

Universal Design as the Foundation of AI Literacy: Preparing the Workforce of Tomorrow

Transcript

January 23, 2026

>> Universal Design as the Foundation of AI Literacy: Preparing the Workforce of Tomorrow. On behalf of the LEAD Center, I'm excited to explore how universal design for learning embedded into artificial intelligence and digital literacy programs can hold immense value in the development of tomorrow's workforce. In case you don't know, the LEAD Center, or the National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities, is funded by the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. Next slide. And my name is Sarah Loizeaux, and I am a subject matter expert on Career Pathways for the LEAD Center with National Disability Institute, and I will be moderating today's webinar. We have a great lineup, and I'm really excited to get started and introduce the presenters. Next slide. But before we get any further, I'd like to first share a few housekeeping items to help us get the most out of today's session. You can turn on captioning through the "Show Captions" option in Zoom, or you can open the captioning link which will be posted in the chat. The browser version lets you adjust text size, color, and background to match your preferences. This session today will be recorded. The recording and materials will be available on the LEAD Center website under "Recent and Upcoming Events" within 10 business days. Next slide. We love questions, and we really encourage you to ask

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questions throughout today's presentation. If you can see at the bottom of your screen, there is a box for questions, a question and answer. Anytime you have a question, feel free to answer in that box, I'm sorry, ask the question in that box. However, if you have a content question, you're having trouble seeing the screen or there's a sound issue, please ask that question in the chat box area. But yeah, hopefully you'll have a lot of questions today and we'll get a lot of good answers for you. But just to make sure that, again, if it's a content question about the material, please ask that in the chat box. Also in the chat box, as people will be referring to websites and resources and material available online, we will be providing those links in the chat, so pay attention for that.

Next slide. And before we go to the opening remarks, I just want to thank the Office of Disability Employment Policy, also known as ODEP, for their leadership and support in putting together today's webinar. Allow me to share a brief overview of ODEP and the work they do. ODEP is a subcabinet-level agency within the Department of Labor and the only non-regulatory federal agency of its kind. ODEP works with employers and government partners to strengthen workplace access and create meaningful opportunities for people with disabilities. Next slide. ODEP's mission is focused on shaping policies and practices that expand and enhance access to employment and training opportunities for Americans with disabilities, while also aligning opportunities with what employers need. ODEP's mission helps to ensure that people with disabilities are able to pursue meaningful career pathways, and that businesses have access to a highly skilled talent pool. Next slide. And to set the stage for today's webinar and to provide opening remarks, I'm pleased to introduce one of ODEP's finest, Ben Cheriyan

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with the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. Ben is a policy advisor for the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, where he serves on the Workforce Systems Policy Team. Ben works closely with the ODEP-funded National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities, the LEAD Center, in the implementation of WIOA to increase employment outcomes for Americans with disabilities. Ben provides expertise on how the Workforce Development System can implement artificial intelligence, financial education, and aligned services to meet the provisions of WIOA's Section 188. Ben also works closely with federal partners, including the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, the US Department of Education, and Social Security Administration to enhance workforce development and leveraging federal resources to develop workforce policies and practices. He is a graduate of the College of Staten Island, where he earned his Master's of Social Work. Thank you so much for starting us off today, Ben. The floor is yours.

>> Thank you, Sarah. Hi, everybody. And once again, my name is Ben Cheriyan. I'm a policy advisor at the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the US Department of Labor. And on behalf of ODEP, I'd like to welcome you all to today's webinar. We have an exciting panel on a very exciting topic. So, you heard a bit from Sarah on the mission at ODEP, so I don't want to repeat what Sarah already said. But I want to think a bit about of how we fulfill our mission. So to fulfill our mission, we develop and implement best practices, effective strategies across various systems, meaning those, as well as

