# PROMISING PRACTICES ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY (DEIA)

## Transcript

October 27, 2022

>> Laura Gleneck: Good afternoon or good morning depending on where you are joining us from. We are just really glad you are with us as we learn about promising practices on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility known as DEIA within the workforce system. Through today's webinar we are going to learn how states and local workforce areas are increasing access and inclusion and addressing questions like how can we advance equitable workforce practices that support improved outcomes for all participants and innovative services for employer customers? And what does it look like to acknowledge customers intersecting identities to meet their strengths and unique needs? Today's webinar is hosted by the Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities, or known as LEAD Center. We are a workforce innovation and opportunity act (WIOA) policy development Center and we are led by National Disability Institute and Social Policy Research Associates. And funded by the office of disability employment policy at the US Department of Labor. Together we facilitate the adoption and integration of inclusive WIOA programs policies and practices through research, technical assistance and demonstration projects. Next slide?

We want to ensure that all of you can fully participate in today's webinar. So let's take a few minutes to share some captioning and housekeeping tips. Today's webinar is live captioned and the captions appear below the slide deck. You also have the option to open the captioning webpage in a new browser and the links have been posted in the chat, or will be momentarily. Once the captioning window opens on your own system, you can adjust the background color, the text color and the fonts using the drop-down menus at the top of the browser window. Next slide?

We really encourage you to ask any questions that you might have about the content as we go through today's presentation. At any point you can click the Q&A button that is located on the webinar menu bar and this will bring up a Q&A panel or a window into which you can type questions for our presenters and we are saving time at the end for a question-and-answer period.

Use the chat box if you are experiencing any technical issues or have questions for the technical support team.

So, to kick off our presentation we would like to welcome Andy Arias who is a policy advisor on the workforce systems policy team. Within the office of disability employment policy at the US Department of Labor. Andy works on a number of federal policy initiatives focused specifically on WIOA implementation and economic advancement for individuals with disabilities. He works across government agencies to align policy in supporting WIOA implementation. He has focused on economic empowerment for underserved communities for the majority of his career.

Andy is adjunct faculty for Georgetown University. His area of focus is diversity and inclusion from an LGBTQ+ disability perspective. And Andy's background and expertise on the national state and local levels has also really helped to support national technical assistance activities around implementation of the US Department of Labor funded disability employment demonstration projects. So Andy, thank you for being with us today and I will now turn it over to you for opening remarks.

>> Andy Arias: Thank you Laura. That was such a good introduction. Good afternoon everyone. I'm excited to welcome you to the webinar focused on promising practices of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the workforce system. As Laura said, I am Andy Arias, a policy advisor on the workforce systems team here at the office of disability employment policy or ODEP. I identify and my pronouns are he and him. I first want to thank my colleagues at the LEAD Center for hosting this webinar and doing a wide variety of behind-the-scenes work to ensure that this webinar runs smoothly. I would also like to thank the wonderful speakers from Minnesota and New York. Thank you for your tremendous efforts in moving the needle for individuals with disabilities especially those from marginalized intersectional communities. Congratulations on all you have done to future the goals, which very much are in alignment with our goals to increase access and opportunity and advance workforce inclusion for all people with disabilities. I'm excited that we are concluding this year's national disability employment awareness month or NDEAM with this webinar. If you have not heard, this year's theme is disability, part of the equity equation and it fits perfectly with this webinar. Diversity, equity, and inclusion, and accessibility in the federal workforce is especially important to me as a person with significant disabilities and so many intersectional identities. I take great joy in knowing we are pushing the envelope on DEIA efforts through policy. Growing up in the foster care and group home system I did not feel like there was a place for me in the workforce. And now thanks to the promise of WIOA, I not only feel like there is a place for me in the workforce, but I feel like I have the opportunity to thrive. WIOA Section 188 is securing those promising employment and equity practices for all individuals including those with significant disabilities and intersecting identities. And now I would like to pass it on to my esteemed colleague, Laura. Thank you.

>> Laura Gleneck: thank you, Andy, for really setting the diversity and inclusion stage and sharing reflections on intersecting identities and for being part of the workforce. It makes a difference. My name is Laura Gleneck and I'm delighted to be serving as a moderator for today's webinar. So let's get started. Next slide please? we have an absolutely wonderful panel of presenters who are going to be sharing effective state and local practices in promoting equity and inclusion and diversity and accessibility.

Joining us from the state of Minnesota we have Heather and Ben, representing Minnesota's Department of employment and economic development. Also known as DEED. Heather Stein is director for the office of diversity and equal opportunity and also serves as the state level equal opportunity officer. Ben Baglio is the director for the governor's workforce development board.

Elena Foshay joins us from the local board in Minnesota. She serves as the director of workforce development for the city of Duluth.

And joining us from New York's Department of occupational resources at Hempstead works career center we have Maria Lombardi, who serves as a disability resource coordinator. So thank you to Minnesota and for New York for joining us. Next slide please?

And joining us near the end of the presentation we are really thankful to have three leaders within the US Department of labor for the three agencies critical to section 188 and the section 188 disability reference guide which Andy alluded to and we will hear about later. And they include Lee Perselay who serves as chief, office of external enforcement representing the civil rights center, Robert Kight, director of division of adult services and governance, office of workforce investment and he is representing the employment and training administration and Chris Button, supervisor and policy advisor for workforce system policy with the office of disability employment policy. We look forward to hearing more from them near the end.

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So through today's presentation on promising DEIA practices within the workforce system you will learn how to create meaningful policies, practices and procedures that positively impact equitable customer practices. How state and local workforce areas are moving the needle towards more inclusive and equitable practices both within and outside the workforce system. How to effectively serve people with intersecting identities, to ensure equal access to programs and services, and as I just mentioned, how the section 188 disability reference guide is being updated to provide the workforce system concrete ways to improve equity and inclusion.

So with that we are going to turn to our presenters and learn about concrete ways the workforce system can improve equity and inclusion.

First we are going to learn about Minnesota's systemic approach to economic equity and Heather, I am going to start and turn the presentation over to you. And Shannon if we can turn the slide please.

