SPRA WEBINAR

MAY 4, 2022

LEAD WIOA POLICY DEVELOPMENT

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>> LAURA ARON: Okay. So please let us know when we're ready to begin, and Dallas, you can un-pause.

>> Recording in progress.

>> Okay, Laura, we're good to go, to start.

>> LAURA ARON: Terrific. Welcome and hello. The Department of Labor's Division of Indian and Native American Programs and the Office of Disability and Employment Policy, ODEP, we have partnered with several 166 grantees to bring you effective practices and program partnerships to better provide employment services to Native Americans with disabilities. They have done this through ODEP's LEAD Center, WIOA Policy Development Center led by Social Policy Research Associates and National Disability Institute. Next slide.

So that everyone can fully participate in today's workshop, we'd like to take a moment to share some captioning and housekeeping tips. Today's workshop is live captioned. For those of you participating online, you can adjust the caption size under Zoom subtitle settings option. You also have the option to open the captioning webpage in a new browser. The link has been posted in the chat box. You can adjust the background color, text color, and font using the drop down menus. Position the window to sit on top the embedded captioning. Next slide. If you have content questions for panelists during the presentation, and we do encourage you to ask them, please type them into the chat box if you're participating virtually, or if you are there in Tulsa just raise your hand and one of us that is there in Tulsa will come up to you. We'll ask you to come to the front of the room.

If you need tech support during today’s workshop because you're participating online, type your question in the chat box and we'll private message you.

I'd like to turn it over to "Beanie" Alexander.

>> LOVINIA ALEXANDER: Hello. This morning I would like to say a prayer for each and every one of us here that work with people, serving people with disabilities and being effective. What I have prepared today is for all of us here that are at work with people with disabilities and for all of us here in this training today I pray for each and every one of us to have good health. I pray for our safety and for our protection. And that we can be able to work with people with our whole heart and good mind and at that time being able to take care of ourselves. Lim lemt.sh, Creator Grandfather, hear our prayer. Laura?

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you, "Beanie," for grounding us in this moment. Next slide.

I'm happy to introduce Maria Mendoza. Many of you already know her as she's a DINAP Federal Officer and out of the D.C. area. Maria?

>> MARIA MENDOZA: Thank you, "Beanie," thank you, Laura. Good afternoon, everyone. It's afternoon for me, I know it's probably morning for some of you all. Hope you're learning a lot from the workshops and I'm a Federal Project Officer and I have been for some of you who are out there in the audience. This workshop is about how to effectively serve people with disabilities by embracing our cultural identities and ultimately we will see that it's a form of diversity. Next slide.

Many people have organized this workshop and I want to thank them all for their contribution. Now I want to take this opportunity to introduce the presenters. Delia Smith, Director of Economic Support Services with the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. Sean Powless, WIOA counselor with the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. Kathy Richards, WIOA Program Coordinator with the American Indian Community Center of Spokane, Washington, and Lovinia "Beanie" Alexander, a Counselor with the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation for Coeur d'Alene. Next slide.

The presenters in part two are Cindy Kemp Program Director with the North American Indian Cultural Center in Talmage, Ohio and our senior, Laura Aron, the Senior Associate with the LEAD center and Social Policy Research Associates. Ms. Aron has been working with the Department of Labor and the Division of Indian and Native American Indian programs for many years and there's me, representing the Department of Labor, Division of the Indian and Native American Programs. Next slide.

This workshop is in two parts, inclusion and partnerships. You will hear from grantees and participate in activities and this part of the workshop you will learn about finding disability for the WIOA program and accessibility and when and how to provide reasonable accommodations. Next slide.

>> LAURA ARON: We turn to Sean Powless from the Oneida nation who will share an inclusion example.

>> SEAN POWLESS: Good afternoon, everybody. I want to tell you a little brief story I had with one of my consumers, named Stephen. He came into my office asking for assistance in finding work. And I realized it's never easy to ask somebody for help so I strive to make everyone feel as comfortable as possible. It didn't take too long while talking to Stephen and relating to him on many things in life he opened up about his life and he's retired and currently on Social Security. He told me his check isn't the most and at the end of the month he has very little to live on.

He told me that he'd like to work part-time so it wouldn't affect his Social Security and he told me when the pandemic happened, he had the urge to get back to work due to him kind of getting cabin fever. He informed me had worked in the carpentry field for 40 years. I heard from a colleague a few days prior that they were holding a job fair and they were essentially going to hire you on the spot as long as you just filled an application out.

Given Stephen's age and his line of work he did for over 40 years I didn't want him to do anything strenuous and that required physical labor. Stephen will be the first to tell you he wasn't the most tech savvy, so I offered to help him with an online application.

Stephen and I thought that a sales position in the tools and building supplies would be his best fit due to his extensive knowledge and career. Unfortunately, there were no jobs around we went through the hiring process, which was quick and easy with his boss. He thought he'd give it a try. After first day of work, he said although he liked the job a lot, he didn't think it was a good fit due to his dyslexia and having to use those hand remotes to scan the inventory in. I feel that being so welcoming with Stephen, I said you could quit the job if you wanted too, instead he called me and said Sean is there anything you can do for me. I explained the disability and she was more than willing to accommodate and move him to something else, it was nice to inform you that Stephen is still working part-time, they moved him in a different department to where he doesn't have to use the handheld devices and scan everything in and he was thankful to come to me and I thought that was a great story to share with everybody. And yeah.