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our federal partners, meaning those that we have validated within ODEP as well as our federal partners that impact the employment of Americans with disabilities. Our work ranges across various issues that impact job seekers and workers with disabilities. And one of those areas is accessible technology. And AI, or artificial intelligence, is a big piece of that. Here, a big piece of that work. AI is no longer just a future consideration, but it's having, as you can see, an impact on the skills needed for the workforce, as well as how workforce services are being provided. As a result, it's important that the workforce system is prepared to adapt to an AI-driven economy. And that's clearly written down in the five pillars of the "American Talent Strategy: Equipping the Workforce for the Golden Age", a joint report that was developed by the US Department of Labor, Commerce, and Education. I want to highlight one of those pillars specifically, and you will hear more about it later, and that is the flexibility and innovation pillar. This pillar calls for the workforce to be prepared for an AI economy by prioritizing AI literacy, increasing career pathways to AI jobs, as well as refueling innovation and shipping, refueling innovation. At ODEP, we work with employers, job seekers, workforce providers to ensure increased adoption, as well as the use of AI that's accessible. So we feel the design and implementation and AI that is accessible for everybody, for all, from all American workers, including for those with disabilities, ensures it is untapped, untaps its potential for everyone. Universal design is a prominent strategy that is, you will learn a lot more, a key word that you hear in today's webinar, that ensures that AI is accessible for everyone, while at the same time aligning to the goals of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of innovation, accountability, and expanding

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participation. When AI, when embedding universal design from the onset by workforce program as they design and implement AI, it ensures that it's accessible for all customers, including those with disabilities. In today's webinar, you're going to hear both the national and local perspective on how the principles of universal design can be used to ensure that AI tools and AI literacy programs is accessible, while at the same time expanding workforce opportunities for all customers, including those with disabilities. But before that, we are happy to have our partners at the Employment Training Administration at the US Department of Labor, who will share guidance that was released last summer through the training guidance letter on how to use Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act funding to increase AI literacy for youth and adults. Before I conclude my remarks, I do want to thank our panelists at CAST, Penn-Mar Human Services, and Carroll Technology Innovation Council for sharing their innovative practices that are being done to ensure AI tools are accessible broadly, and while at the same time aligning workforce. So with that, once again I want to thank you all for joining us today. And I'll turn it now back to Sarah and turn it to our real stars, our presenters and panelists. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, Ben. And you are right, we have a great lineup of presenters today. We're going to hear from experts who will bring their own unique expertise and experience in this area. But what each speaker has in common is a shared commitment to making sure job seekers with disabilities and other barriers to employment are equipped to compete in today's workforce by learning the ever-evolving world of

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technology, especially when it comes to AI or artificial intelligence. Our panel today includes Lillian Fix with the US Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, Dr. Luis Perez, the Senior Director of Disability and Accessibility for CAST, Jack Bayne, Program and Instruction Coordinator with the Carroll Technology & Innovation Council, and Kelly Dorsey, Senior Director Support Professional with Penn-Mar Human Services. Next slide, please. Today we're going to look at how universal design for learning, also could be called UDL, how it could help shape AI-enabled workforce and career education programs. You're going to hear real examples of how universal design is effectively put into practice through the work of the Carroll Technology & Innovation Council. And hopefully you'll come away with practical steps and tools you can use to bring AI skill development into WIOA-funded programs. Our goal is to give you insights you can apply within your organization, whether you're supporting job seekers, designing training, or planning program strategy. So, the next slide, please. Let's get started with the speakers. I am very excited to introduce Lillian Fix with the Employment and Training Administration. She'll be sharing with us ETA's recent efforts to encourage and support WIOA-funded programs to help job seekers prepare for the workforce of tomorrow and build AI literacy skills. Lillian Fix is a Workforce Analyst in the Office of Workforce Investment at the US Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, where she supports WIOA Title I youth programs. Her expertise in public policy and workforce research helps advance national initiatives that strengthen youth training and career pathways. Lillian, it's a pleasure to have you. The floor is yours.

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>> Thank you so much, Sarah. So, as she mentioned, today I'm going to spend a few minutes talking about the Department of Labor's recent guidance on AI. So, we can kick it off with the next slide, please. All right, so first, here's some brief background and kind of context to the guidance. So the executive order Advancing AI Education for American Youth is what actually tasked the department with issuing the AI guidance that I'm talking about today. And Ben already mentioned the "America's Talent Strategy" Report in his opening remarks, but I'll mention it again here. So again, this report explains more broadly some of the strategy around how the Department is thinking about AI literacy and skill development as a priority across the workforce system. The document details five strategic pillars, the fifth of which is that pillar on flexibility and innovation, and which has a lot of emphasis on AI literacy, so I've called it out here on the slide. Next slide, please. So with that background, in August 2025, the Department's Employment and Training Administration, or ETA, issued "Training and Employment Guidance Letter", or TEGL, 325. So, this TEGL encourages state and local workforce development boards to utilize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA, or I might say WIOA, Title I Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Programs to help participants develop AI literacy skills. Over the next few slides, I'll provide an overview of what that guidance says. If you're already familiar with the TEGL, I won't be sharing new information today, but just providing a high-level summary of the content of the guidance. And conversely, if you're not already familiar with the TEGL but you want more information, please do check it out as it goes into more depth than what I will do today. So next slide, please. All right. So in the TEGL, the Department first clarifies, sorry, I see we're switching