>> Heather Stein: Thank you so much Laura. It's a privilege to join you today and share about the systemic approach to equity we are utilizing within Minnesota's Department of employment and economic development (DEED). Throughout my presentation today I will share an overview of some of the systems and tools that we are using to set strategic agency goals and driving our work as well as a few tactics we are using to make change within our agency that will ultimately have an external impact on Minnesota's broader workforce. All of the systems strategies and tools that I will share with you today have been integrated throughout our work at DEED, an acronym I will use throughout the presentation referring to our agency and the intent is that these tools will be, these tools have been integrated to reduce disparities for historically underserved communities.

As Laura mentioned my name is Heather Stein. I'm the director for diversity and equal opportunity at the agency, and I have also been appointed by Governor Wallace to serve as Minnesota's WIOA state level equal opportunity officer. I've been with the agency for 2 1/2 years and served in Minnesota state government for nine years now, worked for a couple different agencies and learned a number of promising practices to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

On a personal note, I'm a mother to two daughters, and live in Minneapolis and I am truly grateful to work in public service in a field that I'm really dedicated and passionate about. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be here today. Next slide please?

So, before we dive into the tools and frameworks that I want to share with you I would like to provide a little context around the wealth inequalities that we were seeing in Minnesota prior to the pandemic.

In 2019 when it comes to income inequality we saw that 26.8% of black or African-American Minnesotans had a household income that fell below the poverty level as opposed to 6.7% of white Minnesota households. When it comes to homeownership, 76% of homeowners were white in 2019, as compared to 25% of black or African Americans.

Now in May 2020 we were already working towards addressing some of these racial economic disparities in Minnesota. But at this point we were nearly 6 months into the Covid 19 pandemic and as many or all of you know on May 25, 2020, George Floyd was murdered by a former Minneapolis police officer. This put a really bright spotlight on Minnesota as protests for racial justice ignited around the world. The simultaneous pandemics of Covid 19, racial injustice and economic disparities in Minnesota were exacerbated and that has created a really challenging inflection point for us in Minnesota's central workforce agency.

At this time our leaders at DEED realized we had a significant opportunity to change our systems in a way that creates economic equitable outcomes so that someone's disability status or the color of their skin would no longer predetermine their economic status in our state. We decided to meet the moment and systemically combat the challenges that have long existed in Minnesota.

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So, since then, during our annual planning process our senior leadership team has discussed how our agency's top goal should focus on making systemic changes that will lead to greater equity in our state. So as you can see the top goal in 2022 was to drive an economic comeback from the COVID 19 pandemic focused on people and businesses who face systemic barriers to growth. And as the slide says, making progress toward racial equity does not require just one approach. It requires many and it is the collection of all of those changes that position us to make systemic change.

In order to do this, we needed to center equity in everything that we do. So we started thinking bigger. We gave all employees the opportunity to learn about what systems change means from various industry leaders. This led us to creating five transparent racial equity commitments that were shared publicly and explicitly including the feedback from black indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) who are leaders throughout our state. We required every division leader at DEED to create ambitious equity goals they would strive to achieve using the OKR system that I can share with you later and track these goals in our progress over time. And in order to support leaders and striving towards these goals we developed an equity framework to help guide the decision-making process and the framework allows us to center customers who face systemic barriers and make more transformative change leading up to the top goal as I shared before and it also helped us to knock down existing silos within our large department so we could tackle goals from different parts of the system. And lastly we focused on changing from the inside out. Like many other states the diversity of Minnesotans is rapidly evolving and in order to provide culturally responsive services to all Minnesotans we need to ensure that our employees have learning opportunities to understand the various cultural norms and means of communities that we are serving and providing them with tips and strategies to provide help and services to those who need our help the most.

Next slide?

So before diving into our models and frameworks I want to do a bit of level setting so we are closer to being on the same page around language. So it looks like the content has not popped up. I don't know if we need to click it one more time there. It looks like it's going to come up bit by bit. That's okay. So anyway when I talk about systems change I mean addressing the root causes of social problems. So we are fundamentally changing the structures that cause a system to behave in a certain way. In order to close the gaps that we see in Minnesota we need to ensure that race can no longer predict a person's success and that's why we're centering communities of color as we target improvements. We are on a journey to do our part in ensuring race is no longer a predictor of someone's success. And in a sense that means we are acting our way into a new way of thinking.

On the next slide it shares the definition of intersectionality and I want to talk about why this works for us to center race in our systems change work.

When we started this work a couple years ago, many people asked why we were explicitly naming racial disparities and calling out race as an identity factor but not all underserved groups. The short reason for this lies in the concept of intersectionality and Kimberle Crenshaw defined intersectionality as a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. Crenshaw used this theory to explain why systemic discrimination against black women, and individuals against black women, so individuals who couldn't separate the woman's experience from the black experience in a legal setting.

Another example, some research at the national disability Institute in 2017, they wrote a report on financial inequality called disability race and poverty in America which included research on the financial conditions of individuals. Grouped by disability status and racial or ethnic, racial and ethnic identity and it showed that individuals who live at the intersection of race and disability to experience disproportionate levels of financial distress. So in Minnesota we have some of the greatest racial disparities in the country when it comes to social economic status, and when race is coupled with underserved identity groups such as being an individual with a disability the disparities become greater. So examining race as a starting point for us and digging deeper into the demographic data helps us to root our objectives in a place where we are targeting folks who face the most systemic barriers to economic equity.

On the next slide, we are going to be transitioning into how we are making equity everyone's job at our agency. And as I have talked about the most financially vulnerable populations in America is a group of individuals that live at the intersection of disability, race and also ethnicity. And the simultaneous experiences of discrimination, the lack of access to economic opportunity that may be due to racism or ableism, really deserves urgent attention and that's why we have made equity everyone's job at DEED. Next?

We set our agency goals and organizational priorities by using a tool or a system called OKRs which stands for objectives and key results, so this allows us to create agencywide goals and track progress and measure accountability throughout the process.

On the next slide we talk a little bit about the equity framework that we created and the framework was intended to help teams build specific goals in the OKR process that address the top pool and focus on systemic change and the need to significantly advance equity in Minnesota. This way all of our goals really address the root causes of problems and position us to create excellent systems change focused goals.

