

Workforce³One

Transcript of Webinar

ETA Supporting Sector Strategies Industry Engagement Peer Learning Group

2) Developing, Utilizing, and Appreciating Industry Champions

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

*Transcript by
Noble Transcription Services
Murrieta, CA*

BRIAN KEATING: I'm going to go ahead and transition to now. So I do want to welcome everyone to today's ETA Supporting Sector Strategies Industry Engagement Peer Learning Group webinar. So again, introduce yourself, if you haven't already done that. Ask questions and comments using that chat, and then we'll also let you know about asking questions and making comments through the phone line in a little bit.

But for now, to kick things off I want to turn things over to Patricia Maguire from Jobs for the Future. Patricia, whenever you're ready.

PATRICIA MAGUIRE: Okay. Great. Thank you, Brian, and thanks, everyone, for joining today. Today is the second webinar in the series for the industry engagement peer learning group. We had our kickoff one in November and talked about how to move beyond a hub and spoke model of employer industry engagement to doing a convening multiple employers within a sector that we really want to focus on when we want a successful sector partnership.

So today we're going to be talking about some strategies on how to do that, how to get that deep engagement, and we're going to talk about how to develop, utilize, and appreciate industry champions to kind of get to that deeper level of employer engagement.

And so today what we're going to do is – oops. Sorry. Used the wrong button to forward the slide.

So I'm going to give a few opening resources and what they've kind of defined or had to say about industry champions, and we're going to hear from two practitioner speakers in the field on how, within their sector partnership, they've engaged industry and really utilized their champions to further their sector partnerships plan and agenda and vision.

So first, we're going to hear from Amanda Duncan who's from the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas. Then we'll hear from Eric Karmecy from the Oh-Penn Pathways to Competitiveness. And what we're going to do is have them each present for maybe seven or so minutes, and then, as Brian said, feel free to chat questions while they're talking in the chat and I'll be monitoring.

And if there's some specific question for the individual speakers, I may pose them after they've done their brief presentation. But we're also going to open it up after both of them do a short presentation for more discussion and more interactive Q&A. So that will be kind of the meat of the conversation today, and then we'll do a quick wrap up and talk about some next steps and some things that are coming up on this project.

So just to go into a little bit about what we mean by when we talk about industry champions, I found when I looked, a few – and I mentioned this on our previous webinar too, the – some of these resources, and they're also available. I have a URL here, and they're available for download in the file share as well, as Brian said. And we will be posting these on the website as well so you can kind of access them later too.

But the first one is the Colorado Regional Sector Partnership Convener Training Workbook, which has a lot of great information about specifics and how-to's. And when they kind of talk about how to engage industry champions, there really is a power in that label. So we're purposely using champions and not using the word representative because champions can note more of an action and a doing versus a talking and because that's what we want. You really want to put some – have your champions take on some ownership and then be willing to invest time and their resources.

And so similarly in that vein, in Comm Corp Partnership: Workforce Development Practitioner's Guide they also define champions as business leaders that believe in the work, are committed to the vision, and then the key next step is they're willing to use their power and prestige to garner support for the effort.

So really helping to use whatever leverage they have, kind of engaging other peers or competitors or people in the industry using the resources at their disposal, whether it be equipment or staff support or all of that. So you really want folks to put some skin in the game in terms of your business champions.

And this isn't published yet. This is in the works. The ETA sector strategies project is putting together a guide to compile the resources and add some additional ones where there's some gaps, but we also talk about really using those champions to do peer to peer, to help convene a larger group of employers. It can be daunting, the prospect of engaging multiple employers. How do you get to that point?

So if you break it down – and that's what we're trying to talk about on today's webinar – and kind of convert or get a few key champions within the industry, then they can really be helpful in driving those other engagement efforts to get even more employers and businesses around the table. And especially when it's those first few – first meeting or call to have those champions do the invite versus the workforce board or community college or whoever other partners doing that, that makes a big difference in kind of getting in the door and getting some response.

So those are some of the key resources that I recommend in terms of what we mean by industry champion and kind of some of the definition or criteria, so to speak. And you'll hear some of this more. Our practitioners will go into more detail about – and expand upon some of these criteria and definitions as well.

So without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our first speaker, Amanda Duncan, who is the vice president and chief business development officer at Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas. Amanda, I'll turn things over to you.

AMANDA DUNCAN: Thank you, Tricia. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this call from the chilly Wichita, Kansas. I've seen some of you log in and introduce yourselves. So I'm jealous of you who said you're from Hawaii, but thank you for joining. I want to give a little bit of background about the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas and a project we have called PACES.

