

Stackable Credentials and Career Pathway Opportunities for TANF Participants

***James Butler, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families,
Office of Family Assistance***

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to our Webinar on stackable credentials and career pathway opportunities for TANF participants. Our Webinar today is being sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families here in the Office of Family Assistance.

We designed this Webinar today as a way of responding to the increasing need for workers to possess advanced training beyond high school, to the Obama Administration's focus on increasing the number of college educated individuals, and to workforce and policymakers calling for the development of clear, attainable pathways to meaningful credentials for those most vulnerable in the workforce -- the low-income and undereducated.

A crucial part of this pathway towards obtaining education skills useful for work is through stackable credentials. Stackable credentials are a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualifications and, ultimately, lead to better pay. Stackable credentials are a key component in career pathway models and help guide participants up a career ladder to different and potentially higher paying jobs.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration defines stackable credentials as a verification of qualification or competence issued to an individual by a third-party with the relevant authority or jurisdiction to issue such credentials. These can be accredited educational institutions, industry recognized associations, occupational associations, or professional societies.

There are a number of forms that credentials can take. Some of those may include educational diplomas, certificates and degrees, registered apprenticeship certificates, occupational licenses, personnel certifications from industry or professional associations, or other skill certificates for specific skill sets like writing or leadership.

Today's Webinar has been designed to provide background information on stackable credentials and career pathways. It will also provide an overview of some of the strategies that can be used to provide TANF participants and other low-income individuals with stackable credentials that will potentially lead to long-term, sustainable employment.

We will discuss some of the methods for designing stackable credential career pathways programs as well as methods for integrating these components into transitional jobs and subsidized employment programs. We want to encourage collaboration between TANF agencies, the business community, the Department of Labor, and some of our local organizations, so that we can better serve our TANF participants by providing skill-building and credentialing opportunities.

Today, we are fortunate enough to have presenters from four different programs to share with us their knowledge and resources. At the end of the presentation, you will have the opportunity to ask questions through the WebEx system. You can also submit questions to be answered following the last presentation throughout the Webinar using the "Q&A" panel on your WebEx screen. We invite you to submit questions for our speakers through the WebEx technology. If your question is for a specific speaker or program, please be sure to specify that in your question.

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Our first set of speakers today will come from Minnesota's FastTRAC Initiative. Judy Mortrude has over 20 years of experience developing, delivering, and managing educational projects for workforce development particularly with low literacy, high barrier populations. She was an instructor and administrator for Minnesota's adult basic education consortium before moving to Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development to staff the Minnesota's FastTRAC career pathway initiative, which is a cross-system initiative between workforce development, adult basic education, and technical and community colleges that focuses on improving results for working learners.

Next, we will have Nola Speiser. Nola comes to us with ten years of experience working with individuals and families in reaching their goals of self-sufficiency within the housing and workforce development industry. Currently, she is a State program administrator for the Minnesota FastTRAC adult career pathways initiative, providing opportunities for low wage and educationally underprepared adults to increase their basic and occupational skills and to acquire credentials that lead to family supporting employment.

Joining Judy and Nola is Danielle Kressin. Danielle works with the Minnesota Family Investment Program and the Diversionary Work Program in the program implementation and compliance unit at the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), as well as with the Department of Human Services' Transition to Economic Stability Division. Danielle has been with DEED for about six years and has been involved with all aspects of the Minnesota TANF program.

So ladies and gentlemen, without further ado, I will turn the presentation now over to Danielle.

Danielle Kressin, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Hi, I am from Minnesota's FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways program. The purpose of our presentation today is to share with you our work in implementing a promising model to reduce poverty by increasing the number of low-wage, low-skilled adults who complete career pathway education and enter career pathway employment.

We know Minnesota's skill gap is continuing to widen based on demographics such as aging population, growth, and populations who have not traditionally been served by our public systems. FastTRAC serves the underrepresented populations -- low-income people of color, first generation students, and adults who simply need help mitigating some of the barriers that keep them from successful education and employment outcomes.

For those learners who lack basic skills, the uphill climb can be even more challenging. Of individuals who need to take nine or more credit hours and postsecondary remedial courses, only about 4 percent complete a degree certificate within five years of enrollment without assistance.

Nearly three-quarters of the 2030 workforce are beyond the reach of the kindergarten through twelfth grade system. This is not a kindergarten through twelfth grade education problem; it is an adult reentering problem.

Our target population is a subset of those working learners that are hardest to employ. Among individuals 18 to 64, six to ten do not have a postsecondary degree.

In Minnesota, nine of our projects are funded with innovation funds, the Department of Human Services funding to specifically target our Minnesota Family Investment Program population, of which a large portion are TANF participants. Others are funded with State dollars.

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We are connecting with community-based agencies that served as population of learners. In the general Minnesota population, 60 percent of adult learners have not obtained a postsecondary degree. But within our TANF population, almost 99 percent of the population has not obtained postsecondary degree. Only about one percent have completed above postsecondary education.

And now I will turning it over to Nola.

Nola Speiser, Minnesota FastTRAC Initiative

Next slide please. The tipping point research study is national research and it's impacting our thinking about career pathways. This study demonstrates that individuals need one year postsecondary credential with credit bearing curriculum within an in-demand occupation. This study has impacted how we in Minnesota think about career pathways and helped form the Minnesota FastTRAC Adult Career Pathway model. Next slide please.

Starting with the Shifting Gears Initiative, which involved five states that focus on design and quality solutions and the expanding access tool and the completion of four secondary credentials that led to family supporting careers, various solutions included breaking down the wall, separating basic skills in the English language services from the postsecondary education and training and combining those services, operating them in joint partnership.

It also looks at supporting access tools and success in postsecondary education with more readily available financial aid and other support. It connects education and work through career pathway programs that help adults gain employment and advance into specific industry sectors while also capturing data which can shape and guide the policies at the State level. Next slide please.

Minnesota FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways is an initiative that collaborates with the various State agencies of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, the Minnesota Department of Education (specifically adult basic education), the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and the Department of Corrections. We also work with the Greater Twin Cities United Way community-based organization and the Joyce Foundation.

All these partners have come together to look at our common goals and the needs of the populations we serve. Out of that we formulated our program, which is on the next slide. Now you can see if you turn to the left, we're going to kind of work our way over to the right where we started with readiness, career awareness, occupational prep, integrated instruction, and, then, we'll move to a postsecondary credential.

You can take the Navigator Service and kind of touch on each one of those cogs. Those Navigator Service provides resources that helps to complete the various programs they are in. Now, in the next slide, we can take this into a little bit more detail.

So, it starts with the Bridge Prep - Bridge 1 and Bridge 11 take place at adults' basic education levels and provide preparatory basic skills, career awareness, and employability skills. From there, they go to the integrated instruction, a credit bearing course at the Minnesota Institution at the college and has both a college instructor in the classroom and an adult basic education instructor to provide more intensive education instruction. As I get farther, I will explain that.

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From there we would like to have the individual get a postsecondary credential in a high demand occupation. The Navigator Service is really intensive case management. They offer support services for success, including barrier mitigation, career advising, and system navigation, which are provided by work personnel and human services. Okay, we can go onto the next slide.

The Navigator Service is really a shell component of the Minnesota FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways model. We see it as a liaison in the stakeholder connector. This individual does recruitment, outreach, coordination of assessments, and intake for the program just to make it easier on the individual because so many partners are involved. Everybody has certain outcomes they need to meet and, therefore, different assessments that need to be taken.