Some of the guiding principles for our equity framework are the concept that nothing happens in the real world unless it first happens in the images of our heads. That is a quote by Gloria E. Anzaldúah. There is another saying that many of you may have heard, do nothing about us without us. Which is really a nod to engagement and engaging the people, and providing a seat at the table to help make decisions about actions or strategies or policies that are going to have an impact on the community.

And finally to measure what we treasure. You know, we need to have systems of tracking and accountability in place in order to assess the progress that we are making over time.

Next?

The next slide includes a snapshot of our 2021 to 2022 objectives. And it looks like Laura put a link there for you. We will also include a link to our equity change framework that I referred to earlier. We can go ahead to the next slide.

This slide shows a snapshot of our equity checklist. Which is essentially a quick reference card that we post, that we made available for employees to post near their work area. And it has three targeted questions that are pulled kind of summarized from the equity change framework. And every decision the Commissioner makes in the Commissioner's office needs to include responses to these questions, which is really important for his decision-making. And the next slide.

So finally in order for economic equity, for all Minnesotans to reverberate throughout the state we are making internal transformation a priority. So for the next few minutes I want to spend some time on how we are changing from the inside out.

The next slide talks a little bit about the transformation that we are in the middle of now I will talk a little bit about three key areas of emphasis as to how we frame our diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility work. And those three buckets, those three pillars are focused on our culture, the talent within the employees of our workforce and the education learning and development. And by culture I mean making DEED a great place to work by celebrating diversity, encouraging authenticity and creating synergy around our shared mission and values and centering equity in decision-making across the agency.

For talent we mean attracting diverse talent to DEED diversifying leadership positions and retaining a workforce that represents the Minnesotans demographics, the demographics of Minnesotans that we serve. And education, we are focused on equipping DEED employees with interpersonal skills and implementing systems of accountability that better position the agency to advance economic equity for Minnesota.

Some examples for diversifying our workforce include a special emphasis on leadership positions and targeting diverse applicant pools, ensuring that our workforce represents the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of the people we serve because we know we are better serving diverse populations when diverse perspectives guide and influence at work.

We are looking to increase diversity at all levels of the organization which requires experience serving diverse populations or with diverse colleagues. And we have even included an inclusive behavior responsibility in all position descriptions for our employees.

As I have talked about we made significant investments to center equity in everything that we do. And we are focused on investing in our employees. So we have incorporated a number of training opportunities and ongoing voluntary options for people to participate in. And we are looking at the possibility of what we might require in the future. So our employees are having access to opportunities to shape inclusive behaviors and make equitable decisions that benefit our neighbors families and friends that we serve. One of the tools we are using in this process is called the intercultural development inventory (IDI) and we have had approximately 80% of our managers and supervisors take this IDI assessment now. So they are learning about their own opportunities for growth and continued growth to become more agile in serving diverse customers, which is really neat to see. We have seen wonderful engagement around this tool. So I will just wrap there. I know Elena is going to share more about ideas and strategies that can be used within the workplace. With that I would like to turn it over to my colleague Ben Baglio to share examples of impacts addressed driven by the equity work and the governors vocational rehabilitation services and state services for the blind. So, Ben I’ll turn it over to you.

>> Ben Baglio: Thanks Heather. I'm the director of the workforce development board which is the state workforce development board created under WIOA to help oversee and guide the state workforce development system. So if you go to the next slide, when we are talking about examples I figured it would make sense to really start with the WIOA state plan although we have other programs. Although Heather spoke to the other disparities that exist prior to the pandemic but really have been exacerbated since the pandemic and how combating inequities and really focusing on those disparities was a focal point prior to the pandemic it really has become a greater focus of our work. So there are two main goals any WIOA state plan approved by the governors workforce development board and the first is really focusing on those disparities and that is reducing educational skills training and employment disparities based on race, disability gender or disconnected youth. Our second is building employer led industry sector partnerships that expand the talent pipeline to be inclusive of race, disability, gender, and age to meet the industry demands for a skilled workforce. So really the WIOA state plan and putting those at the focal points as the main goals to guide a really big components that we are hoping and definitely do help us actualize the work on the ground as kind of a focal point.

And we are in the process like a lot of other states thinking about the work that we can do through our state boards to involve more folks at the table from the communities we are trying to better serve. So I think that is one tangible thing that we are doing for the board itself but if we go to the next slide please we can talk a little bit about some of the programmatic things that are happening here in Minnesota kinda from a broader perspective. But when it comes to our vocational rehabilitation services VRS team a good example of the intersection our team approach that others have spoken about and Heather is the VRS new American's team where not only is the program and services being provided tailored to the needs of specific communities, but also who staff says and is delivering the program really matters too, to make sure the services are the right match for the individuals and communities they we are working on. The Pre ETS team, the preemployment transition services team as Heather mentioned those OKRs objectives and key results measurable things we can do to bring about systems change. They have developed a number of those including one very explicitly on equity and making sure they are serving folks with disabilities but also serving folks with that emphasis on reaching out to other communities serving more BIPOC individual so that there is a measurable result to the source of equity goals. Then service delivery shifts to respond to communities and advocates. So for a number of years advocates for folks with disabilities have come and said there is the service delivery model and having these brick and mortar locations can be good for some but not for everyone. So the team has really looked at the human services model and some of the other models that community-based organizations use to deliver their service to be out in the community more partnering with libraries or others. So that is one example where VRS team is really centering DEI in their work and what they do.

And our state services for the blind team or SSB, again, largely driven right by those objectives and key results. So they have set a number of those around increasing the number of audio recordings that they are doing of state materials you know, the SSB team is definitely a leader when it comes to making sure that more books, not just state resources but everything from [indiscernible] are available to everyone in the community so they set a lot of goals around recording a lot more state resources, transcribing agency brochures into five different languages so that is what they are working on now. They have either completed things in Hmong, Russian, Spanish, Somali and Vietnamese so they continue to be a leader in this area actually currently working with Dakota tribal community partners to develop a braille code in their language and also working on children's literature in Dakota Ojibway Korean and Somali languages as well. Really they have also developed some measurable goals around increasing partnerships. I think everyone talks about wanting to increase partnerships but unless it it is something that can be measured sometimes it is hard to keep centered in the work so they have established measurable goals around increasing their partnerships with other partners that are often attempting to serve some of these communities. So the Veterans Administration, VA hospitals and other local and state the veterans associations. Then really, to SSB does a lot with externally and working with the public and maybe with other employers. But working closely on some of the things Heather mentioned around making sure that DEED is being an example and model employer itself as an agency that is really supporting and making sure our application and processes and hiring processes are inclusive as an agency as well.