We are the local workforce investment board for the Wichita, Kansas and surrounding six-county metro. For those of you who have not been to Kansas before, Wichita is actually the largest city in the state, and we are a hub of aviation. So in 2008 our workforce board partnered with several companies and other entities in Wichita to form the PACES project and become a site for the National Fund for Workforce Solution.

We began with roughly five or six aviation companies. And if you're not familiar, Wichita is home to several OEM, original equipment manufacturers of both commercial and general aviation as well as some military contracts as well. So if you've ever flown on a plane commercially, it was either built or designed in Wichita, some, all, part. We're home – we had Boeing for many years, and we have a large Airbus engineering center. And so that really led to the aviation cluster development.

In addition to that, as aviation is cyclical, we've developed partnerships in healthcare and IT, which I'll talk a little bit more about today, but those industry partners came together. And as you can see on this slide, through PACES we've served just over 3200 people and gotten 1600 jobs in aviation, 300 in healthcare, and 400 in other sector. Oh, excuse me. I've left out our healthcare number, which that field should be 13.

So as I said, our aviation cluster grew to the 91 employers it is today from a core group of five to six employers. And our healthcare cluster really started out with two primary employers, and so in total for the eight years we've seen an investment of about \$3.1 million.

We've had difficulty breaking into healthcare sector. As I mentioned, we started with two main employers, and those were competing hospitals. Those two hospitals, one of them is the largest hospital health system in the state. The other is a privately owned group, and in the past couple of years they've both gone through major transitions dealing with being bought out by corporate health center chains. Excuse me just a second while I try to advance this.

So one thing we did to bring this cluster together through an initiative that we were able to participate through Jobs for the Future as well as some local initiatives to bring the healthcare sector up was provide the sector complete research. We had worked with both of the major healthcare employers to try to get them to come to the table and they were not interested because they were competitors and they just couldn't get over that.

They wanted to work with us individually, but they didn't want to work together with their competitor. In addition to that there was major leadership changes at both of these hospitals, and so as you can see there, we compiled data.

We had technical assistance to compile some of this labor market information, and this is some of the data we presented to the employers, which they really liked the feedback. They could see where the concentration is, the opportunities for the market, the amount of impact it has on the economy. And so then that really got the conversation started.

Another thing that we did to help recruit a champion for this industry was to work with somebody who didn't work for either one of the two groups. We were able to find a dynamic

individual from the local medical society. So it was a group already working, although on different areas than workforce, with the health systems that had a relationship, had clout in the community both in the medical community as well as just the community overall was a leader, a civic leader, et cetera.

So this person helped bring these two groups together to the point that we were able to bring another individual that did work for one of the employers to the table to help develop additional programs, rolling out apprenticeship programs. They traveled with us to the national funds meeting in Baltimore and have just been really on fire for the industry.

This slide here just kind of details a script that we used once we were able to get multiple, those 13 employers to the table to talk to them about the value of working together as an industry. So we talked to them about how they can save time and money. It's kind of a selfish reason to come to the table because they're all going to individually go to seek resources.

So if they do it as a group, they can bring that \$3.6 billion number to the table. They can show the 36,000 employees they have to bankers to request infrastructure for training needs. The other thing is that in addition to those two large health employers, there's boutique hospitals. There's a lot of outpatient care in Wichita, and so we talked to them about coming to the table will give them superior knowledge, advantage over other local competitors or other competitors in the region that may be outside of Wichita, the Oklahoma City market, the Kansas City market, etcetera.

And so this is kind of a script that we have, and after we got those initial companies to the table, we really started talking about making a peer-to-peer ask. This is why you would sell it to your competitor, because there's a lot more weight that comes to a company when their peer is talking to them about a need than when the government or the workforce center or even the mayor sometimes can have. So this is kind of a script that we – excerpts from a script that we use.

And then finally I just wanted to talk about the challenges and some of the outcomes we've had. So number one, the thing that I would tell you all to remember is collaboration is not easy. This is kind of a mantra that we have in our office that we have to remind our self that – when we get frustrated. It's not easy, so don't expect it to be easy and don't get frustrated too easily when things don't go smoothly because it's baby steps.

We also talk in Wichita a lot about cooperation. That's the combination of cooperation and competition. You need a healthy amount of both for your industry collaborative to succeed. And then some of the outcomes that we've seen in small scale and some in larger scale are a stronger location quotient, a better tie to related industries or the supply chain, or more of that type of company wanting to locate here or grow businesses because the main industry is strong.

