots of them or we have a significant community or we have great partnerships and that's who we're going to serve. So they negotiate their performance.

WIOA also builds in a regression model to make - to account for participants who might have different types of barriers to employment, so it - you know, there's - there will be a formula, however it comes out, it says you know, so that helps with the performance aspects of it. I think if you knew that and you knew that going into the conversation to help allay some of the - any fears that might be had around that, it's one point I just want to say.

I think also the other thing to me it was really a big mind - it was mind-bending when I really focused in on the priority of service to individuals with barriers to employment. There was already under WIA priority of service to low income individuals and to public assistance recipients when

however that's defined. But then to also include a new priority of service around people who have barriers to employment.

And the definition to that is really, really broad. I think that that is a shift really and like an opportunity for the system to really look within itself in terms of who are we supposed to be serving and if you have - if your clients meet that definition they should be getting priority of service, right? So I would say knowledge is power. I'm all about GI Joe. I'm kidding. I mean that was, I grew up in the 80s. Sorry. Go ahead.

(Jennifer Kemp): No, I just want to echo, when I said earlier on and I talked about how the performance measures are clearly defined, yet we're still sorting out a few things, and they don't even go into effect into 2016, I think part of that knowledge is the fact that right now they're - folks are kind of in this in between world when they don't really know that their performance measures are going to be or their performance targets are going to be.

And so this is really the time to start the conversation and get engaged, because while they may say that's their concern at this point, they - it shouldn't be their concern because they don't know what their levels are yet. So this is really the time to get into - to sort of say well that may be your understanding at this point. You don't need to worry about it as much. So I'll give it back to you, (Ed).

(Ed Trumbull): (Jennifer) and (Kathy), and that was just wonderful and (Erica), I want to thank everyone who participated in today's Webinar, and I want to thank our speakers again, our presenters again. That was extraordinary information. And I want to, the individuals that are on - that are participating in the Webinar please remember to provide your feedback on this Webinar using the survey that will appear in a separate pop-up window when the Webinar ends.

And I want to assure everyone that presentation materials, a transcript and recording of this Webinar will be available in approximately a week I believe through the OOR Web site, and on behalf of all of us, OOR and ICF and our three wonderful presenters today, thank you again and we look forward to your participation on future Webinars so thank you very much, and with that we can formally conclude today's Webinar.

END