So if you go to the next slide please?

I just wanted to mention a couple things about some of the other service delivery shifts that the agency has made. So the title III program has started doing more with libraries and other community partners again sort of being sure we are out in the community and not just relying on the brick and mortar. Then a really big thing here is the inclusive workforce employer designation or IWE as sometimes it is called sometimes comes out of the northwestern region of Minnesota where the local board was trying to help employers be more inclusive and helping their DEIA work as an employer and when more and more employers started getting interested in the work they ended up really developing this framework that involves employers, what they have created is community workforce inclusion councils and the local workforce board and DEED are all kind of working together to help employers achieve this designation that shows that they are an inclusive employer. And really helping those employers center DEIA work within their organizations. DEED does a number of state programs and workforce development areas and a recent one just came out even around tech training grants and prioritizing specific communities that faced disparities in technology industry particularly BIPOC folks and certain youth so that is built right into the RFP to be centering the communities with the greatest barriers. And I think it is really important and I think we already for one who is around the WIOA space and the workforce development space knows how most of the work happens really on the ground, at the local or regional area. So one thing DEED does do is invest in regional funding and often times the federal government or even state governments do fund programs but they don't always fund systems. So one thing that DEED does is try to invest in filling some of the gap. Obviously not all of it. WIOA has never been fully funded, but to help folks at the regional level do that. So I think that is a great queue up for my colleague and partner in the city of Duluth, Elena Foshay

>> Elena Foshay: Thank you, Ben and thanks for the opportunity to speak about this. I wanted to quickly share a local example of something that the Duluth workforce development board put together. The Duluth workforce development board is obviously a local board. Just like all workforce boards about half of the members are employers and the other half represent economic development organizations education institution community organizations. Our board has 27 very active members and in addition to that we have committees which invite other stakeholders to be involved in our work. One of the committees is the equity committee which has been very active in addressing some of the disparities.

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So the workforce board for a long time has been working on addressing some of the changes that both Ben and Heather brought up, so we have had persistent disparities by race and disability status and employment and income. BIPOC community members and those with disabilities continue to report discrimination when they go search for new employment. We see higher rates of turnover among BIPOC workers once they are hired and at the same time employers in our community and many other places are struggling to hire. This started before the pandemic and it has gotten significantly worse.

The other thing the workforce board really looks at is that the future workforce is really diverse. So in Duluth about 10% of the population overall are people of color but 25% of our K-12 student population are students of color. So the future workforce really is going to be very different from the current workforce.

The other thing that we see is that a lot of employers especially small to medium-size employers really struggle with capacity to focus on equity initiatives so they may be interested in diversity and inclusion but stretched thin. They don't have a separate HR department. They really don't have the capacity to lead initiatives on their own. So the workforce board wanted to step in and help. Next slide?

So before the pandemic we hosted a series of workshops, in person workshops. Remember those? that were focused on workforce solutions so the very first one we did way back in 2018 was just talking about demographic shifts. And our area just like in many places we have an aging workforce that's going to have an impact on the long-term unavailable labor. We talked about recruitment. We talked about retention. Then we really started to pivot toward diversity and inclusion. We held a workshop on hiring people with disabilities and the last couple workshops the main piece of feedback we heard over and over from employer participants were that they wanted more practical tools, things they could implement and take action on. They didn't want to just talk. They wanted to act. Next slide?

So we planned to continue the workshop series and then the pandemic happened so the workforce board and equity committee had to quickly pivot to provide a guide. So I'm going to share the guide and kind of really quickly walk through it. Hold on one second. There's my button. Okay so we put together this guide that was really meant to be something different, something very practical. That included tools that employers of all different sizes could choose from and use to lead equity initiatives. The guide is divided into four sections. It starts with recruiting and hiring, on boarding and retention and we broke it into those four areas really because we see that there's effort that needs to be made, intentional effort that needs to be made in each of the four areas if you are truly going to achieve equity goals.

So the guide sort of follows the pattern. So we started in each section. This is the recruiting section, with what is the end result. What is the end result we are trying to accomplish? and what suggested metrics could an employer start tracking to be able to measure whether their efforts are making an impact. Right? part of this work or part of the challenge that a lot of employers face is that they do things but they do not know, they don't have any metrics or data to know whether the efforts they are making are making a difference, which provide the best return on investment so we wanted to suggest some of those measurables.

We share best practices and these were gathered, they were initially gathered at our last pre-pandemic in person workshop where we had a room of 150 employers sharing some of the things they were doing around diversity and inclusion. We captured some best practices and did our own research to gather together what we felt were some very useful practices and tools. So throughout the guide there's hyperlinks to things that are available for free that people can access and use on their own. And then we had some additional tools and resources in each section. And then it was on to the next section. So this guide was launched in 2021. And it has really been integrated into our own work with employer navigation services as employers reach out to us for help with recruiting and hiring. We pull out the guide often, reference it, pull out tools, encourage employers to use some of the different tools and actions.

All right. Then I am going to stop sharing. And pull up the slideshow again.

So after the guide was launched, we then wanted to try to support employers in actually putting it to use. So this year we launched what we are calling the employer champions initiative, which is really trying to create a network of peer employers who are really interested in doing the work and making a difference. So they are employers who are very different kind of the basics who want to dig a little deeper and are really looking to help move the needle on some of the disparities we see in our community. So this has been a session series. We are just about to do the last session. Where the same group of people, and it is usually multiple individuals from the same employer who participate together, and kind of have been walking through the process digging in, digging deeper, reflecting, pulling out tools from the toolkit and building a network. We have an engagement platform that people can ask questions and interact with each other between workshops. To try to build the network of support and ongoing idea sharing best practice sharing so that our guide can be alive in our local community and continue to be added onto and developed.