And then we've gotten better data from the companies. They've cooperated with us more so that we can back up decision making with the policy level or funding, investments from either the local government, the state government, or where we invest our private grant dollars. And then the industry awareness of the industry comes together to do recruiting, leads to a better talent pipeline.

So for instance, in our manufacturing industry we've had a group really come together of about 40 – excuse me – 32 companies to try to increase the awareness of high school students to enter manufacturing careers. And in the last year we've seen a 7 percent increase in the number of high school students enrolling in manufacturing courses. So that's just one outcome that they know they're helping to grow their talent pipeline for the future.

So that's kind of basically just an overview of what's going on in Wichita and the successes that we've had, which in my mind are minor because, as I said, collaboration is not easy. Getting people to the table takes a lot of patience and recognition of those employers, openly trying to communicate, reaching out multiple times, and then all of that hard work does lead to that magic of the collaboration coming together.

MS. MAGUIRE: Thanks, Amanda. And I actually just wanted to follow up too. I love the cooptation thing, which is so true, and I know, especially like you mentioned, in healthcare you were having to challenge getting folks because of the competition aspect. And you did a great job of using labor market data to kind of get them to the table as a nice carrot. And to follow up on your point, in terms of taking time, what really struck me with your healthcare example is that you almost were able to convert someone that you were – one of the big healthcare employers that is like you were meeting with multiple times, and you have to be kind of opportunistic at these and see what – keep up with them.

And then you were able to identify a need they had and help out with it and then kind of convert them into a champion. They were kind of like, we got this or we're using other agencies for – (inaudible) – for service, and you were able to kind of convert that. (Inaudible) – other tips around that in terms of just you kept kind of circling, coming back to them to make sure you're checking in even though they weren't engaging right at the beginning but were able to kind of jump on it when they did have a need.

MS. DUNCAN: Yes. I want to just point out that it's really important to keep bringing back to the forefront to the employer what's in it for them, how this is benefitting them. And we were really able to convert somebody who had – didn't want anything to do with working as the industry really to become that champion because the individual at the company saw how greatly it was impacting the nursing coming into her facilities, multiple facilities in the region.

And then she was able to see that it was impacting the overall nursing quality that was coming out because the main school that they hired from also supplied nurses to other healthcare providers. And so that's where it finally clicked for her that it's an industry-wide issue. Even though that was the model at her hospital, the way they did their initial intake and hiring was different than other people, they all needed the same skill set. And so showing them what's in it for them can lead to many more things that can help the industry.

MS. MAGUIRE: And sometimes you just have to repeat it again and again or say it different ways because once you get their attention, you almost have to – even though you think you told them the services that you can offer, sometimes until you fully get their attention when they're like, wait a minute. You can help me with this, or you can connect me and help with this? Then

it snowballs and you can say, we also offer this. And they're like, you do? And in your head you're like, well, yes. Remember I've told you multiple times. But sometimes it just takes that persistence and constant reminder.

So great. Checking. Anyone have any specific questions for Amanda before I move on? And feel free if you think of something later to chat it in and we can come back to it in the main Q&A section. I see someone's typing. So I want to give it a second. It's coming up. I'll hold on. I don't want to move. So let's move on, and we can circle back to questions later as well. So thank you, Amanda, for sharing and staying on to answer some questions in a little bit.

And it's my pleasure to introduce next our second practitioner speaker, Eric Karmecy, who's with Oh-Penn Pathways to Competitiveness, project manager with the West Central Job Partnership. Eric, I'll turn things over to you.

ERIC KARMECY: Thanks, Tricia, and thank you all for participating today. It's a pleasure to be here. Greetings from the Oh-Penn interstate region here in Western Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio. Our project really brought together 400 regional stakeholders back in early 2012 in the manufacturing sector to identify key workforce challenges and opportunities that were facing the region.

And from some of these regional planning efforts we were able to develop a strategic plan which really became the basis for our workforce innovation fund grant, a round one application. Today we have about 100 unique manufacturing employers who are part of this effort. This is a two-state effort, five counties, three workforce investment areas.

And basically, to address some of the expansive project objectives, we created the implementation structure that you see on your slide here. This was developed during our manufacturing forum the following year in 2013, and the structure breaks the projects out by subject matter with specific action teams overseeing each area of focus.

As you can see at the bottom of the slide, the five primary action teams that we developed, including outreach and marketing pipeline development, career pathways, work-based learning, and of course employer engagement, sort of the topic of our discussion here today. And these action teams vary in size and scope.

The composition of the team includes stakeholders that are necessary for successful implementation. And while we have multiple employers involved and participating in each one of the action teams, at least one employer also serves as the lead or the champion, as Tricia referred to early today.