They provide case management and support services, career and academic counseling, assistance with the college admissions process (enrollment, registration and financial aid can help guide them through it or at least point them in the right direction at the college institution), employment resources and services, and retention and completion plans.

In Minnesota right now the Navigator Service is really taking off. There are community-based organizations as well as other State agencies that are really looking at how they could use this component to better impact what's going on already. I know Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, our State college system, is looking at it, and adult basic education within the Department of Education is looking at how the Navigator Service could impact their regular day-to-day services as well because we have seen some really good results with it.

Now I'm going to turn it over to Judy Mortrude. We can go onto the next slide.

Judy Mortrude, Minnesota FastTRAC Initiative

I wanted to share with you a success story from one of our local programs. As Nola said, Shifting Gears really brought this work to Minnesota and Minnesota FastTRAC has, as one of its primary goals, systems change and systems alignment, making our processes a little more accessible across our State agencies.

But the work, as you see it in the field, is really local partners coming together. These local partners are adult basic education, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, community-based organizations, and the workforce development system, including the TANF providers in nine of our local partnerships right now.

So we have braided funds. We have put funding together, funding that comes from the Workforce Investment Act, funding that comes from Department of Human Services Innovation Fund to be able to put out about \$6 million over the last three years to local partnerships. This is our Anoka County health care pathway.

If you go to the next slide you can see a little bit more about what the treatment looks like there in Anoka County. If you think back to the model that Nola showed, a Bridge class, they basically built - an adult basic education Bridge class of 100 hours that prepares adult basic education students to move into the college credit-bearing course system. This would be foundational skill-building in math, reading, and writing but all within the context of the health care sector.



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The integrated class was 160 hours. They took a nursing assistance course, a home health aide course, and three other college credits that built the career pathway. There were eight college credits total within that integrated instruction course.

All of this is supported by the Navigator. I think it is important to say that the Navigator is not supplanting other case managers or other workers serving an individual but the case managers and the Navigator is bringing all those different resources together, into alignment, and supporting that individual through whatever system they become attached to.

This one is kind of difficult. I apologize but there is a lot of information here. It is just showing you a report out by our local partnership who was very proud to show the number of students who entered and completed the Bridge class and moved into the integrated class. Seventy-five percent of those students, and these are high-barrier, low skill adults, have obtained eight college credits, passed both written and skills exam, got their CNA credentials, and are now on the Minnesota Nursing Assistant Registry.

Fifty-eight percent are currently working. Three of the five that are not working are coming back to school in the fall of 2012, which is another success for Minnesota FastTRAC because we look at both employment and continued career pathway education as success.

I just introduced you to two particular women, this is Kim and Chantwan who are here in the lab at Anoka Technical College practicing further skills exam. Both of these women were involved in our Minnesota Family Investment or our Diversionary Work Program.

Kim was working with our project for success, is the mother of two children with a very limited work history, and has her high school diploma. Chantwan was on diversionary work and is the mother of two children - one of whom had serious health issues which prompted her interested in a health career. She had a work history for the last five years working in fast food. Prior to that, she had been a forklift driver. She has her GED. I think those last two pieces of information on Chantwan's background are really interesting because they show that Chantwan has obviously been connected in some place, at some time she would have been in the adult basic education system where she at least took that exam and got her GED and probably through some short-term training obtained the skills to drive a forklift. But neither of those were very connected activities and not services delivered in a career pathway model.

The education that Chantwan and Kim got through career pathway, as we said, led to completion of the class and successful attainment of those eight college credits as well as industry recognized credential. The importance of that is in their continued education employment. We are happy to say that Kim is now working full-time. She was offered two jobs. She took a full-time position and, for her, that is the end of her career pathway for now.

But, she has those eight college credits that are hers. They are in her bank and she can use them when she wants. Chantwan, on the other hand, took a part-time job with sort of flexible hours where she can take more and more hours on as she wants because she's moving immediately. She started yesterday at North Hennepin Community College, another one of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System campuses, with the course work for her Registered Nursing degree. And she has the ultimate goal to be a Nurse Practitioner so she can work part-time and continue on her academic career pathway.

Just to give you a quick snapshot, we have got about 34 FastTRAC career pathways going right now in in-demand occupations. Health care is our primary sector but we do have a great number in manufacturing, some in education, business, energy, and culinary arts. We have very preliminary outcomes to share at this



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point but we feel confident that our results are nearing the kind of results that Washington State and their tipping point study showed - that we are moving high barrier populations into and through adult basic education and postsecondary education into employment.

And the final slide is just to share with you our Web site. You can go here to learn more about our local programs. If you go on to the FastTRAC Web site, there is a 'local programs' tab that will give you the background information on all of the different FastTRAC career pathways that are out there now. I would also like to share that at the top right we have a lot of professional development which is one of the things that we have really focused on here in Minnesota - trying to build professional learning communities around this work.

We know it is difficult work and people need to be able to share with each other best practice. So we have professional development that is online for administrators, navigators, and instructors. Those modules are on the Web site and free and open to anyone who wants to use them. That is it for Minnesota.

James Butler, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance

Thank you, Judy, Nola, and Danielle. Okay, we are going to go ahead and move onto our next set of speakers who come to us from the Heartland Alliance Community Green Jobs Program. First we will have Jay Landau who is the Director of Contextualized Literacy and Training at Heartland Human Care Services. He has worked there for seven years in the field of adult education in direct instruction, program administration, and program development.

Jay has worked for both non-profits and community colleges. In his current role at Heartland, he develops and oversees educational programming tied to workforce development fostering participant's economic self-sufficiency in both Chicago and Michigan. He is particularly focused on the integration of transitional jobs programs and contextualized learning.

Joining Jay is Nancy Phillips. Nancy is the Director of Initiatives in the Employment and Economic Advancement Division at Heartland Human Care Services, developing an urban forum offering transitional jobs growing vegetables for local food pantries and other programs that promote economic security for participants overcoming barriers to employment.

She is the founding director of WomanCraft, which is a green social enterprise that employed those transitioning from homelessness as artisans, creating handmade recycled paper items from 1998 to 2010. Her previous work includes 10 years in program management and education administration with affordable housing organizations and educational institutions in Chicago.

Jay and Nancy, you now have the floor.

Nancy Phillips, Heartland Alliance:

Thank you, I am going to introduce two of our programs that involve contextualized literacy and transitional jobs - so we are entitled as adult learning in the context of work. We are able, in these two progressive programs, to talk about the way in which we have built and developed this model.

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We will start with our Community Green Jobs Program. Heartland Human Care Services launched this Community Green Jobs Program through an ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funded CDGB-R opportunity in which we partnered with the Chicago Department of Environment. The population served in our Community Green Jobs Program is adults who are transitioning from homelessness and overcoming multiple barriers to employment.

The starting reading and math levels for our participants had a grade equivalent of grades three through eleven. Most participants were at grade level five through eight in these cohorts. But everyone was eligible to participate and these participants were co-enrolled with our Housing First Program, which recruits directly from homeless shelters so people are directly transitioning from homelessness into housing at the same time as starting these transitional jobs. The National Transitional Job Network Conference also has slides of ours on these programs too.

I wanted to share a little bit about the way that the program works from a participant's experience. Participants do orientation and job readiness training, then they start a transitional job, and then start the literacy curriculum. Participants work 24 hours a week in their transitional job and then they spend six hours a week in job search groups, career development, and in the green jobs classes that Jay and I developed. The lessons are typically one and one-half to two hours a week for 12 weeks.