And our plan after this series is obviously continue to host informal brainstorming sessions places where HR professionals managers small business owners can come together and ask questions and think I'm really trying to do this but I'm struggling with this, get ideas and share best practices and we have a venue that we can continue to share resources that we find is the workforce that employers might find useful.

With that I will hand it back to Laura. I will add anyone can access this guide, the diversity inclusion action guide. There is a link somewhere in the presentation to our website where it can be downloaded for free. And I'm happy to answer any questions about it afterward. But Laura I will hand it back to you.

>> Laura Gleneck: thank you Elena it is there in that chat, so everyone can find that an I want to thank Heather, Ben and Elena for the thoughtful work you are doing in Minnesota. We learned from Heather how they are making equity everybody's job through the use of the objectives and key results system and equity framework and checklists to make change from the inside out. I think that is key. Ben showed impact examples including how funding is being used to also support equity work on the ground, such as Duluth's forward thinking employer action guide, which Elena highlighted and shared how it really is helping employers increase diversity and and inclusion in recruiting, hiring, on boarding and retention.

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So we are now going to learn about another proven effective practice from New York Hempstead Works on how their pioneering staff development trainings have led to LGBTQ+ and disability inclusive services language policies and outreach. So Maria I am going to turn it over to you.

>> Maria Lombardi: Thank you so much Laura. Hello and thank you for joining us for the webinar on promising practices on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility or DEIA within the workforce system. I am Maria Lombardi and I'm the disability resource coordinator for the Hempstead Works center also known as the Department of occupational resources or DOOR. DOOR for those of you who do not know is located in the heart of a very diverse and underserved community. In addition Hempstead is also the home to a large number of helping agencies and service providers. Most if not all are partners of ours.

I am here with you today to speak about the LGBTQ+ inclusive training series my office provided for staff and local partners in September and October 2021, and continues to offer. I will be discussing the webinar series and the LGBTQ+ disability intersectionality. Intersectionality is described as a way of making visible the unique experiences of multiple marginalized people.

I love Kimberle Crenshaw's quote earlier, but I'm going to quote according to the ADA national network when we take an intersectional approach we acknowledge every person has multiple identities which together shape their every day experiences of systemic oppression and/or privilege. In addition, when the disability intersects with other marginalized identities such as being female, or an immigrant, that is when a person faces additional types of oppression. My career here at Hempstead works Career Center began in 2008 as a career counselor and now as the disability resource coordinator through two rounds of the disability employment initiative project in 2014 and 2017 and now with a three-year pilot program known as New York systems change and inclusive opportunities network otherwise known as SCION. Having worked in the field of workforce development as a disability resource coordinator I can tell you my experience strongly echoes the words of the ADA and Kimberle Crenshaw. Next slide please.

Certainly during my 14 years at Hempstead I can tell you the intersectional approach is the most effective way to meet people where they are and connect with them to identify challenges goals and needs. Individuals with disabilities have many identities and one of them is identifying as being a member of the LGBTQ+ community. On your screen you will see directly from the website what it stands for in the LGBTQ definition in addition you can always reference GLAAD's LGBTQ media reference guide for a more detailed definition of each term. Next slide please?

At Hempstead works our mission is centered on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the workforce system and it truly is. As part of this mission, in 2021 when we partnered with Dawn E. Shedrick at JenTex consulting to offer a four week LGBTQ+ webinar series for our staff and partners the training series was developed to ensure that our Career Center and the staff working there were fulfilling Hempstead works mission on DEIA. we wanted to ensure that participants and community members identified as being part of the LGBTQ+ community are always treated with DEIA, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as well as dignity and respect and understanding. Hempstead works should always be an inclusive and accessible space for all jobseekers and identities that represent who they are.

What you see before you now is the description for our inclusive webinar series. Straight from Dawn E. Shedrick at JenTex consulting in this description you will see the fact that research indicates LGBTQ+ clients face many barriers and inequities related to their sexual orientation and or identities.

For those of you who have worked with these clients or have friends and family members in this community, you most likely already know this without needing any research to support the fact.

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The fact is very real. And that is the reason, the very reason why Hempstead works took on this mission to offer LGBTQ+ inclusive training to our staff and partners. In order to truly meet people where they are, truly meet them where they are, you need to be able to understand the specific needs. The inclusive webinar series discussed strategies that we as professionals in our fields could ensure... Could use to ensure professional and program efficacy in an affirming and welcoming environment.

Too often you hear stories in the news about the inequities members of the community face, from discrimination, to violence and hateful crimes. As service professionals, we must always strive to provide a welcoming environment for the people that we serve, and that includes everyone from every community background race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, disability or no disability. Next slide please?

As a professional I have learned from one too many members of the LGBTQ+ community about the inequities they faced in their lives. Hempstead works offered the training series to actively improve our capacity to serve this community and to always make them feel welcome here at the center. Having heard a story about a young individual identifying as LGBTQ+ who was turned away from a service provider when he reached out to them for help, I knew that this could never and should never happen in our center by any of our staff.

Luckily, this individual sought and received help elsewhere where they were treated with the respect and care they deserved. This is a happy ending to this story particularly because this individual, in addition to being a member of the marginalized community was also dealing with a mental health diagnosis and the challenges that come along with that. This was the secondary reason why this individual was seeking help. Even more reason why it was so sad that he was turned away.

We extended this inclusive training invitation to our partners to foster building capacity in the local region with our training providers and local community agencies. We knew there was an increasing number of individuals in the LGBTQ+ community visiting our centers and needing our services and we knew that it was imperative to provide this training to educate and inform our staff and partners which would overall improve our service delivery for the community. This training series helps to bring us one step closer to further embracing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. And also further understanding how important an intersectional approach is one serving our clients.

Next slide please?

As you have seen on the slides we do have staff raising some questions over the years expressing uncertainty about how to properly address and serve individuals in the LGBTQ+ community. They wanted to do the right thing. Sometimes not knowing exactly how.

As an agency, when your staff are asking questions, they are in essence showing how much they care about their clients. It was and is our responsibility to answer the questions as we did with this training series.