This champion for us is someone who takes personal interest and responsibility for advancing a particular facet of project implementation. The champion sort of serves as a cheerleader and acts to rally buy-in from partners, serves as an advocate to build support from others.

And these champions can be as involved as they choose to be in terms of the technical oversight, but in each case, in each one of these action teams it is an employer who serves as the

spokesperson for the activity that is conducted by the team. And this employer, as the champion, is responsible for making presentations, reporting progress to general members, and informing other general stakeholder groups.

Oftentimes the action teams work together on projects that concern multiple areas of focus. For example, the outreach and marketing action team often works with the employer engagement action team to create marketing materials and appropriate messaging for recruiting business partners. I have included as an attachment a handout called implementation structure that gets into the more specific definitions that we've created for each of these teams.

Moving on to some other key employer engagement strategies that we've experienced over the years, some of which Amanda and Tricia hit on earlier, the first thing I just want to mention is the offering of individualized consideration. Obviously these are large industry consortia. We're bringing multiple employers together.

There does need to be some form of individual concern for each participating member, particularly from a communicative perspective. So we all know that business engagement is about relationships, and relationships built on trust are not developed over night but over the course of time. And so mass letters and e-mails are nice, but done alone they're not going to cut it.

So we've got to offer this individualized consideration for the unique needs of all businesses involved. So when we approach businesses, we do it with the mindset and the objective is discovery. What are their challenges? What are their passions? Who are their drivers, and how can we leverage their subject matter experts and leaders from within each business to benefit the industry as a whole? So what we want to do is just going with the mindset of finding out who wants to make a difference and provide them then with the support and resources to get it done.

The next thing that we have on the slide here is clear articulation of benefits, roles, and responsibilities. Every stakeholder has a critical role to play, but businesses are not going to invest their time unless they have a clear understanding of the benefits. So what we did was we laid out the specific benefits of their participation in black and white.

What can we achieve for the industry and for individual businesses if we set out to achieve it together? What type of investment, what must we make to be successful? And what are the things that businesses may be called upon to do in order to achieve that success? We put these to paper, and again, that is a handout that's available. There's an example under partner benefits and roles.

The next thing on the slide is taking a – looking at customized participation options. So not all partners can or should be expected to do all things, but there should be sort of something for everyone. So what we've done over the years is offer a wide pallet of participatory offerings. Each action team has a diverse set of projects which require business input.

So things could be as simple as participating in surveys or skill gap analysis; could be sitting down with a group of employers to look at the curriculum design or advising schools on curriculum development; could be credential adoption, career pathways ambassadors.

We ask our employers to do a lot of things, participate in job fairs, mock interviews, help us with research or to validate research that we've done. We ask them to serve as hosts for a number of events and activities. They can't possibly be involved in each and every one of these things. The important thing is that we give them enough variety so that there's an option for them to participate in at least one. And again, here we have – I've included the ambassador form and the credential option pledge as example highlights as well.

Employer champions and peer-to-peer communication, going to skip over those two for now and then get down to media matters. For us what we found was that it's important to document your accomplishments and successes but also then to put them to paper and share. It's amazing how much free press you can get when employers are driving the agenda.

You want to build relationships with your businesses but then also with the local media. Invite them to general membership meetings and let them hear about your success. We found a phenomenal partner in the form of the business journal, I know recognizing that not every media market has a business journal in their backyard, but to look for and find promoters of positive news. And when you find one, bring them to the table. Invite them to be there. Let them take your story and run with it. It's a pretty cost-effective way to get your message out to other employers.

And then of course speaking their language. Mentioned trust and individualized consideration earlier. To build effective relationships with businesses, we got to learn to speak their language. So we don't want to burden them with our own language, our own acronyms or workforce slang, but we want to create messaging and collateral materials that sound like they were authored by industry experts.

And in our case they sound that way because they were designed by industry experts. So we have an employer brochure, for example, that we use to recruit other businesses. This was developed with this thought exactly in mind. We used an industry perception survey to determine the messaging as well as input from our industry consortia leaders to develop a specific language that's included in that brochure. And again, that's an attachment here.

Finally, I just want to touch on nurturing existing relationships. Urge you not to take existing commitments for granted. I know early in my career I did just that. So it was kind of a hard lesson learned, but the recruitment of a new business partner is not the end of our efforts. It's just the beginning. Names and faces change. Business contacts move on. Companies get bought and sold. People are promoted. They retire. They move on to other jobs, other industries. Keep this in mind as you're building your relationship.