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interpreters here. The Department first clarifies the authority in WIOA to support AI education and training, specifically citing Sections 101 and Section 107 of the law. So section 101 authorizes funding to support digital literacy efforts, which includes education and training on AI. And then Section 107 says that states and local workforce development boards shall, quote, "Identify strategies for better meeting the needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including strategies that augment traditional service delivery and increase access to services and programs of the one-stop delivery system, such as improving digital literacy skills." Next slide, please. So now that we've identified the authority in WIOA, or WIOA, to support this work, what does that look like for the different Title I programs? So the Title I Youth Program authorizes 14 program elements, including the four that are listed on this slide. And depending on what the youth participant needs, the services that support their individual AI literacy development can fit into these four different program elements, depending on how the information on AI or training on AI is delivered. So examples may include providing general education on using AI, providing occupational skills training that incorporates AI, and providing career awareness about potential careers in AI. The Department also encourages youth service providers to identify work experience opportunities for participants in occupations that incorporate AI into the job. For WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs, the Employment and Training Administration encourages leveraging individualized career services and training services to support AI education and training for eligible participants. Individualized career services include short-term pre-vocational services and workforce preparation activities. Excuse me. And these

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services can support AI literacy and digital skill building for participants whose ability to obtain and retain employment would benefit from such skills. And for training services, local boards can utilize the Eligible Training Provider List, or ETPL, or they may consider contracting training services for AI trainings. And then lastly, the TEGL mentions the Governor's Reserve Funds, which can be used for allowable statewide activities. These allowable statewide activities may include demonstration projects and innovative programs related to integrating digital literacy, including AI education and training into WIOA Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Programs. Next slide, please. Thank you. So we're talking about AI literacy development and trainings, but what even is AI literacy? So the TEGL identifies a few foundational content areas and effective delivery practices of AI literacy activities that states and local areas are encouraged to keep in mind when considering various AI education and training opportunities for participants. So very briefly, the foundational content areas cover things like understanding the basics of how AI works, exploring its uses, effective prompting, evaluating its outputs, and managing AI responsibly. And the effective delivery of AI literacy activities may include contextualized learning opportunities, building complementary skills, addressing prerequisites to AI literacy such as digital literacy, and creating pathways for continued learning. So, on the next slide, we'll see some resources, the first of which is the Competency Model Clearinghouse. Thank you for switching the slides. So, the Department's Competency Model Clearinghouse provides competency models that describe the skills necessary to educate and train a globally competitive workforce. In one of the models, the Building Blocks Model, it's a series of

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competencies on basic computer skills, which includes skills related to fundamental digital literacy. And some of them also touch on AI. And these are also called out in the TEGL. And these competencies can also be helpful or a helpful resource when trying to conceptualize what AI literacy might entail or what that might look like. So you may also want to explore some of these other links incorporated in the TEGL, so ai.gov is one of them, and then the National Science Foundation, or NSF's website, just for additional resources to support AI literacy. So, with that, while that was really just a quick, high-level summary of what's in the guidance, please do check out the TEGL for more information, some more in-depth information. I believe the link was shared with you all, but it's also in the slides as well. So, with that, I will pass it back to Sarah. Thank you so much for having me.