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you, Sean. We're now going to do a brief activity. I'd like everyone to answer this question. As you listen to Sean describe his customer's experience, what stood out to you?

Next slide. For those online, we have some online workshop participants. Please put your thoughts in the chat. For those that are in person, I'd like you to think about it and we'll come to you in a minute. Again, what stood out to you as Sean shared his customer Stephen's experience with the WIOA program? And the customer's experience on the job. So for those of you online, again, just use the chat. Put in your thoughts. And those of you in person, we'll get to you in a minute. WIOA. WIOA.

I'm going to turn to people that are there in person and Delia, if you can help me out or Sean. I'd like to know if a couple of people will come up to the computer so those of us here online can hear you. And just share, you know, there's clearly no wrong or right answers but what stood out to you about this customer's experience with the program and on the job?

>> SEAN POWLESS: Anyone? Getting ready to move over there, yeah.

>> LAURA ARON: Say your first name when you come up to the computer.

>> I'm Diane and honestly, what stood out to me was that, first of all, he sought employment even though he was retired. So that to me is amazing. But the second thing that stood out is how comfortable he felt requesting help with an issue. And I thought that was also amazing. So it tells me how open your program or you yourself was to this person. So I think that's important.

>> SEAN POWLESS: Thank you.

>> LAURA ARON: Anybody else? We have a very shy group. What about someone online? You can chat in your response or you can unmute for a minute if you'd like to participate. Sean, is there anyone else in the room?

>> SEAN POWLESS: There's a lot in the room, Laura, but I don't think that coffee hit for the afternoon yet.

>> LAURA ARON: Okay. Guys, we'll have you do exercises soon.

Okay. Well, maybe I want to share then what I heard is, you know, I really heard that Sean, you know, acknowledged a challenge, but importantly, Sean really worked from that customer strengths which I think is really such a best practice and just want to second what the person said in the room about how welcoming Sean was and to build that relationship.

Any other comments? Okay, I have one for question for everyone. Why do you think it might be important to learn if the customer has disabilities? I think there was some kind of sound issue there, so I'll repeat it. Why might it be important to learn if customers have disabilities?

>> SEAN POWLESS: We've got someone willing to answer that, Laura. Just one second.

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you.

>> I don't know if anyone can hear me, but this is Anita in New Mexico.

>> LAURA ARON: We can hear you.

>> I think it's important when we look at the whole entire person and their learning style. It's important because then when we know what types of accommodations an individual might need in their employment setting and also so, you know, there's a better chance for success.

>> LAURA ARON: I love that. I really appreciate that you shared that and we're going to be talking about some of those buzz words that she just shared like accommodations in a minute.

So, thanks, everyone, for participating. Next slide. Maria?

>> MARIA MENDOZA: We know that there are varying definitions of disability. For example, the definition used by the WIOA program is not the same as the one used for the -- by the Social Security Administration to determine if someone will receive disability benefits. Let's talk about disability through different lenses. One is cultural, one is legal, which including the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and its identification. Next slide.

Each tribe has their own concept of understanding what a disability is. They have a very distinctive view of life which based on their own set of creation stories, doctrines, clans and upbringing. Acceptance and tolerance of disability comprises the core values for Native Americans and Native American language -- some languages have no word for disability.

Next slide. At WIOA we use the definition of disability from the Americans with Disabilities Act. An individual with the disability is defined by law in the Americans with Disabilities Act as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities. Who has a history or record of such an impairment or who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Next slide.

>> LAURA ARON: We recognize it's voluntary if customers let us know if they have disabilities. It's their choice. Often though customers don't know that they could be eligible for additional supports or participation in particular programs if they disclose they have a disability. So, it's good practice to let customers know this, and also, that disability status is confidential. Sometimes customers describe symptoms or characteristics of disabilities without saying the word disability. This is your clue to probe further, to find out if they may need supports to participate in training or supports on the job.

And remember that just because someone has a disability it doesn't mean that they can't be served by your program. We don't need to automatically refer them to Vocational Rehabilitation unless we think they could benefit from the VR services.

Next slide. So I just referred to supports to participate in training and at the workplace. And the technical term for supports is accommodations, which someone there in the room, of course, just mentioned that word. So supports are accommodations. WIOA requires that we provide reasonable accommodations to help people fully participate in our programs and in the workplace. And reasonable means that they would not create undue hardship for your program or an employer.

As you recall at the beginning of the workshop, Sean shared that they helped customers receive changes to his job responsibilities. This is an example of an accommodation that the employer provided and the program helped broker. There are physical and programmatic accommodations. Physical accommodations are things like wheelchair ramps, hearing amplifiers, and height adjustable desks. Programmatic accommodations are changes to practices or policies that allow someone to fully participate in training programs or even your orientation. For example, let's say someone shares with you that they have anxiety and they cannot attend an orientation where there are too many people. You might provide an accommodation for that person by conducting the orientation one-on-one with that person.