And yes as you see on the slide we did receive praise from our local partners for offering this free training series. One such partner that we reached out to about the series indicated that we were the first and only provider on Long Island to offer this truly important and necessary training series in our region. Next slide please?

What are some of the lessons learned from the training series? what we learned our number one what it means to be part of the LGBTQ+ community as well as number two the social and cultural challenges faced by this community and the inequities they face every day in the workplace and in their personal lives. Then there is number three, the true importance of setting aside our biases and prejudices and truly embracing diversity equity, inclusion, and accessibility for the members of the LGBTQ+ community.

We are keeping the momentum going. Next slide please? we are keeping the momentum going here at Hempstead works by expanding the workshop series to our Summer youth employment program for the participants ages 16 to 20 in our program as well as the businesses that will employ them. We plan on implementing an ongoing training and awareness for staff and partners in the coming year by continuing this training series for newly hired staff as well as for existing staff that would like a refresher. Currently we have expanded the training series to newly hired disability resource coordinators throughout New York State for the grant as well as all the existing DRCs for previous DEI grants for disability employment initiative grant that preceded the SCION grant. The ongoing training will help us develop new strategies and methodologies to continually improve the way we accept, understand and assist members of the community in our career centers all throughout New York State.

Training and education are the first step in empowering ourselves, embracing DEIA, and improving how we interact with and effectively serve our clients as well as one another.

Next slide?

I will end my presentation with resources and information for the LGBTQ+ inclusive series starting with the resources from our local area here on Long Island and expanded to the national level with the GSA network.

And on the last slide after this one you will find my contact information as well as contact information for our youth services coordinator as well as our career Center and training services coordinator. I can tell you before I wrap up and hand it back to Laura I can tell you, one story that recently occurred over the summer. In our summer youth program we had a youth in our program who was working beautifully, getting along wonderfully with his employers and colleagues at his place of employment in our program. Until one day he heard some words being spoken by some of his coworkers, young coworkers. There were some disparaging comments made about the LGBTQ+ community which he was a member of in addition to having a mental health disability he was completely struck and devastated by the comments he overheard, feeling that they were directed at him specifically as well as other members of his community. He immediately contacted our coordinator and our coordinator contacted me and we started immediately strategizing how we were going to make this right. We did not want him to leave his worksite. We wanted him to finish up the summer and have positive really wonderful work experience that actually he had been up until the moment he heard the conversation. With our interception and a little bit of guidance and support we spoke with the employer. We spoke with a supervisor. We had conversations with some of his coworkers, not specifically pointing to him, but just a general conversation about empathy, diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. All the things that we are here for today. And I will tell you that after having a conversation with the youth and this young man and his coworkers and the employer he went back to work the next day, finished up the summer and everything was all smoothed over with a coworker. So many times people do not realize the words they are speaking are harmful and hurtful to others. And sometimes again you just need to educate them and inform them what it is they are saying. It can be hurtful even if they are not meant to be. All right Laura, it is back to you. Thank you so much for having me here today.

>> Laura Gleneck: Great. Thank you Maria. I am so moved by the presentations from Minnesota and New York and really showing how bringing up the true challenges that exist but how everybody is coming together to think of thoughtful strategic ways to make it a more inclusive, diverse and accessible center. Really great, Maria, for showing how this innovative training series is helping workforce administrators to understand the unique needs of the LGBTQ+ community and really more inclusive practices that have been implemented as a result. Thank you all so much for that. If you go to the next slide? we have a poll. You have had an opportunity to learn about replicable state and local activities and practices that are helping to increase equitable access and inclusion within the workforce system.

And before we turn it over to our department of labor representatives to learn how these and other DEIA practices are helping to inform guidance at the federal levels, we wanted to take a moment to hear from you about successful promising nondiscrimination and equal opportunity practices that you are implementing at the state or local level to promote inclusion of underserved populations including people with disabilities. So if you will pull up the poll please. and we would love to hear from you do you have policies practices and/or procedures currently in place at the local or state level that promote DEIA in workforce programs. You can let us know if you do please include your name and agency in the poll. And then when you exit today please use the post webinar survey to provide additional details about your DEIA effort.

Maybe for those that selected I don't know this could be an opportunity to go back if you have learned things, to ask questions. It’s great to see the yeses and for the no's we hope that is what you will take away from the presentation. So we can keep the poll up and I'm going to move on just to keep us going. Thank you all for taking the poll.

So next we're going to hear from our leaders joining us from the Department of Labor to learn more about the importance of DEIA and its connection to section 188 of WIOA. As a reminder our leaders include Robert Kight representing the employment and training administration, Lee Perselay representing the Civil Rights Center, and Christopher Button representing the office of disability employment policy first I will turn the presentation over to Robert Kight to get us started to provide some words from the employment and training administration. Robert I will turn it over to you.

>> Robert Kight: Thanks Laura. As you said I am Robert Kight director of adult services and governance within the employment and training administration and my portfolio primarily consists of the WIOA adult services dislocated worker programs as well as the Wagner Peyser and adult dislocated worker grants programs. I want to first join Laura and provide kudos to the presenters from New York and Minnesota today. I very much appreciate you sharing some very good practical strategies to make diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility a way of doing business in the public workforce system. As most of you know, ETA partners with state and local workforce development boards to oversee the delivery of workforce services through more than 2300 American job centers across the country. Under WIOA the AJCs are required to provide full access to all jobseekers to include individuals with disabilities. And I think if we are honest we could say that some probably do a better job at fulfilling their responsibility than others. So it is really very timely and appropriate today to have this conversation on section 188 of WIOA.

I will tell you that ETA's leadership is committed to ensure that the workforce system services are provided and there's accessibility to underserved and marginalized communities, not only in our WIOA programs, but through all of our funded workforce development initiatives. In fact, these days DEIA must be fully embedded into our policies and programs and funding initiatives to help drive this change in the workforce. So I am glad to be here and with that, I will pass the baton on to Lee.

>> Lee Perselay: Thank you. I appreciate that very much. My name is Lee Perselay and I'm chief of the office of external enforcement of the civil rights Center at the US Department of Labor. Today I'm going to spend a few minutes talking about the WIOA section 188 regulations that apply to applicants participants and entity is within the workforce system.