The participants worked at the Greater Chicago Food Depository in town where they sorted over one million pounds of food and reclaimed food to be distributed to 650 partner agencies for distribution to low-income persons. Jay and I started this curriculum last August and we piloted it for three cohorts, completing at the end of March. Prior to developing the specific contextualized green jobs program, we were using regular adult basic education lessons.

We wanted to incorporate a contextualized literacy program that would have context related to workplace instead of regular adult basic education classes because we wanted to support the participants in achieving their goals for economic security. The program helps them succeed in their traditional job and in completing their transitional job. They are able to leverage the new work, reading, and math skills to make them more marketable for other kinds of positions. We wanted to also support skill building in all their life areas that could not be supported by literacy skills, including parenting and career advancement.

We had an opportunity to innovate because this was a new funder. We wanted to use this opportunity to lay some groundwork for other career pathway curriculum and help people to bring more marketable skills into the workplace.

Here [in this slide] are participants engaged in their transitional jobs at Greater Chicago Food Depository, sorting food for redistribution. We used several of the skills that related directly to their transitional jobs in preparing our contextualized literacy curriculum.

Now, I am going to turn this part to Jay to talk specifically about the curriculum lessons.

Jay Landau, Heartland Alliance:

Good afternoon. As you look at this slide, the participant-centered piece is really important to Nancy and I. Heartland Alliance employs a "strength space" approach in all of the work that we do. The way that we developed this curriculum was to make sure that we drew out the experience of the participant related to the topics discussed and the employment and skills that are being addressed in each lesson.



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We wanted to make sure that the employers we were working with and employers in the industries we were targeting were engaged in the development. Engaging them serves to not only make sure that the curriculum is relevant to the career sector but also to have employer buy-in so that when the program is complete the employers are more willing to hire the participants that have taken the course.

We also wanted to make sure that the course is culturally relevant and pertinent to the experience of the participants that we were working with. We used a lot of local neighborhood-specific examples in our lessons.

The skills addressed in the curriculum include soft skills, teamwork, time management, communication skills. These are things that come out in school to some degree or another in any class but we explicitly made sure that we would help participants build these skills as the course progressed through 12 weeks. Literacy and numeracy skills were embedded in throughout the curriculum but in a way that they were not the focus of the work but more a byproduct. We're really talking about employment and about the career sectors that the participants were engaged in through their transitional jobs and learning what were the foci. We also included hard skills and critical thinking skills.

If you look at this list of reading skills, those of us on this Webinar who are in adult education and preparing people for the GED will see that this is a lot of the skills that are on the tape test and eventually tested for on the GED exam. But again, these are not explicitly addressed in the curriculum but embedded throughout the lessons, activities, and readings that participants are presented with.

In math skills, we are looking at the same thing. We are talking about the basic math that is going to come across in the GED or a college placement exam. Money math was really important and the participants really respond well to that. It's something that really relates to their life experience and the relevance really enhances the motivation to learn and absorb some of the math materials that are presented in the lessons.

This is a sample math activity. If you remember back to the photographs we were looking at a few minutes ago, you saw participants actually sorting food. A lot of what the participants were working on at the Greater Chicago Food Depository was sorting the food that the depository receives and boxing it into separate boxes that would then be distributed out into the community. So, one of the first math lessons that we work on is multiplication and it involves the actual weights of the boxes that the participants are working with at the food depository. They are presented with different examples of types of food that would need to be boxed.

What we are looking at is something that is contextualized to the actual work that the participants are engaged in during the week. This will not only help them to perform successfully in their transitional job but it will also help them to increase their math skills.

These are the results that we got from this Community Green Jobs Program. We are going to begin talking in a few minutes about how we've evolved out of this Community Green Jobs Program using the same model. We had some amazing gains and it is important keep in mind that we were working with participants at varying levels. Some were starting at a third grade level in reading or math as measured by the tape test, while others were starting at an eighth, ninth or tenth grade level.

The average math gain was two and one-half grade levels and that was after 12 weeks of class. The average reading gains were a little under two grade levels, so 1.8 grade levels. We felt really good about the fact that these gains were so large in a short period of time and that really gave us the confidence to go forward, continue to use this model, and develop it further.

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Nancy Phillips, Heartland Alliance:

In addition to our literacy, reading, and math outcomes, this is a transitional jobs program and employment outcomes are a big part of our work with the participants. So, in this program we were able to enroll 29 participants between August and January. Seventy percent of participants completed their transitional jobs. Sixty percent of the transitional jobs completed were transitioned to unsubsidized employment. Of those who were placed, 90 percent of them gained full-time employment, 70 percent of the positions were benefits eligible, and the average wage was \$11.50 an hour. In working with homelessness populations with multiple barriers, we're really pleased with the quality of jobs.

Some people were placed, including at the Greater Chicago Food Depository, for a full-time job with benefits at good wages. We have seen the contextualized literacy improve our outcomes compared to the way we were operating before.

Jay Landau, Heartland Alliance:

The next two slides show the way that Nancy and I sort of envisioned the way that this model would work. We continue to update this flowchart as we develop the program. If, as you look at the slide, you start at the bottom and move your way up, you will see that we do a job readiness training and orientation prior to participants starting the contextualized literacy course and their 12 week transitional jobs placement.

You will see digital literacy there on the same tier, which we believe is crucial to helping participants succeed and move into gainful employment. As you move up the ladder, you see that we are focused on helping the participants obtain unsubsidized employment. Enrolling in adult education career training and college really is extremely pertinent to the topic today of career pathways and stackable credentials and we're going to start talking more about how we've continued to build that piece in.

Once students take our course, they are able to continue to advance in their career and to advance their educational level. On the right hand side, you can see the supports or the inputs that are required or provided by us to assist participants in moving up this ladder. Heartland Alliance has a lot of case management services and resources that we can provide, so we are making sure that we are providing support to reduce barriers, such as securing child care. Additionally, the participants are receiving rent support for 12 months, transportation, et cetera.

Now, this is the same model but, if you look on the right hand side, you can see the outcomes and the impact that we have intended for this program. As you look at those outcomes and impacts, you see that it builds from a basic level of gaining confidence and basic job readiness soft skills to an understanding of what skills are required to succeed in a given career, including budgeting and saving from the beginning of the transitional job placement to subsidized employment to unsubsidized employment. You also see long-term career goals being set and the capability to work towards educational goals. We are making sure that this class is not the end of an educational pathway but the beginning.

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Nancy Phillips, Heartland Alliance

As we were learning lessons from our community green jobs, we were partnering with the City of Chicago again for our transitional jobs program for persons with convictions in their background. We are serving 30 people this calendar year in this transitional jobs program partnering with the City of Chicago. Some of the people are also co-enrolled in our housing program. Some people are residents from the neighborhood in which our new urban farm is being launched, and some people are co-enrolled in other programs.

We have actually started to focus on some sectors that look at general conservation or greening of regular jobs. In this case we focused on employers in the sectors of urban agriculture, landscaping, and warehousing to match with the food distribution at Greater Chicago Food Depository.

We are building on our partnerships with Greater Chicago Food Depository for this new transitional jobs program and with our long-term relationship with a local landscaping employer. We are partnering with Wright College for a certificate program and still in this model still doing 12-weeks of contextualized lessons. All the lessons have reading and math. Math was actually requested by the participants in the feedback loop. We have increased lessons that for this new program.