Find champions from multiple levels of each participating business and work with your business partners to ensure the participation becomes part of the culture of that organization. When they attend a meeting, they're taking the information that they acquire in that meeting back to their

home office and they're sharing it with others in their organization so that if and when they leave or move on, this has been something that's been a philosophy that's been adopted by the organization itself, not any one individual.

And then of course maintaining regular contact. And for us of course it's important to do the phone calls, the e-mails, the meetings, large-scale group meetings but we also try to visit each partner at their place of business in person at least once a year.

So those are some of the things that we have found to be successful, and look forward to hearing from others from around the country today on things that you guys have done to be successful as well. Tricia?

MS. MAGUIRE: Great. Thanks so much, Eric, and great advice. And actually, just wanted to circle back. I know we talked a little bit and you skipped over a little bit in this slide but the peer-to-peer communication is just a huge, huge thing to pay attention to. And I know you guys have used it a lot too, and just wanted to ask if you could say a little bit more about the specifics?

So asking your employer champions to actually just – and have you – has it been helpful to kind of draft talking points for folks if you're asking them to shoot an e-mail to a fellow business or have a phone conversation about the project asking them to participate, what are different things you can do to help your champions be better communicators even with their peers?

MR. KARMECY: Sure. Yeah. Workforce practitioners can offer businesses all the advice in the world, but no act is more compelling to a business than the endorsement or success story delivered straight from the mouth of their colleagues or competitors. So that is definitely something that we have tried to focus on.

Actually, a large number of our businesses that are involved today initially came to the table at the urging of one employer in particular who wrote a very compelling two-page personal letter several years ago at the very initial stages of this. And so in that case we weren't even at the table yet ourselves. The business them self had created the talking points.

Now, as we've progressed and developed resources to address this more broadly, yes. Absolutely we do do those types of things and providing talking points, but we're also asking that they call upon others to help identify what those talking points are.

MS. MAGUIRE: Yeah. And it's – sometimes even folks ask for the talking points but they'll go off script and do their own thing, but it's always – it's one of those things people love to ask for talking points so they have them and they – I see in the chat too Tina Burger [ph] mentioned that they also use champions to call their peers to complete occupational skill surveys and give them a script for the call.

So things like that go a long way. I mean, we all do it; right? We do it for other folks or even our bosses sometimes. You draft up an e-mail and say, here's some suggested language or here's some talking points or things to highlight or – especially if it's a – maybe some statistic if there's a – (inaudible) – a sector partnership, a training program going. You may put together, I've done

this in the past in different roles, some current numbers. Be like, they're doing really great. They have this many participants. They have these skills or something like that to arm the business with even more information to kind of encourage their peers to come to the table. So that's great.

And wanted to circle back to – I love your point about that when you approach businesses, the objective is discovery because, I mean, to be honest, we're engaging industry because we're – we want them involved in our programs.

But what you need to present and what's really important and kind of we need to shift when we're talking to businesses is immediately try to engage them and tell them what's in it for them and not start saying, we're a great program and we are offering this, this, and this, which you can – you want to get to that, but you want to start with – and I love that word, discovery. It's discovering what their challenges are, their pain points.

So I just – I didn't know if you had anything more to say about that, but I just wanted to call that out because that kind of is a nice way to think about employer engagement, and that kind of shifts your talk – your own kind of language and how you would approach a business or employer.

MR. KARMECY: Yeah. I mean, we are passionate about what we do. We have a lot to say and a lot of different things to do, but you have to go in and be disciplined to not regurgitate all those things because you can overwhelm them very quickly. I mean, we all have great knowledge of our programs, but when we're conveying them, I mean, you have to tell people several times before they start to get it.

And what we're looking to do really is find employers who are willing to drive it. So keeping in mind that all of the things that we want so passionately to tell them about, these are things in this specific project that employers have created as key objectives of the project.

So when we go in, I'm looking for talent. I'm looking to find – when I'm sitting down with a business, I want to talk to as many people there at as many different levels as I can, and I want to find somebody who has passion about what it is that they do and about some of the challenges or opportunities that they see in terms of building and improving their workforce within their organization.

And that's the mindset you go in with, particularly on the – in the early stages is to get those people to the table so that they can help you mold the project plan moving forward.

MS. MAGUIRE: Exactly. That's what we're trying to work towards, creating buy-in. So thank you, Eric. And so I want to open it now up to both our speakers and some Q&A, and I want to – let's invite Brian back to give us a little technical update on – folks, feel free to keep chatting questions into the main chat, but there's also opportunity to unmute your lines. And I'm forgetting, Brian, what that queue is.