>> Thank you so much, Lillian. I find that super interesting and helpful context. And as someone who once a long time ago worked in an American Job Center, I imagine I am not the only one. Now, if we go to the next slide, please. I am really excited to introduce one of the leading experts on universal design for learning, and apply it into the area of career and workforce development. Dr. Luis Perez with CAST, as the Senior Director of Disability and Accessibility for CAST. Oh, you can move to the next slide, please. Dr. Luis Perez promotes the creation, delivery, and use of high-quality, accessible educational materials and technologies to support learning opportunities for everyone. As a member of the Post-secondary and Workforce Development Group at CAST, he also works to increase access to middle and high-income careers for people with

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disabilities. Dr. Perez is a cohost of the CAST podcast, "The Learning Experience", with numerous launches monthly. He was recognized with the 2020 ISTE Making It Happen Award, and is a coauthor of "Dive Into UDL" from the International Society for Technology and Education. He also currently serves as a workplace at Assistive Technology Strand Advisor for the Assistive Technology Industry Association. Luis, I know you've got some great guidance and resources to share with us today, so I will give it over to you.

>> Thank you so much for that kind introduction, Sarah. And I will just add to my introduction here that I identify as a disabled person, and I use a range of assistive technologies, including screen magnification, text-to-speech and screen reader technology, and AI. So, this is something that is personal to me beyond my role at CAST. It's something that I use in my day-to-day living situation. Next slide, please. So, CAST, it is a national nonprofit, and we have a singular mission. Our mission is to lead, inspire, and convene a global community to design equitable and inclusive learning experiences through our universal design for learning framework. And even though we originated in the Boston area, we are now distributed around the country with many of us working virtually, and that is the case for me. I'm joining you all from, I would typically say sunny Florida. I'm based in St. Petersburg, Florida, but it is a little bit chilly today, not as chilly as it is probably for some of you around the country. Next slide, please. And just to define our terms, we will be using the term "Universal Design for Learning" or UDL a number of times throughout this session today. But Universal Design for Learning

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is an educational framework that is based in research in the learning sciences, and that includes many observations in the classroom and a lot of feedback from educators and others who apply Universal Design for Learning in a number of different settings, including the workplace. And the goal of UDL is to guide the development of flexible and accessible experiences, experiences that allow everybody to thrive. And so often people will say UDL is about providing voice and choice. And that's really the flexibility part of UDL. But they often forget that accessible part. If we don't make experiences accessible, then who has choice and who has a voice? So, we want to make sure that we consider both flexibility and accessibility together. Next slide, please. And one of the tools that we've developed to really support the implementation of universal design for learning, whether it's in the classroom, in the workplace, in any environment where learning takes place, is our CAST Universal Design for Learning Guidelines. And those guidelines really help us reach the goal of UDL, which is to support people in gaining agency over their own learning. And we say that someone who has agency over their learning has these three characteristics. They're purposeful and reflective. So, they act with intention, but at the same time, they're reflective and they're able to make adjustments as required by the learning environment. And this is really important when it comes to living and working in the age of AI, where we need to be adaptable and we need to make adjustments on an ongoing basis. So, that idea of being of reflective learning is really key. Learners who have agency are also resourceful and authentic. So they don't just know a lot, but they're able to learn more. They love learning, and they're able to seek resources in creative ways, and they're also able to apply their learning to

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novel situations that mirror real-world challenges and issues that are important to them. So that's what we mean by authentic. And then finally, learners who have agency are strategic and action-oriented. So, they don't learn by chance. They are able to apply a set of strategies that they've gained over time and that allow them to act with intention to accomplish their own meaningful self-directed goals. Next slide. And so here is just a visual, it's a snapshot of our UDL Guidelines. We always intended for the UDL Guidelines to be a living document, and that we would update them every few years to reflect the latest findings from the learning sciences. And so the UDL Guidelines are currently at version 3.0, and they're represented as a grid with three columns at the top that represent the different ways in which we need to provide flexibility, right? We need to provide multiple means for how people engage with learning, multiple means for how we represent information, and then multiple means for how people are able to demonstrate their knowledge or their learning. And so that's important, those three principles across the top, but then we also have the layers of the UDL Guidelines that represent what we want to see happen within learners over time as they develop learning agency. So those layers are access, support, and executive function. We want to make sure that we provide accessible information, but we don't want to stop there. We want to support people in taking accessible information and making meaning from it. And then finally, we want to support people in taking that meaning and then turning it into useful knowledge that they're able to apply, and that includes the development of strong executive functioning skills. You can find a more accessible version of these guidelines by going to the CAST website. We actually have a special website for the