Jay Landau, Heartland Alliance:

Here, I just wanted to make sure that we included the definition of stackable credentials from the Department of Labor. Mr. Butler spoke to that in the beginning of the presentation, which was great. We are working very hard to continually incorporate more and more this concept of stackable credentials and make sure that, as participants start with us, we're able to move them on a pathway towards both greater employment opportunities and greater educational opportunities.

We were able to partner with Wilbur Wright College, which is a city college of Chicago, so that this 12-week contextualized literacy course will be accredited through the city colleges of Chicago system and our instructors will be accredited to be city college instructors. What that means for the participants is that they're going to receive a certificate of employment readiness and urban agriculture, landscaping, and warehousing at the end of our 12-week program.

We are going to work with the participants to help them determine which of those tracts is most relevant to their interest and their skills as they look for employment. We have been working to make sure that we're getting even more employer feedback into the curriculum. We have developed very strong partnerships with some landscaping employers in Chicago and are continuing to strengthen our partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

Now, part of the Wright College partnership includes the students touring the campus and learning about admissions and the different types of programs at Wright, which includes vocational certificates and associates degree programs. This helps arm the students with the knowledge that they'll need to continue their studies after completing our program.

Many of our students are going to want to get into a GED program before they go into Wright College and into postsecondary education. GED programs are also part of the city colleges system and we're facilitating transitions into GED programs as well.

Nancy Phillips, Heartland Alliance:



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One way that we are really working to help participants think more about career pathways, to understand where they are in career pathways, and what it will take to move up is to work with our employer partners, to gather information from them, and to make sure that the students understand what entry level is, what it takes to move up, how long it takes, and what you can earn in the next steps.

We have gotten a great deal of positive feedback and excitement from those students around mapping out the career pathways. We borrowed this landscape construction and maintenance career path from the Chicago Land Green Collar Jobs Initiative on which Heartland is a partner agency. This is available on our Web site with some other career pathways as well.

The mapping and visiting a landscaping employer and having them discuss the pathways and the steps has helped. We had success with people starting at an entry level, moving up, and gaining skills in this particular path. We are also working on warehousing and distribution with Greater Chicago Food Depository but also with some other local employers. We built this career path through discussions with our employer partners about their experience and by talking to a warehousing trade association about the different skills required to move up in the ladder to help those with a varying amount of experience, some people come with some warehouse experience or some landscaping experience that may be sporadic and may not really having an understanding of the overall industry.

This both helps with reading and graphic information by facilitating discussions and raising awareness on designing their own career pathways and moving up the career ladder.

We are increasing our site visits to permanent employers. This has really helped the participants transition to un-subsidized employment. We're making sure that curricular content is being supplied by the employers, that they're talking about workplace skills and advancement, and that we're putting in more hard skill content.

We can also talk to successful former participants about what has allowed them to retain their job and how that helps them meet their goal. If there's a participant who has been working at Greater Chicago Food Depository, they can share all that information with their peers. Peer mentoring has been a real strength of the program and for people's success.

We are also doing some screening for peoples' affinities in these target sectors and we're incorporating them into the career ladders, which we just looked at.

There is one thing that we wanted to talk about briefly if people are going to look at a contextualized literacy program that would include the context of the reading and math lessons around work and around what participants' job goals are. We think it's important to be mindful that participants may have had negative experiences in classrooms before, so it is important to make sure that their input is drawn out and that its value makes the curriculum relevant to participants' goals and experiences. We have learned that it is best to avoid red marks and bad grades and make sure to include discussion points.

It is also important to note that work is a great equalizer. It helps people overcome the stigma around literacy if we call it a Green Jobs class versus Literacy class. People found that to be a really great change from their former GED practice sessions. We also do pre- and post-tests to measure results and helps participants think about other training or education. It also helps us understand how effective we are being in presenting the curriculum.

Jay Landau, Heartland Alliance:

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We are going to wrap up here. I don't want to go over our allotted time and I want to make sure that the other presenters are able to present their great information as well.

What I want to leave with is that we have found really great results for participants in integrating a few different things, transitional jobs experiences, basic literacy, and numeracy skills. Then, making sure that part of that model is building the knowledge of pathways and facilitating the ability of participants to move along them both in employment and in education.

We are really excited, at Heartland Alliance, about continuing to develop ways of successfully integrating transitional jobs and contextualized literacy with clear pathways.

This is our contact information. Please feel free to reach out to Nancy or me with any questions or follow up after this Webinar. Thank you very much.

***James Butler, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families,
Office of Family Assistance***

Thank you, Jay and Nancy. Moving on, our next speaker is Elizabeth Ehrlich. Elizabeth is Chief of the Parks Opportunity Program, better known as POP in the City of New York's Department of Parks and Recreation. She designs and implements innovative programming which allows trainees to perform valuable work for New York's parks, increasing civic pride in greening city neighborhoods while pursuing sustainable employment and financial self-sufficiency.

This is her fifth position with POP and, in each role, she has worked to create innovative partnerships with other New York agencies and private organizations to provide services for trainees in areas including education, vocational training, financial empowerment, housing, child care and benefits assistance, and emergency intervention.

Elizabeth you now have the floor.

Elizabeth Ehrlich, Parks Opportunity Program:

Hi everyone. My name is Liza, I am speaking today about the Parks Opportunity Program and I am going to go over a little bit of what my colleagues from the Heartland Alliance said previously with respect to the fact that the Parks Opportunity Program is a transitional employment model.

I am not going to be speaking as much about stackable credentials. Rather, I'll be speaking a lot about transferable skills and the skills utilized and gained by our trainees while they're with the Parks Opportunity Program and how those are applicable to a variety of different employment sectors.

In this presentation, I am going to outline the structure and format of our program and also describe a little bit about how we use transitional jobs as an opportunity to impart transferable skills to the trainees that are in our program.

Our program, the Parks Opportunity Program, is one of the country's longest running transitional employment programs and we execute this program through a partnership between with the New York City Human Resources Administration, just to give you a little bit of structure.

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Our trainees spend four days per week working, cleaning and greening New York City parks and recreation centers, and then one day per week receiving employment skills counseling and soft skill development which is geared toward increasing their marketability in employment.

We adhere strongly to a Work First model, so it is very important to us that we are able to have our trainees really wrap their heads and their brains around the experience that they're getting in their current job at the parks and then use that experience to transition into employment.

The few things that I would like you all to keep in mind as you are listening to this is that we are doing two things here. We are both the employer and we're the service provider. So, in sort of contrast to the presentation before me where they were talking about people being employed at the Chicago Food Distribution Center and then receiving services from Heartland, we are doing all this under one umbrella at the Parks Department.

We are both the employer where trainees are gaining hard skills and working on their professional development, and we are also the service provider where trainees are gaining soft skills and sort of using their experience at the work site as a laboratory. We will spend a lot of time talking today about the exact sort of work that people are doing at parks and, then, how the counselors and the client services staff that also work for parks are drawing upon the experience that people are having at the work site to help them see that those skills are directly transferable to a variety of other employment sectors.

A lot of times we'll have trainees that are here and they will say, "Well, you know, why would I work for parks right now if (A), Parks isn't going to hire me after this or (B), what if I do not even want to work for Parks after this?" And we say, well that is good, our goal is not to have you be here long-term, this is a six-month job and our goal is to help you prepare, via this job, for employment afterwards.