Next slide. Here are examples of other types of accommodations that could make it easier for your customers to learn and to work. Someone might need repeated or written instructions. Tools to enlarge print. A seat preference. Checklists to complete tasks. Staff of your programs also can receive accommodations so you even in the room can receive an accommodation to help you better do your job.

So here is another example, perhaps a staff member is immunocompromised and needs the work from home during this pandemic. Your workplace could provide the supports necessary for that person to work from home.

Next slide. Maria?

>> MARIA MENDOZA: Yeah, next slide. Okay. We want to -- we encourage you to strive to combine the recognition of your participant's strength with practical accommodations that make it easier for people with disabilities to learn and to work. Think of strength in a broad, comprehensive scope that includes cultural, spiritual, social, emotional, and intellectual strengths.

Next slide.

>> LAURA ARON: We're on slide 17. Thank you, Maria. Now we'll turn it to Cindy Kemp of the North American Indian Cultural Center in north Ohio. Cindy?

>> CINDY KEMP: Good afternoon, everybody. Whether it's on the phone or in person, the very first thing that I try to do when meeting or talking with a client is to try and make them feel as comfortable as possible. I try to treat them -- to treat them as if they were a member of my own family. I listen and try to let them know that they -- and what they have to say are important, that their unique situation is now a priority to me. I tell them about our program, our WIOA program, and the other services that our organization has to offer.

In addition, I also let them know about other programs in our community that perhaps NIACC can't provide, but we can offer a referral to other organizations and agencies.

Everyone is struggling with something and sometimes it's simply getting your courage together enough to ask for help or assistance and that can be very traumatic. Some people even think that it shows weakness or failure. Personally, I have been on the other side of the table when I went from being married to a single mom. I was the person that was struggling and asking for help, although I wanted to show everyone that I could take care of myself and my children. I knew that I needed some guidance from somewhere, so it takes a lot of courage to decide to reach out for help and assistance and it can be overwhelming and very humbling.

If you have to talk to someone who is not compassionate or acts like you are bothering them, or that they have more important things to do, let's be honest, it just doesn't work. It doesn't click. Try to make your client feel that their needs are now your top priority. Sometimes just knowing that there is someone who is ready to step in and help you navigate through what seems like huge obstacles and barriers can be a great relief.

It takes nothing at all to show respect, kindness and concern for the individual who seeks assistance from your programs and the services we provide. Try to remember that one day, some stranger somewhere will still remember you because you were kind to them when no one else was. There's no greater compliment than someone contacting you and beginning the conversation with my cousin came to you for assistance and they said that you could help me.

Next slide.

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you for sharing your and your organization's inclusion practices, Cindy.

Okay, let's do another activity. If you're there in Tulsa, I'd like you to turn to someone who works for a different organization or a different tribe near you. Share how disability is understood and perceived in your organization. If you're participating online, and I'd like you to use the chat and share how people with disabilities are included or not included in your services. And your instructions are there on the slide. I'd like you to take a couple of minutes and then we'll come back to you. For a little report out.

>> LAURA ARON: Okay, for those of you in Tulsa, please wrap up your conversations and think about who would want to come up to the front of the room and share some of the things that you learned. Again, how disabilities understood and perceived in your organization and we're going to wrap that up and then we'll also turn to our awesome online participants. So Delia, just let me know when people are wrapped up.

>> DELIA SMITH: Laura, can you hear me?

>> LAURA ARON: Yes.

>> DELIA SMITH: Do you want some people to share from here?

>> LAURA ARON: I do.

>> DELIA SMITH: Okay. Anyone from the room want to share back with Laura and the team some of the stuff that you guys discussed? No?

>> LAURA ARON: Do it anyway. That will help spread all the interesting things that you guys talked about. Come on up. Don't be afraid. We'll give you extra points if you come on up. Everyone needs extra points on a Wednesday. Sean and Delia, you might have to volunteer someone. I think you might have to volunteer someone. Let us know who you are.

>> I'm Adam Arca, I'm a Program Coordinator for the Central Council in Juneau. We discussed the way that the way that the stigma that there is and the courage it takes to go in and to ask for help. And a lot of these folks are family members so at our organization, we try to help them as best we can. Be patient with them. Just kind of understand that it might not work out the first time. Yet, build trust with them and build rapport and slowly guide them and walk them through the process and just kind of keep patient with them.

>> LAURA ARON: Adam, I really appreciate you sharing those thoughts and that discussion and how important it is to build trust and especially it's I think for many folks sometimes it is family members, too. So thinking about especially if you're on res, so Adam, thank you so much.

Are there any --

>> SEAN POWLESS: We have another one, Laura.

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you. Just tell us who you are.

>> I don't like microphones or like my voice. Can you hear me okay?

>> LAURA ARON: Yes.

>> Okay. So we were discussing -- I don't think that we have anything that is very inclusive right know, but I saw the title and I'm like we need to be inclusive, so I wanted to come here because I thought maybe it will give me some good ideas to bring back to our tribes so that we can be more inclusive to all of our tribal members especially the ones who have disabilities.