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guidelines, udlguidelines.cast.org. And so I invite you to check out those guidelines where you can explore each of the considerations in much more detail than I have time to explain today during the limited time that I have. Next slide, please. So that brings us to how Universal Design for Learning and AI can work together to create more inclusive learning and working experiences. Next slide. So I want to leave you with just five big ideas from a resource that we recently created and have shared on our website. The title is "UDL and AI: Better Together". So at CAST, we really think about AI as assistive or augmented intelligence. And what does that mean? Well, that means that what we want to create is a human-centered partnership model of people and AI working together to enhance cognitive performance, and that includes learning and decision-making. Next slide. And part of developing that assistive intelligence or that augmented intelligence is keeping humans in the loop. And you've probably heard this term quite a bit in the AI and learning literature. But I want to expand on it because it's not just enough to keep humans in the loop. We need to keep humans all around, right? When we do that, we're able to harness the power of AI, because AI is really powerful and has a lot of potential. But by keeping humans in the loop, we can also provide some guardrails to protect against some of its shortcomings, right? Like any new technology, it has a lot of potential, but it also has some things that we need to be careful about to make sure that we're using it responsibly and that everybody's able to benefit from its potential. Next slide. So, some of the ways that we can foster this sort of partnership of augmented or assistive intelligence is we need to co-design AI from the start with the communities that are going to use it and that are going to benefit from it, but may also

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feel some of its other impacts, right? So we don't want to retrofit. And that's a big idea of universal design and Universal Design for Learning, that we want to design proactively from the start for inclusion. So part of that is applying the UDL principles and the universal design principles from the start so that we're reducing barriers and we're ensuring accessibility for everyone. Next slide, please. And so that people can participate in that co-design process, we need to also build AI literacy. We recently did a survey of educators, and 70% of them say that they're interested in using AI to support students with disabilities and multilingual learners, which are two of the big populations that we work with. And this really shows that educators recognize the potential of AI, but they need a little bit of support to really realize that potential in practice. And so I was really happy to see some of the resources that Lillian shared earlier that are available for you all to really create those programs that will build that AI literacy for everybody. Next slide. And then the last point that I want to make here is that we need to prioritize the creation of a disability-inclusive workforce for AI. We need to increase the participation of people with disabilities in the development, not just in the deployment and use of AI, but it's in development by creating accessible career pathways, right? So many of the limitations that we have with AI, with things like bias and so on, they're not necessarily going to be solved just by creating more representative data samples. We also need to create a more representative AI workforce, where people with disabilities are involved from the beginning as decision makers and as creators. Next slide. So I will leave you with this quote, and it's actually not from our founder but one of our co-founders, David Rose. It's actually from AI. During a recent fireside chat that we had

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with David, he used Claude, one of the AI language models, to create a prompt that gave him this quote about the relationship between UDL and AI. And Claude said that, "AI can give UDL wings, but UDL can give AI humanity." And I deeply believe that. I think AI gives us lots of options for providing flexibility to people who need it, right? Whether it's improved text-to-speech, voices, improved screen readers that are more accurate and have more natural-sounding voices, or the ability to summarize content or change the format of content in a way that's scalable. I really do believe that it gives UDL wings by giving us more options for how we represent information and how we allow people to engage in learning and working. But at the same time, what UDL can do, and we all can do, right, being part of design through Universal Design for Learning, is give AI its humanity, right? Making sure that we're not replacing human judgment, we're not replacing human creativity and innovation, but instead we're enhancing it. Because together, we all working together alongside AI, we can do amazing things. Next slide. So, I'll leave you with that quote, but again, you can reach out to us if you have any questions. Our website is cast.org, C-A-S-T dot O-R-G. And you can also reach out to us in many different ways and follow us on social media as well. And if you're wondering, CAST stands for the Center for Applied Specialized Technology, but we no longer go by that because we don't just develop specialized technologies. We develop technologies that work for everybody through the application of UDL and accessibility. And with that, I'm going to turn it back to Sarah. And thank you again for this opportunity to be with you today.