Just as sort of an overview, I would like to spend some time talking about each component as an employer and as a service provider. As you can see from the slide, I am just showing some pictures of different sorts of experiences that people are having while they're working at parks. New York City parks are about 14 percent of the city's land mass, so we have a lot of space throughout the five boroughs of New York City.

We have outdoor space, we have recreation centers, and we have administrative offices, so there are a lot of different opportunities for a variety of work assignments for people to gain this experience, and then, through these other components that you see on the screen, the employment skills counseling, the training and education, the job search, and the client services. Those are all sort of rotating around the on-the-job training that people are receiving to build upon their experience in the field and to use to transition to the next job.

Here is a little bit of structure of what our program looks like. Our trainees are here for six months. They work 40 hours per week. They earn \$9.21 an hour, so this is a paid transitional job. It is unique for a transitional job in that they are represented by a labor council - Labor Union District Council 37, which is DC 37. There are certain termination rights and a variety of different benefits that come with that union representation despite the fact that it is a six-month job.

They are actually required to participate in employment activities as part of their job, so it is not okay for someone to come in and say, "Actually I don't want to look for a job outside of Parks. I am just interested in looking within Parks and working at Parks." We are very clear with the trainees that while we expect them to transition to employment, it is not even necessarily at the conclusion of the program – it is at any point throughout. Our goal is to move them outside of Parks to another position.

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They, also, have to be physically able to perform the duties of the position. A lot of the work at Parks involves being outside and being on your feet, so it is crucial to us that all of our trainees are actually physically able to do the work. Also, since this is a partnership with our city's Human Resources Administration, all of our trainees have open public assistance cases when they are referred to us and then throughout their time. Our entire workforce is people who are receiving public assistance.

So, what are they doing while they are here? Our trainees are doing a lot of different work. They are working to maintain parks, beaches, and pools. They are staffing our recreation centers and our offices; and, they are performing and providing security at different events all over New York City. They are helping to weatherize our facilities and ensuring that they are as sustainable as possible. They are working on a variety of different playgrounds to make them safer for our city's children.

There is a variety of different types of jobs and the commonality between all of these is that they are interacting with the public; they're working to have a clean work environment. They are working well with others and are taking direction from supervisors. A lot of these experiences differ depending on what type of assignment someone has, but the real commonality here is that they are developing the skills that are applicable to any sort of employment sector that they could transition to after this.

As I started talking about on the last slide, some of the skills that people are gaining are like skills in any job where one would learn how to take criticism, complete tasks, accept responsibility, handle change, and work well with others. It can be challenging for people to transition into employment when they have not worked in quite some time, but what is unique about using transferable skills and transitional employment is that when as we're preparing people to go out and interview for different jobs, they are really able to draw upon experience they have and work that they are doing now.

We think that when talking about these sorts of different industry sectors that people can transition into, it is important to be able to point out to people the experiences they are gaining from their work every day, even if they are not sort of along a specific training path with regards to some of the stackable credentials that have been discussed prior. Transitional jobs are incredibly valuable for that sort of experience.

The one day a week the trainees are spending with us for employment services is incredibly valuable because they are really using the experience at the work site as a laboratory. During this one day of the week, they can think about what has happened at work throughout week. Did they have a negative interaction with a co-worker or did their supervisor give them feedback that was upsetting? How did they handle that? They are able to really come together as a group, share these experiences, and talk about the value that is gained from that, which often people cannot see on their own if they haven't had many experiences getting constructive criticism. It can be hard to accept that as a positive thing.

Sharing experiences with peers who have had similar experiences and seeing how that experience can be directly translatable to another industry sector, an industry sector that they may be interested in pursuing next, is incredibly valuable for our trainees. Another very valuable component of having both of these services is that both the employment and the supportive service under one roof is that our staff. The POP staff is able to communicate regularly with the park supervisors because we all work for the same agency. We are able to really perform direct intervention if there are issues at the work site. In many cases, that can either save someone's job or be a valuable interaction where we can discuss that this job might not work out and how the experience will benefit their next employment placement.



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Now, just a little off the topic, except that earlier I heard someone talking about this too, so I am excited that I can touch up on this, the importance of partnership in any sort of program like this, whether it is one that we heard about earlier or mine, is that you cannot do it all. I think a lot of times there are so many different things that we all need to be doing for our clients. Everyone has their own story. It is really crucial to be able to develop your relationships with local city agencies like the one we have with the Human Resources Administration or with our local Department of Education, who is providing a lot of the services that were described by my colleagues from the Heartland Alliance earlier in terms of contextualized education.

It is important to even develop opportunities with different employers, because, as I said the goal of our program is not for people to necessarily find work at Parks, it is to roll over into unsubsidized employment with different employers. We constantly have to develop partnerships. We have to sell these transferable skills to the employers so that way they can see why it is important to hire our trainees and why our trainees are best suited for their companies.

Just to wrap up, a transitional jobs program is really an ideal place for people to learn skills that are crucial to success in any industry. The most important part of it is being able to help the trainee make connections. They might not be working at Parks forever as this is a short-term job. It is transitional but our goal is to help them find employment outside of this and to be talking about how every day's experiences lends themselves to that next experience.

Even if you think it is kind of difficult for someone to see how working at a park could be like working at a food service place, for example, or working at an office somewhere. A lot of time is spent discussing customer service, task completion, working well with others, taking direction from supervision, punctuality, stress management, and a variety of different things that people might not be able to see the connection. Sometimes it is really crucial that we help to drive them.

That is it. My contact information is here and, if anyone has any questions or is interested in learning more about the program, I am available. Thank you for having me.

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***James Butler, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families,
Office of Family Assistance***

Thank you, Liza. We are going to go ahead and move into our last and final speaker, John House. John is the Director of the new HPOG, which is the Health Professions Opportunity Grant Program called Creating Access to Careers in Healthcare, better known as CATCH.

This particular program trains low-income adults in the Snohomish County, Washington area to fill critical jobs in healthcare in hopes of closing the gap between underlying poverty and regional job shortages in health services. The program provides ways for students to get the training they need to move into better paying jobs on a flexible schedule. It specifically reaches out to TANF, refugee, and immigrant populations.

Without further ado, Mr. John House.

John House, Edmonds Community College, CATCH Program:

I am going to use this first PowerPoint page to provide some context for the project before I move into the specifics. So, again, CATCH is Creating Access to Careers in Healthcare. It is specifically focused on healthcare, which is, I may be biased but, an extremely exciting arena. It holds so much opportunity for our target population because it includes home health aide all the way to the highest levels in healthcare, which offers a rich pathway and that is one of the key things of my presentation today.

Also on this PowerPoint page, up in the right hand corner is a graphic which I think helps to provide some context on something we conveyed with our students. -- healthcare offers this interconnectedness and range of opportunities from very high-touch to high-tech. It's one of the areas that we work hard with our community, our partners and our students to understand that rich array of opportunities within healthcare. Generally our minds go right to nursing, am I correct? But we work hard to convey the multitude of opportunities in healthcare, again, from high-tech to high-touch. We work closely on career development with all of our students with that in mind.

Also on this page, down in the bottom are two primary training entities for our project, two community colleges based in western Washington State, both are 15 to 20 miles north of Seattle. Edmonds Community College is the fiscal agent for the HPOG grant and Everett Community College is our close partner part in parcel with an HPOG grant, which I will talk more about in a second. Partnerships are key to this grant and leveraging existing partnerships.