I know that one of the things that we were discussing is our -- we have a tribal member who's deaf. He was recently released about a year and a half ago, and I'm sitting here thinking how would we help somebody who's deaf when none of us know sign language? And so I'm hoping that maybe we can come up with a class for our staff to take sign language classes so that they can work with those tribal members who are deaf. I know that personally, I have 20% hearing loss in both my ears so I have adapted without realizing. I read people's lips without thinking about it and I was told by my cousin, and I never noticed it. As people who do have disabilities they tend to adapt without telling anybody that they have adapted on it. I guess that's one of the things, you know, I'd like to do is figure out ways of how we can be more inclusive to our tribal members and I figure ASL is a good idea and those who are unable to, you know, use the Internet or, you know, the computer or whatnot.

So, I'm just looking for ways to be more inclusive.

>> LAURA ARON: What's your first name?

>> Angela.

>> LAURA ARON: Angela, I really appreciate that and it also goes to show, right, no matter what organization you are, there's always something to learn and this is why we're all here together, right? To learn from each other. And if after this presentation you want to contact me, we can talk further also as you think about if you want particular or more ideas than this hour and a half workshop. So thank you so much, Angela.

We have those online participants and they have been chatting away also and I want to share a couple of their chats with the group. Barbara says people with disabilities are included in our child support program. We work with the paying parent's ability to pay and for the receiving parent we assist with paperwork. Anita says, our organization called the laguna connections program provides employment support services for Native Americans with disabilities and we work in collaboration with our 477 program called partners for success and by having both programs in one location, we are better able to collaborate services for all of our participants.

I really appreciate you sharing those comments and especially from what Anita said it's really getting to that partnership piece which let me tell you kind of the last half of our workshop here is really about that partnership piece, and how we don't all have to do it alone. So thank you all for doing this activity.

We are now going to hear from one of my colleagues in Spokane. So, next slide. We now turn to Kathy Richards from the American Indian Community Center in Spokane, Washington.

>> KATHY RICHARDS: Thank you, Laura and good afternoon, everybody. I'm Kathy Richards, I'm a WIOA Program Coordinator at the American Indian Community Center in Spokane, Washington. Whenever I meet people at the Indian Center, I like to talk to everybody. So I see them, I welcome them.

The one thing I keep in mind is that this might be my first chance that I have to ever connect with this client. So I make the most out of it. I welcome them by their name and tell them that they made it there and I ask them what tribe they come from and I tell them what tribe I'm from. I ask what brought them to the American Indian Community Center. I tell them -- I start going over the intake and have the client fill out all forms before I even set up their appointment. So we go over the entire application.

In order to get accurate information for the GPMS while doing this -- sorry, I'm going too fast. We find out more information if they disclose of a disability. Ask them if they would like a tribal rehab counselor to assist them or not. I offer professional clothing and hygiene. I get all of my donations from the community and Native businesses all donate to me. I offer smudge kits if I have them and I tell them that this is up to them and in order for it to work I can offer applications and referrals all day long, but they need to do the work.

I go above and beyond for all the clients and not everyone accepts my help and that's fine. Thank you, guys.

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you, Kathy, and I just want to kind of share, again, what she said about one of her intake practices, because it's quite a promising practice. She has folks fill out all of the forms and then she goes through the forms with every single one of her customers. So you're going to come to that disability question, right? And that helps someone become more comfortable. So thank you so much for sharing that, Kathy. Next slide. We turn it back to Maria.

>> MARIA MENDOZA: Disability is underreported from the WIOA program. I want to share some data with you. According to the US census, up to 17.5% of working age American Indians, Alaska Natives they have reported they have a disability. Next slide.

>> LAURA ARON: Can you finish just the data on this slide?

>> MARIA MENDOZA: On the slide 20?

>> LAURA ARON: Yeah.

>> MARIA MENDOZA: Okay. DINAP workforce program, overall, only 5.7% reported that they had a disability. There appears to be a mismatch here even though both the census and our workforce program used self-reporting to collect disability status. Next slide.

>> LAURA ARON: Document to say the other -- the thing about low reporting and our goal on slide 20?

>> MARIA MENDOZA: We're on 21.

>> LAURA ARON: On 20.

>> MARIA MENDOZA: Yeah. We would like to have the reporting -- we'd like to have an accurate reporting and show how many people within the DINAP program do have a disability.

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you, Maria. I want to say that low reporting may indicate that our participants do not know they can receive accommodations to help them be more successful during a training program. And at their workplace if they disclose they have a disability. And staff just may also not realize that they can leverage partners to provide more comprehensive services for participants with disabilities to ensure their success and may not know how to broach the topic with customers. I'm so glad you're here at this workshop so that you can spread the news to your fellow co-workers.

DINAP's goal is not only to see an increase in the people with disabilities served because as you can see it's very low, but the broader goal is making sure that customers and staff have the right information to enhance customer success.

So let's make sure everyone knows where you enter this information into that GPMS case management system. The disability question is on the barrier screen, it's right after the question regarding long-term unemployed status.

Next slide. If you click on the words show detailed instructions, you'll see this on your GPMS screen. It further describes what each answer to the disability question means. Yes indicates that a customer has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of his major life activities. Like Sean's customer had dyslexia, and because he disclosed it, then it would be a yes.