MR. KEATING: No problem. So to unmute your phone line, everybody, the way you're going to do that is by pressing *6 on your phone. So *6 will unmute your line. If you could go ahead and let us know what question or comment you have, go ahead and once you're unmuted introduce yourself verbally and then give your question or comment or ask your question or make your comment.

And then once you are done asking your question or making your comment, you can press *6 again to remute your line. So again, *6 to unmute your phone line. Please go ahead and press *6 again to remute once you're done, and we want to invite you to go ahead and do that now if you've got questions or comments you'd like to share verbally. Like Patricia said, you can absolutely continue to ask them over the chat, but we do invite you to chime in with us over the phone as well.

MS. MAGUIRE: Great. Thanks, Brian. And just to kick us off too to go back to some of the questions that were coming in while our practitioners were speaking, wanted to go back. Sherry Taylor (sp), you had a great point about having quotes particularly from those who have gone from a naysayer to believers and champions and asking if we have the quotes to share. And I know Gail Green (sp) had mentioned that you guys use business testimonials, and they go a long way towards attracting new business.

And I have to agree. I've used them in – when I was employer coordinator and job developer myself in different ways, and I've seen other folks do it. But it's a good question in terms of – I don't know if – I know, Amanda, you had written that you don't have any available, but it's a great idea and – but, Eric, do you guys have any – in terms of – I feel like it might be a tricky thing to share, but my mind is going too to see if there's a way we can maybe set up something to – if folks get permission from their business partners, to share a quote or something that others can access who are maybe trying to start a new sector partnership and can say, another manufacturer or healthcare or IT company in another region had this experience or something of that.

So, Amanda, Eric, anything to jump in on that point in terms of business testimonials or quotes?

MS. DUNCAN: This is Amanda. We have used some statistics related to either the return on the investment or the business impact as far as maybe a lower attrition rate or lower turnover to talk about the financial impact that can happen with the business.

And we do have some testimonials on certain aspects of our partnerships, but one kind of funny story that one of our main champions, who has even moved employers and continues to be a real driving force even though the company she worked for changed, she said, you're the best kept secret I don't want my competitors to know about you because it helps my business so much, which of course then drove more people to inquire.

So really even though she wasn't giving a testimonial, just the fact that saying, you're my – the secret to my business through kind of a humorous impact had people inquire with us. So obviously we're not publishing that at our website, the best kept secret, but yeah. So that's something that was kind of impactful.

MS. MAGUIRE: That's awesome. Yeah. And I know, folks – and actually, I was going to pull up – I know, Eric, you have your brochure. Folks, I've used the quotes similar to that. I love the best kept secret one, and it's kind of ironic that makes people be like, really? But using similar ones on program brochures or on websites or things of that nature. Eric, did you have that on your – what's on your brochure, or have you used quotes or testimonials?

MR. KARMECY: The language in our brochure is limited. It's – it focuses on some of the benefits, attracting the next generation, the training, the developing relevant programs. It really is focused on that. We did not include – it's a great idea to include this testimony. The media that I was talking about, we can't have a meeting without – I'm talking about crews of – I mean, we're on TV. We're on the radio, and we don't pay for any of this stuff.

Every meeting we have multiple media sources now that show up to every meeting and give us a lot of free advertising and testimonials from the businesses who are there. We usually have about 50 people at our meetings. Usually about 25 to 35 companies are represented out of those 50 people.

And the companies are the ones reporting, and the media's there listening to them and quoting them and then taking it and putting it into their press after the event and grabbing people after to do video for TV and those types of things. So it's really been incredible some of the free stuff that we've been able to get from the local regional media here.

MS. MAGUIRE: And actually, you queued me up for – I had a follow-up question I wanted to ask both of you too, and you – because you touched on it a little bit in your presentation. I want to draw it out because once you develop and really utilize and put your champions to work, you also want to make sure you're kind of rewarding them or acknowledging them, recognizing, appreciating, whatever the words.

I know media is one way, and businesses usually like that good press, free press, free publicity or PR, advertising. Amanda, you mentioned taking employers with you to the national fund meeting, and that's kind of a nice way to appreciate them. And I didn't know if you guys had any other tips or ways that you have recognized your employer champions for the work that they do in your different programs. So Amanda, do you want to start or –

MS. DUNCAN: Yeah. One of the things that we are really cognizant of is every time that we have a grant opportunity – anywhere from 40 to 50 percent of our budget comes from non-federal funding even though we're a workforce board. We are aggressive about applying for other grant opportunities. So those champions are who we contact first when we have grant dollars available for flexible or innovative approaches.