I guess something I hope you take away in my short time with you is to peak your interest in HPOG grants so that you will follow up on them. There are 32 across 23 states in the U.S. and there may be one very near you. I am hoping that you will reach out to the HPOG site for their lessons learned to date and their merging innovations around this pathway and stackable credential work within healthcare. I have a link on my last page to the HPOG listing and the Federal site.

Our partners include Workforce Investment Boards and the homeless county initiatives. One exciting initiative is a homelessness prevention initiative that's in partly funded through the Gates Foundation. We partner closely with them in working with our TANF, refugee, and immigrant students. Our overarching goal is to train low-income adults for careers in healthcare and to address shortages in the healthcare system.

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HPOGs flow out of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and they are directed by the Administration for Children and Families. There are links at my last page for more information on those. We are a five year grant; we are in year two, approaching year three. We serve about 100 new students per year. Because we have multiple start points across each year, we start five cohorts across each year we have overlapping groups of students typically from year to year. We tend to serve 120 to 150 participants across that whole continuum in a range of needs from foundational training to more advanced healthcare training to career placement, et cetera.

Some of our promising practices that are woven through our model is I-BEST, which is a Washington State promising practice Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training. I also have a link for this in my last PowerPoint page. I encourage you to check out the I-BEST information; there are models for replicating and integrating this model into your area of programs. It models much of the FastTRAC model. Physically right in the classroom, it couples developmental education training experts, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Adult Basic Education (ABE) with the content expert, in this case, healthcare, but it can be other technical areas as well. It is literally physically coupling those two individuals in the classroom and those two instructors do the pre-work needed to coordinate their training throughout that quarter or semester.

The CATCH program is also a hybrid. Generally 60 percent of the instruction delivered to our students is on ground and 40 percent is online. We are very hybrid which is reflective more and more of college classrooms, although it certainly varies depending on the content.

One of the outcomes that we are finding is that our students are increasingly prepared for the trend in higher education classrooms being increasingly hybrid. One of our key features is learning communities, both broadly for our project and also with our students. Our students work when they are on ground and, when they are in the classroom, they're working in pods, in groups. They have technology available to them for further work as well as instruction.

They also develop study groups. Now, we very intentionally foster the formation of study groups, but we found that our students needed and wanted to form these learning communities. We also want to make sure that the learning communities are instructive and efficient, so, we offer some instruction on how to create an effective study group and how to participate effectively in a study group.

In the true sense, our program is about providing wraparound services. That is looking at all the life domains enveloping not only academic aspects, but also familial, social, economic, et cetera. That is similar to some of the other presentations and driven by a Navigator model. I think it is very appropriate for our project that Navigation model has emerged within the healthcare system. It makes a lot of sense because in healthcare when an individual in a family is ill, both that individual and that family is often overwhelmed with emotion and the trauma of that illness that they need somebody to help advocate for them with a clear voice and guide them through a maze and a complicated system.

That is true in a lot of cases for education. A lot of our students have had negative experiences in education in the past. They are coming in very tentative. Having a clear voice, an advocate on their side, has proven to be very effective with our model. As we know higher education systems are complicated, if not complex systems, as well.

I have a diagram here. We are partnership driven. A second take-away for my few minutes with you is coordination -- leveraging partnerships and student transformations. I think these will come through in my few minutes. Everything we do is around those concepts. We are coordinating existing resources. There is no way we could create all the resources that we need to serve this population.



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It is a massive coordination effort leveraging existing resources. We were fortunate to have a major Department of Labor grant taking off at a time when our grant was just taking off. We have been able to leverage between this Department of Labor grant called Healthcare Education to Career Opportunities and our CATCH grant to help our students further along their pathway in healthcare.

Then what I would like to focus on with our CATCH work, and I have a couple examples of this, is student transformations. When that is your end outcome, when you experience a student transformation, it's a vastly different thing than thinking about the nuts and bolts of a program. We are seeing student transformations on a daily basis. This is a nice example, I think, of our constellation of partnerships. It is really an interdependent relationship. Many of these are required mandated partners through our HPOG grant and a number of them are just so essential because of the expertise that they have, such as our Housing Hope community partner.

Many of our students are coming out of homelessness or faced with or in the midst of homelessness. And using their expertise to effectively work with them and their case managers has proven essential. Our colleges, our employers, our Workforce Investment Boards, our TANF local community service offices, and our host of community agencies all meet on a regular basis. We have very in-depth quarterly meetings with many crucial conversations going on in those meetings about how to coordinate our resources and services.

I say this because I realize that many of you listening do not have the kind of grant money to develop some of these programs right now. But there are a number of things I think we can do around coordination, leveraging and managing knowledge, which I really want to highlight.

This is one of our student transformations. Luce was a student who, in 2010, was living in her car with her family in the Washington State area after moving to Washington from California. One of her very first actions in coming here was to go to a local Workforce center, which in Washington State is a job repository and job support repository. She was looking for employment, was referred to TANF, applied for assistance, and was granted assistance.

Then she was referred to Emergency Housing, Housing Hope was part of that local housing provider, and received housing. Then from Housing Hope, one of our CATCH partners, she was referred to our program here at Edmonds Community College and, once her housing was stabilized, started our certified nursing assistant program. Now Luce has completed four certificates of completion in healthcare. She is on the pathway to becoming a Registered Nurse. She wants to be a Labor and Delivery Nurse.

After receiving certificates under the CATCH program, CATCH, very intentionally, works with all of our students to transition to other forms of financial aid. In Luce's case, she received a Federal Pell Grant to continue her education. With our Navigators and our close work with students, we're able to draw on and know of the natural supports of our students. In Luce's case, she has a very supportive family that we've been able to also use to leverage her success.

One of the chief barriers to postsecondary education is cost. The CATCH program provides all tuition and expenses for students. All supplies, books, everything is covered within our program. Then we work with the students to transition them to other forms of financial aid once they've maxed out the resources offered within our program.

A key component of CATCH is accelerated training. I think we're able to do that because of our high ration of hybrid instruction. We work with the healthcare content in a compressed way although it is not minimized.

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This is something the faculty are very clear on that in spite compression of the content, it does not compromise the rigor and the competencies required.

One of the other key features of our program is that we provide all of our students with a laptop computer and all the software that's needed to be successful in college and in our CATCH program. There is a dedicated online Navigator just for our students. She works off-site but she can also be on-site in our classrooms when needed. When students are bringing in their laptops into the classroom to use the in class, she is on-site to support them and guide them.

Previously, I mentioned the I-BEST model. We have a college success course, also similar to, I think, some of the other presenters. We front-load a college success and digital literacy curriculum and we back-load the key employment transition piece. More than two-thirds of our students move along the healthcare pathway immediately after our program, which includes up to two certificates of completion in healthcare. We require all of our students to take the certified nursing assistant exam and then they will have some options for a second certificate.

Many of our students take phlebotomy technology and EKG technology courses. From there, they are positioned to move along the healthcare pathway to our patient care technology program, health unit coordinator program, medical assisting program, or other technology path.

This just captures a little bit of the process we go through with students. Their readiness-to-benefit assessment is an on-site approach that we look at the full scope of the student, all of the strengths that they bring to the table. That is the social experiences and previous academic and work experience that they have. We really try to learn about the student and find out if this student is ready to benefit from an intense postsecondary training program at this time.

Now I mentioned that we have five start points over every year of our five-year grant. So, a student who might not quite be ready for language reasons or because of instability in their housing or some other area will not be denied access to our program. But instead, the Navigators will work with them on addressing that social need or that economic need or what have you and get them positioned for a future start point in our program.