No means that the customer reports that they do not have the disability and remember, this is the customer reporting this.

The third possible response is did not self-identify. So while a response to the disability question is required in the GPMS, individuals do not have to answer yes or no. They can choose did not self-identify, and if they choose this option though, we don't know whether or not they have a disability. So we can't say yes or no and that's just one of those choices. We hope that may be as trust is built with someone that they may change that answer.

And especially because remember, you can update this data field at any time during a customer's participation. They might later tell you they have a disability, and so sometimes that happens as trust is built.

I also want to make the point that it really is someone's voluntary choice as to whether they tell you they have a disability. If you see that they roll into your office in a wheelchair and then on the intake form they put no or they put do not self-identify, you can't change it to yes because you saw them in a wheelchair. Right? Okay.

So I'm now going to turn it over to "Beanie" to summarize our inclusion best practices. Next slide. "Beanie"?

>> LOVINIA ALEXANDER: Hi, this is "Beanie." So, I'm talking about the promising inclusion practices of -- so providing social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual inclusion. And welcoming everybody. Be receptive to anyone who comes through the door. Work with customers as a whole person. Use intake as an opportunity to build trust. And provide confidentiality.

And then I have a story to read of one of our clients that we share.

>> LAURA ARON: "Beanie," hold off on the crane operator until just a couple more slides.

>> LOVINIA ALEXANDER: Okay.

>> LAURA ARON: Cool, thank you for summing up kind of what we were talking about inclusion in this first part of the workshop and summing up -- summarizing those best practices.

And we're going to go to the next slide and Maria will start us off with the next part of the workshop.

>> MARIA MENDOZA: Yeah, we have been talking about inclusion, and now we want to share promising practices and partnering with other organizations. Let's now discuss identifying partners to provide complementary services.

Next slide.

>> LAURA ARON: So here, I want to bring out that, you know, you have heard many different voices here today, and I especially want to thank "Beanie" Alexander who you just heard and are now going to hear again, because I want to point out she's not a WIOA program grantee, okay. She's not a section 166, you know, et cetera, grantee. Instead, she's from the Coeur D'Alene Tribe vocational program and she's Kathy Richards' program partner and agreed to be a part of this presentation. As you can see, the partnership is so strong that she wanted to come to this workshop to share stories and best practices.

And so now, I'm going to turn it to "Beanie," and she's going to talk about some partnering. Go ahead, "Beanie."

>> LOVINIA ALEXANDER: So as a Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with the Coeur D'Alene Tribe, our program is career renewal. I partnership with the American Indian center, the WIOA program, Kathy. Kathy has -- when she comes across some of her clients, she right away she recognizes that they could -- they would be eligible or would be able to use our vocational rehab services so she refers them right away to me.

I'd like to share a story of somebody that we have shared partnership with and I'm going to -- our person that we're talking about, our successful employer, employee, his name is Smalls. We'll call him Smalls and he has a personal employment goal to work in a position that pays the big bucks, and he wants to be the crane operator with the company of his dreams. He knows who he wants to work for, and that it will pay well.

I met Smalls in July of 2018. A referral from Kathy Richards, the Program Manager at the American Indian Community Center in Spokane, Washington. Smalls is a share client between AICC and the Coeur D'Alene Tribe Voc Rehab program. He is a small injury client with the WIOA program. He was in prison, he lived in a halfway house, a transition from being out of prison on probation with the strict agenda.

It is -- I don't know, it almost -- she can say it. It's a process for smalls to see each of us at the Indian Center. And in his rehab assessment with him he said how he needs a tattoo removed as it's incriminating and gang related, interferes with as he is -- he says it interferes with his livelihood and I don't want to be associated with the lifestyle. We found a program called Inked Out and it was free to the client. Smalls is working as a production laborer and he wanted to get his CDL and excel in the company.

In December of 2018, Smalls received his CDL, paid for by comfortable benefits his tribe's program. Tribal employment rights office. By February of 2019, he was on the job training as a truck driver, preparing to drive truck and operate a crane on his own. In October of 2019, Smalls is now eligible for a post-employment service with the Coeur D'Alene Tribe Voc Rehab program. December of 2020, Smalls decides to move on from his dream company which he made $29 an hour. He wanted to join a union, operate cranes for $45 per hour.

Then again in March 2021, Smalls wanted to advance in his skills, attending training to become certified to operate all sizes of cranes. The cost was $9,000 for the training. Paid by AICC, WIOA program, the fed rated tribes TERA program and the Coeur D'Alene Tribe VR paid for the Department of Transportation's physical. He explained he left his dream job on account he was not getting enough hours. He was now receiving full-time hours.

June 2021, Smalls completed his crane training. He's working as a crane operator; he can operate all size cranes. His goal to operate the largest -- his goal was to operate the largest crane. He reported his pay wage was $90 an hour.

From July 2018 to June 2021, the services that were provided, WIOA provided Smalls with gas cards, tools for laborer job and crane training shared costs and motel costs. The Coeur d'Alene tribal rehab provided Smalls with the YMCA fitness membership, the Department of Transportation physical which was his post-employment services with our program. And went to work clothing. The fed rated tribal program provided shared costs, union dues and CDL training.