So for instance we received some money for a women's non-traditional training program to have women enter manufacturing. So we reached out to those companies first who were our champions for our aviation program because there was OJT dollars that were associated with that. We received a Boeing grant for OJT. We reached out to those companies who were at the table

active, engaged in the industry first. So it's kind of like something that we can offer them for their great partnership.

MS. MAGUIRE: That's great. Training dollars – OJT dollars is a big one. It goes a long way with businesses. So that's great. Eric, you have any more examples? I know you brought up the media piece too, which is a key one.

MR. KARMECY: We did create – and I did not include this as an attachment – we created a very simple one-page success story profile that we've not done a great job at soliciting success stories from them. But very early on in our project we did kind of give – invite them to tell us about their successes. We do try to highlight our companies on a monthly basis, on a rotating basis. We give each company a spotlight on our e-newsletter with links to their website and more information.

So, I mean, we're promoting the companies themselves based on their involvement in the consortia as well and trying to get them to be more cognizant of what is a success story because some of the hardest things that we have, both – we have a hard time doing that not just with our employers but even internally here in our organization, trying to get other staff to tell their story about their great work with clients and customers.

MS. MAGUIRE: I know. That's always a challenge because it seems kind of in addition to our everyday work, but it actually is a great way to help promote and leverage and highlight the good work.

And I was going to say I've done similar things. Look first at if you do your own e-newsletters or any type of publications, include those success stories, pictures, the employers in our spotlight or highlight, as well as look at businesses often have a lot they do internal – their own internal website or on their own newsletters or internet or something like that.

And so if you provide them with a short blurb of a success story and a picture or something or if they participated in something, I found they're very willing – you've done the work for them. They just need to submit it through their channels or something, and that gets them nice publicity internally as well – as well as external.

And I've seen other – and it's easy – this is something you kind of build on and you expand as you develop and have more mature sector partnerships, but I've seen a lot of sector partnerships, once they do have graduations or completing training or education programs, they use that graduation to invite the businesses to have them maybe MC it or give an award at each one or something like that to really bring home that – and actually, and businesses seem to really love that, and when – and if it's a big annual thing or – they love having plaques or statues or some type of acknowledgement that they can bring back and put that on their – up on their office on their wall or something like that. So any little things like that can really be helpful, and does any – and I'm kind of keeping an eye on too the chat here.

If anyone on the call here has any examples of what they've been doing, feel free to jump in. It's always good to get new ideas of ways to do this. Oh, and actually, so Tina just jumped in with

do a lot of live streaming and tweeting at their quarterly events and send pics of attendees, which is great. I have to be better about tweeting and things, but that's a great way too to get some quotes or just have a hashtag an event and encourage people to use it.

And then you can retweet or reuse their tweets; right? I just said tweet a lot. I think I'm using the right language. Yes. So that's another great example of how to use social media to get out there and get the stories out there.

And we're veering off a little bit to a question from Joe Young. She was asking to both of you – and I know the answer but, "Is there a membership fee for employers to be a part of your coalition?"

MS. DUNCAN: No. This is Amanda.

MR. KARMECY: This is Eric. There – we have kind of a unique structure in the Oh-Penn region. We've got two different consortia that have come together. Now, through the American Apprenticeship Initiative, we have actually have five and an expanded greater Oh-Penn region. But as it relates to this project, two primary consortia that came together under one umbrella, the one in Pennsylvania had absolutely no fees for participation.

The one in Ohio did have a fee structure associated with it. Now, obviously to take advantage or to participate in any of these action teams, they don't necessarily have to have been part of either consortia, to be honest. But yes. There is a fee structure for the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition in Ohio. That is required, but that is – that does not prohibit them from taking advantage of the grant-related activity.

MS. MAGUIRE: Thank you. And, Amanda – (inaudible)?

MS. DUNCAN: Sometimes we – there's not a fee to participate with us, but as we enter into grant projects, there's sometimes a matching fund requirement. And we talk to the employers about usually the biggest commitment is the value of their time at the meeting. So then they have to determine is it worth the return on the investment of my time?

MS. MAGUIRE: And that's a really good point, and I think you both touched on you had it in terms of really being clear with the employers when they – what their – your expectations are when they join the coalition. And I think you're both very good about, in your programs, of doing that so that the employers know they're not just – you want them to actually participate and maybe take on pieces of work or something and not just kind of come in that champion versus representative type of role, that doer versus talker. So actually, that's a good question here. Do you guys have any official kind of – how do you kind of on board your employers in terms of expectations of their participation?