So, in a sense they are weight listed for another start point. I think it is very motivating for them to see that they can address this particular issue, that they can set a goal and start the CATCH program on another date or in particular cohort or year. Some students are not able to join the healthcare program for other reasons, such as a disqualifying criminal background which assess right up front or maybe they are income ineligible. That's one of the main criterions, really the main criterion, for our program is income eligibility -- 175 percent of federal poverty.

If a student does have one of those disqualifying elements in their background, the great thing about being based at a community college is we can refer to them to another program on campus, refer them to financial aid or other forms of aid if they need it.

Once the student starts our program, they move into the college success course that I mentioned and then into digital literacy where they get their laptop computer. Then, they move into our hybrid I-BEST prerequisite courses, about 13 credits of courses. It is pretty intense. But, we are setting a foundation for them moving along in the healthcare pathway and having full options and opportunities to move along that pathway to advance certificates. If they have all those pre-requisites under their belt, then they are able to choose from so many other options and opportunities along that pathway.



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Once they finish those pre-requisite courses, we have about an 80 to 85 percent success rate with our students. That number, however, is regularly changing because we are finding that some of our students, about 15 or 20 percent stop participating usually for some very profound social reasons, a death in the family, some marital issues, sickness, or injury. Then, we offer them an opportunity to come back again because we have those five different start points over a year. We offer them that opportunity to come back and then move them into their clinical externships.

I am sensitive to the time, but I have a couple of examples of pathways. These were developed by my colleague at Everett Community College, Charlie Thompson, and depict our CATCH program. This particular pathway shows that students coming in do not have a high school diploma or GED, which is required, but they are interested in our program. We will work with them here at the college to secure their GED in preparation for CATCH.

Then, we will move them into our college success and digital literacy program courses, the other pre-requisites that I mentioned, and then, to the certified nursing certificate. Many of our students are obtaining a nursing assistant certification and immediately going out and finding work, which lends itself well to more of a portfolio type career. They can have various clients and various hours, which lends itself to pursuing advanced certificates, including a second certificate in phlebotomy or EKG.

One other example of a pathway, one we are hoping to more specifically implement this coming year, is the CATCH program that I have gone over. In this particular case, after CATCH, they would move into a medical assistant transfer degree. Then, from there, through a partnership that our community colleges have with Central Washington University, they move into a baccalaureate program.

The other thing I will point out before we move on is to look at the wage progression on the right hand side. What is interesting about this part in particular is a big part of the CATCH program is providing the entry level while positioning our students for moving along the healthcare pathway for wage progression.

Similar to, I think, FastTRAC and some of the other programs, we have a Navigation model and I think I have gone over that but I will just mention that we have a social Navigator full-time, embedded, or located on site working with the students on securing a host of their social needs and linking with their case managers to help meet their needs. We also have a job employment Navigator specifically working with the students to prepare them for employment. Whether they are going on the pathway or not, we're working closely with them on the soft skills and all aspects of personal marketing and working on the other side with employers to ensure that employers are knowledgeable about our program and our students. And then thirdly, as I mentioned, we have an online Navigator who is supporting that critical hybrid education piece.

Some of our key lessons learned to date really have to do with some of the key concepts I mentioned up front - coordination and leveraging and managing the knowledge base that already exists in our local area has proven key in our work and our success to date..

To end, there are a couple of links I have on my final page but I also wanted to end with an additional student spotlight. This was a student who was referred to us through one of our partners at the Immigrant and Refugee Services Northwest. I will let you read the slide, but what I like about this slide is that it speaks to what I was saying earlier about transformations. It is not the best picture of this student because it is small but here is a student, in her scrubs, with a stethoscope around her neck, and a name tag, and she is standing very confidently.

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One of the things I like to do when I go out and present on our program is to ask the audience about what they see about this student, what do they notice about Nina? Often they will mention the scrubs. –Well, this is a student transformed in a lot of ways. She is very confident. If you read her quote it reads with confidence. She feels like she has opportunities now and options in her life and if you compare it to when she came in, it is very clear. Just from this picture alone, I think it is very evident that she looks like a professional standing there. That is exciting for us to see.

My final slide is some contact information. I realize I only had a few minutes with you all but I hope the actions that you away are that you will check out the other Health Profession Opportunity Grants that are out there. I think of them as engines of innovation out there around healthcare pathway and stackable credential work. There are modeled, varied approaches but there is probably one near you that can offer you some lessons learned on their work to date.

I also included the I-BEST model information and our CATCH Web pages. I have also highlighted seven other student success stories, which you might find interesting as well. So thank you very much for your time.

***James Butler, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families,
Office of Family Assistance***

Thank you so much, John. We are actually out of time and I am not sure how much additional time we will have for question and answers. But I will go ahead and turn it over to Jackie at ICF who will move us into the question and answer session, Jackie.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you, James. Okay, we are going to move into a Q&A session. I know we are a little behind time but if you can stay, feel free, that would be great. The first thing I wanted to address is some people have asked about the PowerPoint. You should have received them this morning in an email from the Welfare Peer TA Network as a PDF. But, we will also be sending those out in the coming weeks as well as the audio from the Webinar and the transcription, so just look out for that.

Okay, now, the first question is for all the presenters. Someone asked, as far as attendance in the program, what strategies do you use to keep the participants coming back and wanting to complete it? So if anyone wants to answer that first, go ahead.

Judy Mortrude, Minnesota FastTRAC:

This is Minnesota. I would say that our Navigator strategy has been really a key to this. The Navigators are there in the classrooms weekly, they are on top of any potential type of issues that come up that make students stop attending. So they have been a real key part of our strategy for keeping people engaged.

Elizabeth Ehrlich, Parks Opportunity Program:

This is Liza from the New York City Parks Department. I can say for us it is a transitional jobs model. People are working – they are working in our program. They are paid for their work with us whether it is working on increasing their marketability or whether it is their actual work at the job site.

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So non-compliance is grounds for progressive discipline and termination because it is a job. We are providing services for people, crucial services throughout their employment, but it is a job and they are paid for their time. We definitely perform progressive discipline and, if necessary, we'll terminate non-compliant employees.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you both. Okay the next question is specifically for the Minnesota FastTRAC program. Someone asked, how can we see the career pathways for the six areas mentioned under the FastTRAC program? For example, are there courses in the bridge and integrated portions or certification?

Judy Mortrude, Minnesota FastTRAC:

I am not sure that I fully understand that question but all of the local programs, the grants from last year 2011 and the new grants for 2012, are on the Web site. So if you go to www.mnfasttrac.org, About FastTrac and local programs, people can see that and all the partners are listed there. Then you can see what occupational sector the grant is in, which partners are working together, what credentials are being awarded, and what employers are part of the program.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you. We have another question for Minnesota. Someone wanted to know who developed the curriculum and the learning materials for the bridge program. Do you all develop that or does someone else?

Danielle Kressi, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development:

No, the bridge programs are developed in collaboration between the ABE, the Adult Basic Education, and the college instructor. That's been one of our big pushes, that for many years ABE programs were developing bridges kind of in isolation without really knowing what they needed to know to get people to land in the right place.

By doing the integrated instruction model, where the Adult Basic Education instructor could be in the welding class or in the manufacturing class, they learn what they need to build a real successful bridge. Those materials are also shared in our Minnesota repository of course work. We do not have the link up here but we can get that link to you to publicize. Again, that is all free course work that has been developed through our grant process and is readily sharable.