Laura?

>> LAURA ARON: Isn't he now making $90 an hour?

>> LOVINIA ALEXANDER: Yes.

>> LAURA ARON: So everyone can see not only did we all want to become crane operators now, but what incredible leveraging of programs and partners this story showed. You heard all of the different kinds of programs that were involved. As you know, DINAP is always wanting you to leverage other resources and we know we can't do it by ourselves.

"Beanie," that was awesome and thank you so much. We'll turn to Kathy to talk about other partnerships she has besides with the Coeur D'Alene Tribe. Next slide.

>> KATHY RICHARDS: We are a fortunate city, we're surrounded by five local tribes so we have each tribe come to our office as much as possible but with COVID, we haven't had any tribal partnerships except for this tribe and the Coeur D'Alene Tribe, thank God, coming to our office every day.

We're a very fortunate state also that we have a 701 plan in action for Washington State. It's -- the state -- the Washington State is committed to working with tribes and recognize American Indian organizations on the government to government basis. There is a working on collaborative agreement between the department of social and health administrations including aging and long-term care services. Home and community services and adult protective services, behavioral health administration and child treatment center. Developmental center, economic service administration and community service division and division of child support. It's called the 701 plan and through this 701 plan we are partnered where the five local tribes who serve clients and vocational rehabilitation as part of the Washington State 701 plan. We meet quarterly, we all have to host the meeting and the -- where -- and the Coeur D'Alene Tribe -- wait.

All tribes listed on here are at those meetings every quarter and we discuss clients that we have traveling around for college, for work, for whatever they're doing. Anybody that's moving into our area as we discuss clients that we -- that are going to school are doing whatever, we just update everybody that what our programs are doing and ask for requests or assistance and we meet with the state at that time also.

So, it's very, very helpful for us and it helps us to co-enroll state Indians on the state program that may not have ever met any of the tribal people yet. So this goes on four times a year and we had our last one. It was awesome.

>> LAURA ARON: Next slide.

>> KATHY RICHARDS: I believe it is boots on the ground deal, you have to interact with your community as a whole not just WIOA clients. I have been the funeral cook for the AICC for the last 14 years. So when people pass away in Spokane, we're a city, we're urban, and they don't have family, they don't have a tribe or anybody to help them bury their people, I cook and help them bury their family members and stay with them for the whole two days.

"Beanie" is one of my help cookers. Everything is done for free for the family. From the community. We don't get paid for this. I'm a community health worker, an interested messenger and I'm a facilitator and I love what I do. I go and help people wherever they need me. I don't need a title. I prefer to be called a helper and I love the city that I live in and all of the Indians that I serve.

Thank you, guys.

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you so much, Kathy. Next slide. If those examples weren't good enough, we have another example for you and we are going to hear from Cindy Kemp again to share another partnership example. Cindy?

>> CINDY KEMP: When I first began attending the meetings of our local Job Center, I became acquainted with the individuals that were partners there and the local service providers. We should chat and tell each other what our specific organizations did and what services we could provide.

I didn't realize how important these relationships would be until much later when I had to ask for assistance to help one of my WIOA clients. Tess had been my client for years before and she had dropped out of the program as a result of alcohol and substance abuse. She had quit school, lost her kids to the children's service system and went into drug rehab for a bit. I had lost track of her.

Out of the blue, she called me and wanted to know if she could please start over, could she have a second chance. She told me that she had turned her life around, she had followed all the steps and gotten her kids back. She had been clean and sober for 18 months and was doing great. She wanted to try school again, but this time she wanted to be a drug and alcohol counselor.

She wanted to help moms who had been involved with the criminal justice system who had lost their children to children's services systems. She wanted to be able to show them how to put in the work and effort needed to get their kids back and she wanted to use her experiences to be a positive role model.

So, I told her that I felt everyone deserved a second chance, but that she was going to have to keep in touch with us and she'd have to let us know what she was doing and how school was going. She promised me that she would. And for three months it was great. I heard from her all the time.

Then I didn't hear from Tess for about eight weeks. I tried calling, got no answer. She wouldn't respond to emails or letters. It was like she dropped off the face of planet earth. And we have all had clients like that, right? So I figured that the stress of school and being the mom of two young boys had gotten to her and that she had slipped up and fallen back to old habits.

One day, our receptionist said you've got a call from Tess. So I'm figuring she's going to tell me that she's sorry, but she went back out and things are messed up, but could she please have another chance. What I heard next was unbelievable. Not in my wildest dreams did I think this would ever happen. There had been a car accident. Her car had flipped and Tess had been trapped inside for hours before they could get her out. Her arm was almost completely severed, but they were able to reattach it but were not sure if the surgery would work or if she would have function of her arm at all, plus there was always the possibility of ultimately having to amputate her arm.

While she's telling me this, I figured she was going to tell me she was dropping out of the program. I mean, I would have told myself that. But no, Tess wanted to know if I knew any place where she could get some help. She lives in a different part of Ohio, about two hours away, so I told her to let me do some checking and I'd call her back.