The WIOA section 188 regulations are quite detailed and given the limited time that we have available today I am only going to talk about them in a summary way. I encourage each of you to review the regulations in order to better understand the rights and responsibilities in more detail. So let's get started.

... Next slide.

So, section 188 of the workforce innovation opportunity act is a nondiscrimination provision of the statute. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, political affiliation or belief, national origin, including limited English proficiency and citizenship status. The Department of Labor section 188 implementing regulations for the nondiscrimination equal opportunity provision of WIOA are located at 29 CFR part 38. And I have included a link through the ECFR website where you can find the regulations online in their entirety. Next slide?

The US Department of Labor civil rights Center is responsible for administering and enforcing the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA and its implementing regulations and for developing and issuing policies standards, guidance and procedures for effecting compliance. Section 188 and its implementing regulations prohibit discrimination against individuals in any WIOA title I financially assisted program or activity. Which includes job training for adults and youth and programs or activities provided by recipients at American job centers. American job centers also known as one-stop centers.

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These programs or activities may not refuse to offer or provide services to individuals because of the prohibited bases we just talked about, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or political affiliation or belief. Discrimination on these bases also prohibited against employees who are employed in the administration of or in connection with any WIOA title I financially assisted program or activity. Next slide please?

The regulations apply to recipients, which is a term defined within the WIOA section 188 regulations of WIOA title I financial assistance including programs and activities that are operated by AJC partners as part of the AJC system, such as unemployment insurance TANF Adult Education, trade adjustment assistance in others. Next slide please.

The regulations also apply to programs and activities that are part of the one-stop delivery system that are operated by one-stop partners listed in section 121(b) of WIOA which is 29 USC 3151 to the extent that the programs and activities are being conducted as part of the one-stop delivery system in the employment practices of a recipient and/or one-stop partner to the extent the employment is in the administration of or connection with programs and activities that are conducted as part of the WIOA title I or one-stop delivery system.

Next slide? so now I'm just going to highlight some of the regulatory provisions. This is really a very very brief overview. So I have only highlighted a few provisions. Again I encourage people to take a look at the regulations themselves, which are much more detailed and cover many other bases of discrimination as well as other issues.

But for the highlights, we have in the regulations a general prohibition on discrimination, which reads no individual in the United States may on the basis of race, color or national origin age, disability or political affiliation or belief... Or for beneficiaries applicants and participants only, on the basis of citizenship, or participation in any WIOA title I financially assisted program or activity be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, be subjected to discrimination under, or denied employment in the administration of or connection with any WIOA title I financially assisted program or activity.

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The regulations also have specific section related to discrimination... Prohibited based on sex. I have just included here the initial... Language in that section. There's more detailed language in this section as well. Initial language says providing any aid benefit service or training under a WIOA title I financially assisted program or activity the recipient must not directly or through contractual bases discriminate on the basis of sex. And individual may not be excluded from participation in denied the benefits of or subjected to discrimination under any WIOA title I financially assisted program based on sex and the term sex includes but is not limited to, pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions, transgender status and gender identity.

Again, there is more detail with any specific regulation found at 29 CFR 38.7.Next slide please?

We also have a specific regulatory section with respect to discrimination prohibited based on national origin including limited English proficiency. That section is quite detailed. Again, I encourage individuals here to take a look at these specific provisions and requirements. I have only pasted in the slide, just the beginning provisions of that regulation. Which say in providing any aid benefit service or training under WIOA title I financially assisted program or activity a recipient must not directly or through contractual or other arrangements discriminate on the basis of national origin including limited English proficiency. In addition, a recipient must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to each limited English proficient LEP individuals served or encountered so LEP individuals are effectively informed about and/or able to participate in the program or activity. Next slide please?

The regulations also have provisions specific to prohibited harassment. And which defines that harassment as well, harassment of an individual based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or political affiliation or belief etc. is a violation of the nondiscrimination provisions of WIOA, the statute end of the regulations. Next slide please?

We also have a retaliation prohibition in the regulations. At 29 CFR 38.19, which says the recipient must not retaliate intimidated, discharge, threaten or coerce or discriminate against any individual because the individual has enforced their rights under WIOA section 188 by filing a complaint alleging a violation opposing a practice, prohibited by the regulations or participating in an investigation review hearing other activity related to the regulations.

And then I am just going to talk briefly about some of the disability provisions. So next slide?

The regulations requirements concerning individuals with disabilities generally parallel the ADA, and the requirements under ADA and section 504 of the rehabilitation act. Next slide. So there is a general provision with respect to discrimination, prohibited based on disability. There are 12 or 13 different subsections under the general provision the first one or two are set out in this slide which say discrimination includes denying a qualified individual the opportunity to participate in or benefit from aid benefit service or training and also includes benefit a qualified individual any aid and if it's or training that is not equal to what is offered to others or is that not as effective. And so these closely parallel general prohibitions against disability discrimination in the ADA. Next slide and then like the ADA there are other requirements in regulations that are related to individuals with disabilities. They include providing reasonable accommodations, providing reasonable modifications in policies practices or procedures providing effective communication auxiliary aids and services ensuring physical accessibility and providing accessible electronic and information technology. I know my time is running short so I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Chris Button at this point.

>> Chris Button: Thank you so much Lee. Thank you to Lee and Robert my DOL colleagues as well as to the other speakers today and colleagues at the LEAD Center in helping organize this important webinar. I want to talk just a minute about the section 188 disability reference guide. That has been mentioned a couple times today already. DOL including the civil rights Center, employment and training administration and office of disability employment policy put this guide out a number of years ago for the intent of assisting the system including the American job centers of course to provide promising practices that correlate with specific requirements of the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity requirements of section 188 of WIOA, which Lee has given us a very high level overview of. And they were most recently put out in February 2019. Hopefully many of you are familiar with this guide already. Next slide please?

So the guide is intended to assist American job centers in the system to identify strategies that they can implement to ensure that what they are doing within their system can assist in ensuring equal opportunity and nondiscrimination for jobseekers that come through their door. I want to clarify that it is not a compliance document. It is an educational document. The guide is divided into two separate parts and it is intended to give you a series of strategies that you as a system can choose to implement in order to meet various requirements that Lee has spoken about. It is not in itself a compliance document. Part one of the guide provides the promising practices that have been collected from job centers across the country. And you can look through as you look at requirements from section 188 and you can find suggestions in part one of promising practices that are being implemented right now by colleagues and other job centers across the country in order to meet the requirements. The promising practices are divided into equal access programs and activities, nondiscrimination and equal opportunity policies practices and procedures and additional affirmative obligations.