I also know that most of that course work has been consumed by the www.acp-sc.org, the adult career pathway Web site. They have taken most of our curriculum and put it up into their very searchable free database as well.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you. Okay our next two questions are for the Heartland Alliance. Someone first asked if Jay could provide more of a basic definition, just a little more of an explanation around what digital literacy means.

Jay Landau, Heartland Alliance:

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Sure, I would be happy to. Digital literacy at a basic level is building skills and competencies related to using technology – using computers and the Internet. The way we approach digital literacy is really in the context of work, so that the digital literacy learning that's going on with the participants in our traditional jobs programs would be related to the ability to create an email account, write an email copy text from a Microsoft Word document into the body of an email, attach a resume to an email, and do an online job application.

We are really talking about the computer skills that are needed to obtain a job. What Nancy and I are really excited about developing further are computer skills that would help participants to retain a job as well and, of course, the skills that I just mentioned would that. But, we are looking to continue to build our digital literacy curriculum. I hope I answered the question.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you, Jay.

And the other question I have for you all right now is, how do you find employers for those transitional jobs and who pays the wages for those jobs?

Nancy Phillips, Heartland Alliance:

Transitional jobs wages are paid through our funder but we pay them so that we are the employer of record. We place participants at a work site for 12 weeks. We have also done that kind of in house model with some of our programs but have also partnered with external employers and utilized a work crew model so that the whole group is a cohort that starts and stops at one time, for example at Greater Chicago Food Depository. They start and have the same 12 weeks together The peer support piece has actually been a great part of the success of the program, I think.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you, Nancy.

Okay now we have a couple quick questions for Liza from the POP program. Someone asked, first, do the participants get paid for the days they spend in training? And also, is there a curriculum for the days that they spend in training and is it possible to get a copy of it?

Elizabeth Ehrlich, Parks Opportunity Program:

They are paid for the day that they spend in training and we have a variety of different sorts of workshops that all fall under the same curriculum that is used. Whoever is interested in doing that please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly and we will see what we could potentially share.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you, Liza. Okay now we have a question for John from the CATCH program. What are some strategies that you have used to get employer buy-in in your program?

John House, CATCH:



Webinar Transcription

Stackable Credentials and Career Pathway Opportunities for TANF Participants

One of our main partners is the WIB, the local Workforce Investment Board. Our WIB staffs are work source centers around Washington State and they have job developers as part of the local WIB in these workforce centers. The job developers in partnership with our job development employment Navigator work closely to bring information about our CATCH program students, the curriculum, That is one aspect.

Our local job developers are aware of our program. They are connected to our program and are sharing information as they do outreach with employers, healthcare employers, about our students. More importantly, I think, is being a community college training effort. In fact, in two community colleges, we have healthcare advisory panels that really drive the curriculum. The externship sites and the externship requirements that our students have are often the first in depth healthcare experience for many of our students. It is often the first opportunity they have to be employed. It is almost like a protracted interview when they do their externship.

Those externship experiences are connecting to employers. Having our students connect with employers advisory panels that we have as part of our healthcare programs, the local Workforce Investment Board job developers, and working in concert with our on-site Navigators are strategies we are using.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Great. Thank you, John. And we have another question for you. Do you track what happens to participants who drop out of the program? And can someone reapply if they drop out?

John House, CATCH:

Yes, as part of the HPOG system there is a relatively new data management system. It is driven by data. We enter all students into the system which allows us to have basic information on all of our students. A student who does drop out is in our system and we maintain contact with them. We push out information on a quarterly basis to students who have not completed our program.

We also advertise other community college resources to them. We realize that healthcare, the hybrid nature of our program, or the compressed nature of our program might not be a fit for them, but there are a myriad of other community college resources and programs that could support that student. It is important to the college, both colleges, that we maintain contact with all students in our program who applied to our program and who did not finish.

What we do find almost without fail is that any student who steps out of our program wants desperately to come back in. They typically stepped out because, as I mentioned, of a serious, often very serious, issue in their life. We work with them on identifying a date to possibly reenter and then maybe have some stair steps leading up to that date, some check in points. Are they following up on what they need to, are they addressing their challenge, and how are they addressing it?

We work very intentionally on bringing students back into the program unless there was a really clear fit issue with the student. Then, we're referring them to other campus resources.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you, John. I am going to ask a question for everyone now. How do you all work with people who have barriers to employment such as not having a driver's license, transportation, or child care issues?

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Elizabeth Ehrlich, Parks Opportunity Program:

I can go first. With regards to driver's licenses, we do actually have training to help people get driver's licenses while they are here with us. Of course, they have to get their permit first and a lot of different things that are solely dependent on them before we can assist the driver training. But that is a component of our program that I did not mention during the presentation.

Of course for us, we are in New York City so that is not a major barrier. We have really sort of unbelievable public transportation. But, what I can say is that are barriers that really come more in the form of child care. While people may have child care because it is provided to them, it just might be difficulty in coordinating child care or they have to drop off their children on three different subways before they come to work in the morning or that sort of thing.

We do have supportive services where people on our staff are helping to coordinate with the trainee. We also have with a great relationship with the city's Human Resources Administration where we work to make sure that there are no outstanding issues regarding the child care that is provided to them. Ultimately, it just involves case-by-case basis of sitting down with the person and brainstorming about the different ways that they can coordinate the resources that they do have to make sure that there is adequate coverage.

Occasionally, it can involve changing their work schedule but we have to be really careful with that because this is a transitional job and that may not happen in their next work site. So, we explore how participants are looking at scheduling and their child care obligations as an overall component of their employability and what they can and cannot do with their next job.

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Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you, Liza. And then as a follow up to that we've also had two questions related to this for everybody. Do you work with participants with a criminal record? Could someone speak to that?

Nancy Phillips, Heartland Alliance:

Yes, our entire current transitional job population is specific to persons who have a record, a criminal conviction in their background. We work in other programs as well with people with old and new convictions.

John House, CATCH:

This is John from the CATCH program. We definitely see at least one-third, maybe more, of our applicants who have significant criminal issues in their background. And as I mentioned, if it is of a disqualifying nature, we can work with them on looking into other education training opportunities here at the college.

Within healthcare, and I mentioned high-tech to high-touch continuum of healthcare, there could still be some areas within healthcare that would qualify for that individual based on their background; so, we will explore that as well. We have our Navigators who are experienced in referring those individuals with disqualifying crimes to resources in the community that specifically work with individuals with a certain background and exploring options, et cetera.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International

Thank you, I guess we are going to wrap up for today. We know that there are some questions that have not yet been asked and we will send those out to the presenters and send out the responses to those questions with the transcript and PowerPoints later on.

So now I am going to hand it back over to James to close us out. Thank you.

James Butler, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance

It looks like we are losing everybody quickly. So I just want to thank everyone, all those who joined us for today's Webinar – and a special appreciation to all of the speakers for today, for taking time out of your schedules to share information with us.

We hope that the information here was beneficial to you and the communities that you serve and we encourage you to begin thinking about ideas for next steps in your community as a result from the knowledge gained from this Webinar.

We will have transcript and audio recording made available for everyone within the next two to three weeks for this particular Webinar. As you close out please be sure to fill out the evaluation poll that will pop up as you exit the Webinar.

On behalf of the Office of Family Assistance, I thank you all so much and have a pleasant day.