One of my people that I worked with at the -- his name is Larry, he was from the Bureau of Vocational Rehab. So I contacted him, told him what was going on and he put me in touch with his counterpart from Lucas County in our state.

Larry was amazing, and the other person that we contacted from Lucas County they told me that they would contact Tess. Not only did they contact her, they contacted me every step of the way, letting me know that what they were doing for Tess and her family and how well she was doing.

Tess finished school and is working with the transition school program that offers services for re-entry. She is helping these ladies just as she wanted to do. She truly is a role model. My bureau of vocational rehab at the Job Center in Summit County helped out. They followed through every step of the way. Partnerships can and do work.

Next slide. When I first began attending meetings at the Job Center, I discovered that I wanted to get involved with other organizations throughout our area. So, I became involved with our local FEMA board, the Summit County homeless task force, Catholic charities and the diocese of Cleveland. I have been able to meet and partner with many individuals not only in my local community, but in the surrounding area as well. Many of these organizations have offices in other areas of the State of Ohio so I'm able to get referrals and information on programs and services that might be useful to our clients in other areas of the state.

Having done research on many statewide agencies and programs, especially in the area of working with individuals with disabilities, I have created a Bible, if you will, of resources that our program participants can access and be referred to should they need specific services. It is like one giant rolodex of statewide and local community service organizations. I tell my staff that if they touch my Bible and don't bring it back I'll break their fingers. I'd be lost without it.

Getting to know service providers in your community is well worth the extra time and effort. Recently, at a meeting of our local FEMA board, as we were reviewing proposals for upcoming funding, a request for moneys that had been received from a local program that provides transitional housing for individuals re-entering society after just after being released from the criminal justice system, there was discussion and someone said they didn't know this program, that they didn't know anything about them.

So, I spoke up and told them what an amazing organization this was and how they not only provide housing, but they also provide job assistance and training for their clients.

So, I was able to help them get the funding that they needed. In order to better serve our clients, we need to know our communities and the resources that are available. This can be done by partnering with other organizations and working cooperatively. We need to speak up and letting others know how amazing they really are.

Thank you.

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you so much, Cindy. Not only does it show what a strong person your customer Tess was, but, of course, how the strengths that not only Cindy but everyone that you have heard speak with today really bring to their job. It's always more than just a job and you're always thinking about who could you partner with and at the beginning of the workshop we talked about building trust with our customers and now we're all about building trust with potential partners. We might not know if we need them in the future or we need them right now and be able to leverage those resources and as you heard, Cindy even spoke. She knew so much about a partner she was able to speak about them in a room where the partner wasn't even there and the partner received funding.

So I know I want to partner with Cindy. So we are going to do another activity. Next slide.

And we again, we have the option if you are online, we'd love for you to participate and so appreciate that you're doing that online. And answer this question. For those of you in person you'll turn to a neighbor. Someone that you haven't talked with yet.

What types of programs serving people with disabilities have you heard about in your area? And it could be some of the organizations that Cindy or Kathy or "Beanie" talked about. Or it could be others, and so I'd like you to take a couple of minutes and again turn to someone you haven't yet spoken to in the room and discuss what programs serving people with disabilities that you have heard about in your area. And then we'll come back and report out. Thanks. Take a moment.

>> LAURA ARON: Okay, we're going to have you wrap up your conversations about programs in your area which you might know of serving people with disabilities. And if you would like to share, I'd like you to come up to the front of the room and while you're thinking about if you want those extra points by coming up to the front of the room, I'd like to share some things that some of our online workshop participants have shared. Because they're pretty interesting.

First, Colleen Plasek says that she has attends meetings with the local American Job Center and a couple of other groups. So she's learned about vocational rehabilitation, and all they do as well as organizations that assist individuals with autism. So that yet is another plug like Cindy and others have said, that it is really important to go to those American Job Center workforce board meetings. Thank you, Colleen.

Anita says, this is very interesting, they have a tribal scholarship program for tribal college scholarship program and it accommodates students with disabilities if they cannot go to school full-time. I think as we all know sometimes scholarships require you to be a full-time student. If they're unable to do so because they have a disability and can only attend part-time, that tribal scholarship program will still accommodate them which is terrific. And they have a tribal benefits program that assists people applying for Social Security benefits and they have their own VR program and a veteran’s program.

I think what's so key there is making sure that, you know, clearly she's from a tribal program and there are so many programs on res often and sometimes they're in silos, right, and they don't speak to each other for many different reasons. And so it's such a best practice to be able to have lasting partnerships that last beyond someone leaving their job and hopefully having even formal written memorandums of understanding between different tribal programs. So I really appreciate the online participants for sharing.

Is there anyone else in the room that wants to share in Tulsa?

>> SEAN POWLESS: Yeah, we have one more, she's coming up.

>> LAURA ARON: Great.