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>> Thank you so much, Luis. That was great. And I will say personally, the five ways that AI and UDL work better together, that infographic, I keep that on my desktop. It has been a super helpful tool for me as I understand more about how to apply AI technology and support people with finding ways that it works for people with disabilities. Now, I'm going to bring on our final presenters who are putting universal design into action, providing an accessible learning environment for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment. At the Carroll Technology & Innovation Council out in Carroll County, Maryland, they're providing digital skills training that includes employment-focused credentials, and along the way have been providing learning how to understand and effectively use AI technology, embedded into all of that, universal design. Add to that their effective collaborations, including one that you'll hear about today with Penn-Mar Human Services, and it's no wonder how much of a positive impact they have been making. But I don't want to give too much away, so let me introduce our speakers, Jack Bayne and Kelly Dorsey. Jack Bayne is the Program and Instruction Coordinator with the Carroll Technology & Innovation Council out of Carroll County, Maryland. His classes have become a lifeline for many. From seniors overcoming a fear of technology to job seekers rebuilding confidence, he is known for his patience, consistency, and empathy among his students. Jack has developed partnerships to expand senior center programs, piloted initiatives supporting individuals with disabilities, launched the Safe Step Scam Prevention Program with the Carroll County Sheriff's Office, and helped found the Carroll Innovation Lab. And he is presenting alongside today with one of the people he's been collaborating with, Kelly Dorsey. She is a Residential Supervisor at

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Penmar Human Services in Westminster, Maryland. She brings 20 years of experience in the medical field, including 15 years supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities, 8 of which have been with Penn-Mar, providing high quality person-centered care that promotes dignity, respect, and meaningful independence. Kelly has significant expertise in helping individuals achieve personal goals, build life skills, and participate fully in their communities. She believes in balancing independence with the right level of support to empower each person to live independently as possible. I am so glad you're both here. The work you're doing on the ground is fantastic. So, I will stop talking and bring it over to you.

>> Thank you, Sarah, for that introduction. I really appreciate it. I appreciate the opportunity to be here and speak on this webinar alongside Kelly. I'll move to the next slide. So, all of the work happened in this one space called the CTIC Innovation Lab. We had a ribbon cutting for this lab back in August of 2025. It's funded by the Maryland Office of Statewide Broadband in an effort to bring more technology to areas that might not have had it before. Within this lab, you can kind of see in the pictures here on the right, we have some new workstations. I'm actually sitting at that workstation pictured there on the bottom, where we have technology necessary for groups to meet, for one-on-one sessions to occur, and more specifically, partner organizations to have a space to provide larger-scale instruction. Head over to the next slide. So this was a partnership that, you know, happened kind of behind the scenes between Kelly and I. Penn-Mar's office is located upstairs in the building that we're in, and it was a really, really easy

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decision to link up and start a program. So, I'll let Kelly kind of tee us up for what this program looks like.

>> Hi, everybody. Thank you for having me. Yes, I work with individuals and with the increased need for the knowledge of technology in our world today. I've reached out to Jack and his organization to see if we could work out something where we could start a group for these guys to really learn how to navigate technology and how it would benefit them in their everyday life. Along with going into employment, with everybody moving into the digital, you know, so this was a huge thing. They were all very excited. We did the NorthStar lessons. Jack was so gracious to take us in and start working with them. We were able to do one-on-one sessions as they needed. We were, we did set up a group where a group of four to five individuals would come in and Jack would instruct them. They really thrived throughout this, enjoying the time not only with Jack and in the lab, but, you know, getting to know their way around the computer, learning new skills, and things that could help them advance in the future.

>> So, just to kind of piggyback off that, and thank you, Kelly, very much.

>> Yes.

>> We launched this program in the spring of 2025. We started with four or five learners, like you said, using NorthStar Digital Literacy, which provides instruction via online modules. And to be able to utilize that effectively, there needed to be staff

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members involved. So, while I was a host site for this program, I still needed people to train, you know, learners that would come through the door. And Kelly was the first staff member from a different organization that we trained. So, she was a certified North Star Instructor for the FAF, move to the next slide. Thank you. So the biggest thing that I love about NorthStar is that it produces industry-recognized credentials. There's 17 that you can get, ranging from things like basic computer skills, internet basics, using email, more job-centered ones like getting a certificate in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Google Docs. In addition to those, you had some career search skill modules as well. So with the NorthStar subscription that was made possible through the same computer lab grant, you can see here on the right, our learners would come in once a week, and they did that for six straight months, both with Kelly and I present. A lot of times during the baseball season, Kelly was there instructing them solo. So, we were able to kind of divide and conquer and make sure that everybody got everything that they needed on a weekly basis. We met in the lab, like you see here on the right, and we would also meet in some of the supplemental rooms in the building that we both work. So once a week, Thursdays, 3:30, they would come in, gather around the table. A lot of the guys would work independently and would ask questions as needed. You see my guy there in the Raven's jersey. Derek, he finished every single module that NorthStar offered. He did that in person and on his own time, too. You know, he would come right after he did his day job at Buffalo Wild Wings, and then we'd sit down and learn some computer stuff. Go to the next slide. So, we had a graduation at the end of those six months, and here