Part two of the guide shows you the relationship between the promising practices section and the actual legal requirements of section 188 that are applicable to WIOA title I financially assisted programs and activities and one of the cool things is that it includes hyperlinks so you can be reading the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity section 188 regulations, the requirement that all of our job centers have to meet and there will be a hyper link to the section to a part of part one for the promising practices for that particular provision are. Things that you can consider doing in order to meet the requirements of the particular practice, the hyperlinks are really very helpful in helping you to understand the relationship between part two and part one of the guide. So I really do urge you to take a look at that. Let's jump to the next slide please.

In terms of what is next we got together here at labor and we were very aware that even though the examples that are included in the guide are really fabulous and kudos to the speakers today because I know that they helped contribute examples that are already there. And we certainly are going to be augmenting the guide with the examples they have been talking about. But we were aware that there were additional practices that could be included to specifically promote inclusion of underserved populations including individuals with disabilities. So we are all working with the LEAD Center to update the section 188 disability reference guide to provide these additional practices ideas and resources that will consider all the systemic barriers that individuals with disabilities face because of various intersecting identities.

So the updates to the reference guide are consistent with language from both President Biden's executive order and the Department of Labor equity plan. We are actively working on these updates right now. And we hope to be able to release the updated guide late this year or at the latest, early next year. We really do encourage you to take a look at it and to make every effort to see how DEIA strategies might be incorporated into your own service delivery within your own part of the workforce development system.

Laura I'm going to hand it right back over to you.

>> Laura Gleneck: Great, thank you Chris and Robert and Lee. This all goes together with the poll we had earlier learning about something you do not know so I hope you do look at the promising practices guide that exists and look forward to the one that is coming out. Then the relevance and importance of section 188 and DEIA. We have so many questions and we have a few minutes. So I'm going to touch on a couple of them that we have time for. And I think I'm going to look first to Heather and Ben. We had a question and I think this is appropriate, again with regard to the response to the poll. And the question is do you have any recommendations for ways that people can connect with the state workforce development board to advance DEIA efforts for those who do not have an existing connection to their state board.

>> Ben Baglio: That's a tough one because the thing about state workforce development boards is that they are very unique based on the different state. So here in Minnesota our state workforce development board is within our primary state workforce agency, DEED. And that is the case I think for about roughly half maybe of state workforce boards. But sometimes they are housed in a Department of Commerce or sometimes they are standalone agency sometimes in the governor's office. So I guess that is a tough one to answer. But they tend to be pretty large entities. We have the largest in the country here in Minnesota because it is just the way they are written they can become pretty big entities pretty quickly. But they oftentimes have openings and there is a number of those that maybe the audience might fit in, and maybe they can apply to serve on the state board or local board where a lot of the stuff happens obviously.

>> Laura Gleneck: Thank you for that, Ben, Elena, how do we help employers keep up the momentum on the DEIA work?

>> Elena Foshay: I think number one is to recognize that they are balancing a lot of responsibilities so the more we can support them to integrate DEIA into things that they already need to do the better. So employers have to recruit, they have to hire and onboard employees so how can we provide them tools that will help them do that like providing interview questions or providing examples of updated job descriptions or places that can post jobs or on boarding plans or someone to help them do their job better. I think the other piece, and this is really kind of the role that the workforce board equity committee has taken on is to vet tools. There is a ton of information out there about diversity and inclusion that can be pretty overwhelming. So we take a look at it, we kind of vet what we think is the most useful or relevant or the most practical and that is what we put in the guide and I would imagine we will probably do an update on the guide at some point in the near future to add some new tools that we have found.

>> Laura Gleneck: Great. Thank you Elena. And Heather I know we do not have too much time but could you quickly share a little bit more about the equity change framework?

>> Heather Stein: Hi Laura. Yes I would be happy to. The equity change framework is a set of guiding questions and steps for organizations to help frame objectives and agency level goals and the six steps in the framework include first just being really specific about what the intended outcomes are. Secondly, who is included in the design of the program or the service. Thirdly, how can we collaborate to drive more impact. So kind of doing a stakeholder analysis and understanding where we have levers of influence and where we don't or how do we create those. The fourth is examining the impact of the efforts. So once you create the plan, recognizing whether or not there are still gaps. Fifth is strategies and accountability methods in place. How are you going to measure your progress. And lastly how will you communicate efforts, and I think in that piece it is really some of these strategies and requirements that Lee shared are really important around language access and accessibility of communications to those that you are serving. Like I said there are a lot of other prompts in each of the six steps that will be a helpful framework for folks interested in doing more with this.

>> Laura Gleneck: Great and I'm glad you will share it and we will also post these materials to the webinar archive so thank you for that. We are going to move forward, to the next slide, Shannon. Just a really special thank you again to the presenters. And the work that you are doing to build a more inclusive and accessible workforce system for all customers especially those at the intersection of disability. Thank you to the Department of Labor for working together across agencies to provide the workforce system with additional practices, ideas and resources that consider the systemic barriers individuals with disabilities face because of their intersecting identities, and increase cultural competence. The next few slides we are just going to go through, Shannon that include federal equity resources that we hope you will come back and look at. We can go to the next slide with the LEAD center, so I hope you love what you heard today. Be sure to check out the center website you can find this events recording and transcript as we put in the chat at the end of next week and plus a very robust library of resources. We also encourage you if you are not already to sign up and receive information and notifications on future events including our newsletter. Next slide please? And we want you to follow us., Follow the LEAD center on social media if you see a tweet you like please retweet. Please share posts with your network and encourage them to follow the LEAD center. If you go to the next slide, and then the final slide, and thank you to all of you who joined us for the presentation today. We hope the promising practices on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility shared today will provide you with practical ways to improve equity, inclusion and diverse workforces. Thank you everybody and enjoy the rest of your day.