>> Hello. Hi. I'm Jessica Sanders, and our table talked about the various services for those with mental or physical disabilities could be from a range -- wide range of sources from behavioral health, for people with mental health illnesses from the other table as well, vocational rehab, we share that. From Lemmy, based on our program we work with youth too in transition. So, there's definitely clients who have had learning disabilities. Either have a history of IEP, but it's a variety of different situations like other mental -- not only mental illness, but substance abuse as well and anxiety and depression just as a few to name. Then my table also talked about housing as being a good support. Like having housing authority, Lemmy Housing Authority in our neck of the woods, but with other tribes having that as a way to screen anybody when they're going through housing if they have any disabilities, they walk them through the different referrals as well to support them.

One thing that somebody at my table mentioned was job coaches and asked if we had that. We don't actually have job coaches. I thought that would be really helpful when going through an individual's plan if they wanted to work and are ready to work, but really have a severe disability at the same time. We have to look outside for that to get that and usually based on my experience, we have connected with the community in doing work experiences with that other company or that business that can do the job coaching.

So -- but yeah, it was just really interesting to connect and compare with the other tribe. One last thing to share was that the difference between like my work with Lemmy, the vocational rehabilitation program you have to want to work and you have to be -- you have -- in order to be eligible, you have to want to work and be employed but with vocational rehabilitation, they don't get them employed, if I'm correct, right? No employment necessary. Like they just automatically diagnose them as having a disability and they don't have to actually work.

So, it's just interesting.

>> LAURA ARON: So, Jessica, I really thank you for sharing and I think I just want to bring out a couple of points that you just said. With vocational rehabilitation, you're correct that the folks actually diagnose, you know, a mental health condition or physical disability, et cetera, and can be helpful with that. But vocational rehabilitation definitely helps people get jobs, so I just wanted to let everyone know that, right? I'm sure your partner at the table was waving at you.

And, of course, partnering people can have different pieces of the puzzle come to the table. That's what I really liked what you shared, Angela, bringing in housing and behavioral health, et cetera, that many different kinds of organizations can partner to put together, put together this puzzle.

And one last thing I want to point out of what she said is that even people with significant disabilities can work. So I really appreciate those points you brought out, Jessica. Thanks so much.

>> You're welcome.

>> LAURA ARON: Okay. So we now are going to go back to the next slide and we're going to turn to Sean Powless to summarize partnership best practices.

>> SEAN POWLESS: For those of you who may not have these implemented these are great bullets to implement into your program. The first one is leverage other programs' resources. Proactively seek other services and programs for customers. Co-enroll customers in other programs when it makes sense. Both programs share positive performance outcomes. Stay connected to the local and/or state workforce board. Create formal MOUs with partners. Don't depend only on current staff relationships. Document referral processes. Use customer release of information form between systems/programs. Consider the interests of potential partnering agencies. And last, your box is in the way there. You're good. And then, of course, center the best interests of the client.

So, everybody, get your phone out and take pictures of these. These are important.

>> LAURA ARON: Thank you so much, Sean, and we will post these slides too. Also, take photos, exactly.

Next slide. So with that in mind, we have some links in slides so that's why we want to give you the slides after the event. Because here are additional resources to help you out when you get back to your desk. You can find information about reasonable job accommodations on the job accommodation network. The second bullet is if you're a tribe and have a vocational rehabilitation grant, we have provided the link to additional technical assistance and training. And last on this slide, there are links to a toolkit about understanding disabilities in American Indian and Alaska Native communities, as well as an online training that covers serving people with disabilities.

Next slide. All of the grantees that presented today often co-enroll their participants with disabilities in vocational rehabilitation programs and as we said at the beginning, it's sometimes just not necessary, you know, you can serve them. They may not need VR’s help, but we wanted to provide this link to you in case you want to leverage resources from the VR program. Tribal vocational rehabilitation can be found in 86 tribes and state vocational rehabilitation is available in all states.

So if you're not a tribe that has a VR or you're not even near a tribe with VR, every single state in the nation has VR and offices in your regions.

We also wanted to mention that centers for independent living support empowerment and self-determination for people with disabilities and they can be found in many areas around the United States. I really think that they could be an incredible partner for you if they're in your area. So I know you guys are all brainstorming different organizations and I'm not sure this one came up, but if you just put in a search online, centers for independent -- center for independent living, one might pop up in your area.

So, we encourage you to see if there's a center near you.

Next slide. Many other resources are also available. Next slide. Many resources are available on the LEAD Center website and this slide includes a link to the website where you can sign up and get information about the newsletter and next slide, you can always connect with us by social media.

Next slide. And lastly, I see we're at time. We've got a minute left and so to close today's session, I'd like to introduce one of our partners with the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability and Employment Policy, Ben Cheriyan.

>> Ben Cheriyan: Thank you, thank you for participating and I want to give a big thank you to our partners at DINAP for their coordination and putting this presentation together. We have been partnering with DINAP for over a year since it was part of the two-part webinar series we did last year and we hope to continue this partnership moving forward. I think the main takeaway is there's no cookie cutter approach when working with disabilities. All of our speakers and our attendees, we learned that there are multiple practices. I want to conclude that say that May is mental health awareness month and in the spirit of building partnerships I encourage you to think of partnerships that you can build or leverage within federal, local or within your communities to support customers with mental and behavioral conditions.

Again, thank you for participating and I hope you enjoy the rest of the conference. Good-bye, everyone.

(Webinar concluded at 3:00 CT)

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