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are some shots from that. It was just a really, really happy day. Kelly, I'll let you speak more on that, too.

>> It was a wonderful day. They worked very hard for this. As you see, they seem to be, from the pictures, they seem to be very proud of themselves. Yeah, it was a great day. I thank you guys at the Carroll Tech, because you made it a huge deal for them. They still talk about it to this day. But Derek has completed all his courses and is continuing to advance in them, believe it or not, on his own.

>> Very good. And go to the next slide, thanks. So, there's a lot that went into making sure that everybody got across the finish line. A lot of that we owe to the universal design. Through these three core strategies, number one, making training accessible, number two, applying that universal design through teaching practices, and then achieving workforce alignment. I think everything that these learners did over the course of those six months is really very much adjacent to the workforce, and it was instantly something that they could put on a resume. Go to the next slide. So, we made training accessible by offering this cohort at no cost due to the funding made possible by the Office of Statewide Broadband in Maryland. Had a beginner-friendly onboarding. So, the onboarding process took a little bit longer because it was the first time that we did something like this, but it was still seamless all the same, getting everybody signed up and kind of comfortable with using the NorthStar platform. Making sure that everything that we talked about was in plain language. NorthStar does a great job of that, but it's also on the instructor to make sure that that's explained plainly. The environment I

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thought was a huge part of it. Being in the Nonprofit Center is great here in Westminster. You know, myself, as an instructor, also making it fun to come to training every Thursday at 3:30 pm when you might not want to after work. And then self-paced learning, didn't rush anybody, didn't put any deadlines on anything until we had a set for graduation. Everybody moved at their own pace. And you would see, you know, various different amounts of credentials earned. Go to the next slide. NorthStar is really good about having accessible options as well. Every slide that was within the modules had read aloud settings, offers on-screen tips when learners kind of got stuck so that, you know, they weren't spending more than 10 minutes on one specific slide. As for instruction, we were able to kind of devise some lesson plans and goals together to make sure that everybody was staying on track, and that we know how to effectively teach the learners. And Kelly was a great resource for me to kind of lean on, because this was the first time I had taught a group like this. And then making sure that learners are actually, you know, improving in specific areas, having them take an assessment at the end of every module, which they needed to do to earn the credential, but it was also a good way for us to gauge kind of where everybody was at. Go to the next slide. So, for me, universal design was huge because in addition to teaching groups like this, I also teach groups of older adults at senior centers and libraries across the county. So, I was able to use a lot of the teaching practices that I learned from teaching older adults with more than just them. So while sometimes things could have gotten hard, offering encouragement and reassurance when learners feel overwhelmed, not trying to stress anybody out, right? We're all going to get to the end together. You know, people make

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mistakes all the time. And sometimes you can be too hard on yourself. So, normalizing some of those relatable struggles that might have come up at some point. And then, "Nobody's bad at computers." I always say that. "You just don't know enough yet." So, especially with this group, sometimes, you know, they might have had their first laptop as a result of this program, and they just might not have had enough practice with it yet. Making sure to define every term that's presented, especially if it's brand new. I think repetition is the number one thing when teaching digital skills. And building trust, right? I feel like by the end of this program, I was kind of friends with these guys. I could walk into their workplace and strike up a conversation. Derek and I would talk Ravens and Orioles for 10 minutes at the end of every class. So, it was really fun to really get close to these guys. Next slide. So of course credentials are kind of the name of the game these days. I feel like when you're applying for jobs, there's always a section to upload any additional credentials. And this is an example of what the credentials look like from NorthStar. This is Kelly's. Kelly also got to go through all the credentials. But it's a real resume-boosting experience. And we tried to put an emphasis on productivity, communication, and problem solving, because that's how they are in the credentials, and all things that they could run into on the job. Next slide. So as it pertains to AI, no, I really haven't talked anything about AI right now, because I feel that AI literacy starts with a lot of the digital basics, making sure that learners know how they're already interacting with AI on a daily basis, and knowing when to use AI in specific situations. So, you know, you already see it in things like autocomplete when you're making a text message. Google search, you see the AI over your top every single time, email inboxes,