MS. DUNCAN: We had a commitment sheet that we have people sign in our manufacturing collaborative to allow them to have access to the high schools or bringing students to tour their facilities. And then they can indicate the level that they're going to participate at, but they have to identify the key staff from their company that will be the point of contact so they're not

sending a different staff person to every meeting that we have, that we have consistent representation from the company.

MS. MAGUIRE: That's awesome. Yeah. That's always helpful because that's a challenge that people have had before that they have the commitment from the company, but just like you said, it's kind of they know – they commit to coming, but whoever can come at the time. So it's hard to make progress if it's a new person each time. That's awesome.

And Eric, you guys have partners and roles clearly defined too; right?

MR. KARMECY: Yeah. And we also have a memorandum of understanding that we ask each of them to sign. I will say back to that last question about the fee structure, now, we haven't looked at this – we haven't looked at the data for this in other areas outside of our region.

But I will say that the group that actually pays or has to write a check to be a part of the – they seem to be the stronger – if I had to tell you which one was stronger between the two consortia, the one in Ohio that has that fee structure assigned to it seems to have greater participation rates and seems to be more – I don't know how to say more active.

So it's something that we've talked about recently and that we're still kind of getting our arms around as to – because there are pros and cons to having those fee structures. Obviously, for the long-term sustainability of this and if the employers again are the drivers and elect to require that, then obviously we're not going to object or stand in their way.

MS. MAGUIRE: Right. I know there's that pro and con is – when you have – when people even pay a little bit of money, they have more skin in the game, and they're more likely to pay attention versus if you offer something for free. Sometimes even a – I've done it when I've had – put on different events or trainings, and when you have them free, people sign up and then if something comes up, they may not come.

But they're more likely if they put a registration fee down to let you know if they're not coming or follow up or they take the commitment a little seriously. It's human nature. I do it as well. So it's interesting, though. So did you say as to how the fee structure came about and how you kind of introduced it?

MR. KARMECY: And again, this kind of came about before I was even at the table with this group.

MS. MAGUIRE: Okay.

MR. KARMECY: But I know that it is – it's a tiered structure that enables the smaller companies who may not be able to afford as much money, they're paying by the – their total employment a tiered structure so that this thing is not – so that it's not dominated by just the large companies.

MS. MAGUIRE: Right. Very interesting, and so I see too we're about five minutes before 3:00. So just want to do a time check, and I think I got all the questions that folks have posed. But I just want to throw it out there, if there's any last-minute burning questions before we do a little wrap up. So feel free to type them or interrupt us. And, Brian, can you put the slides back up? I just had a couple of closing slides just to let people know. Thank you.

And so here's our contact information for our speakers and myself, if you have any follow-up questions that come up afterwards. Or feel free to contact me if you have also any ideas for the two remaining peer learning group industry webinars that we're going to be doing, which I'll get to in a minute.

I want to keep this slide up for a second so you can see the info. But I want to say thanks again to Amanda and Eric for taking the time and sharing their experience, and thanks to you all on the phone for participating. And scrolling through too I did see someone said that great information for sharing, and they approach engagement the same way. So good to know that we're offering good information for folks. So thanks for the feedback.

And so just in terms of the next two webinars that we're going to be doing in this series is in March we're going to be focusing on once you have your employers around the table and your champions, it's getting to a shared work plan. So you've done the initial engagement. You have employers at the table, and how do you develop a shared vision and mission and action steps? I know Eric had shared some of their kind of action teams, and so that kind of thing of how to really keep organized and keep people engaged and working towards your ultimate goal.

And then the big question in May that we're going to be trying to approach and offer some suggestions is how to sustain long-term employer engagement or industry engagement. I'm still trying to train myself to say industry versus employer, and I keep slipping. But past that, a lot of times you have the catalyst for bringing folks.

Yeah. There may be a grant, and then maybe once that – that grant may be hopefully a couple years, a few years. Once that's over how do you sustain that momentum and keep things going both with additional funding or without? So we're hopefully going to bring in some folks to talk a little bit about that in May.

And so thanks again. And actually, I wanted – and also some next steps. I want to put my thinking cap on. I really like this idea of the business testimonials and the videos and folks said, and I think I may follow up with some of you that had mentioned that to maybe brainstorm some ways we can maybe share what people have so that folks can leverage that when doing their industry engagement. And I don't see any more questions coming in.

So with two minutes to spare I'm going to wrap things up, and thank you again. And please enjoy the rest of your day, and hopefully we will see you on our future webinars. Thanks, everyone.

MR. KEATING: All right.

(END)