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and then of course in documents as well. So getting a real good foundation and introducing some topics, you know, led to AI literacy. Go to the next slide. Making sure that this group of learners knew when to be using AI tools. Asking themselves, What am I trying to do? What does success look like at the end? And what do I need help with? You know, how fast am I moving? What ideas do I have? Do I need to be more clear? Things like that. And that goes for technology in general, too. You know, maybe you can look something up in a textbook if you're doing a school assignment as opposed to giving a Google search. The next slide. You know, including things like maybe this task doesn't need to use AI. I know I wrestle with that a lot in my everyday work life. Maybe this needs some human judgment, not some artificial automation. Especially private information, making sure that all of our learners know when and when not it's acceptable to put personal information on the internet. Of course AI could get this wrong. You know, as much as we would love for it to be 100% correct, it's just the reality of the situation. Next slide. We offer AI Studios, which kind of goes over all that, and we use that for job seekers, older adults, students, you name it. This is a program that actually, right before this webinar, we delivered at a senior living facility right down the street. So it's not just, you know, one group of people. We're able to use this with everybody, you know, including accessible tools, patient human teaching. Patience, I feel like it's the name of the game. Using digital skills that build confidence, and then AI awareness with real world purpose. My little equation that I got here, AI readiness equals digital foundations, awareness, decision-making. Next slide. Feel free to keep in touch with my organization. We're celebrating 25 years. You can tell from that graphic.

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All that information is there. AI studios are remote, so there's no need to hike it out to Maryland to get connected with us. But thanks again. And thank you, Kelly, for all your hard work the past six months. Appreciate you. And thanks again for having me.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you both. I loved that. I absolutely love the work you're doing. I am all about collaborations, and I think that's a really big key part. But I really appreciate this idea of finding a program with credentials that is accessible, and then being an accessible instructor yourself, abiding by those principles. I think that's such great, lots of great tips. I really appreciate you both coming on. We have so many questions. I don't know that we'll be able to get through all of these questions, but they're great. So, I hope that we are able to find a way to get all these answers out to you, but I'm just going to pick a few and talk and see if we can get some good answers for you. I don't, like, it's hard for me to know even where to start, but here was one I'll just pull out. It says, "A lot of people I work with are nervous about AI. How do you address common fears like losing jobs to AI, messing something up, or control over their personal information being shared?" And I'll let any one of you answer if you want.

>> This is Luis. I'll jump in and then welcome the rest of the panelists. But I think the fear over jobs being lost, just remember that there will also be jobs being created, right? So every technology is disruptive, right? Every technology eliminates some jobs, but it also creates some additional opportunities, right? I mean, there's the example of the

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cellphone, right? That disrupted some jobs because we didn't need landlines as much, right? So, it's really important, again, this is why I advocate for Universal Design for Learning, because things are changing so rapidly. We need to create workers of the future who are really adaptable. And that's the goal, is to give people the ability to reinvent themselves, because the days of one person having the same career for the rest of their living days, that's probably something of the past. Nowadays, people are going to have four or five careers, some of them we haven't even thought of yet, right? That have to do probably related to data centers and so on, building the data centers and keeping them running and so on. So that's what I would say is that there is, yes, there's going to be some disruption, but there's also some opportunities as well to create some new jobs, some new opportunities.

>> Thank you, Luis. And also opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in activities that may have been closed to them before --

>> Absolutely.

>> -- because of the AI technology. Great. Anything else to add? Alright, let's see here. There's just so many good questions. I apologize for taking a while here. Oh, here's a good one. "What AI tools work well for job seekers with different levels of reading, writing, and computer skills and may have been developed using universal design strategies?" I know, Jack, you had talked about in the class, people were working at

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their own pace, but are there any specific tools you-all would recommend that can really support people no matter where their literacy skills are or technology skills are?

>> Yeah, I think, especially for things like resume building, job searching at large, we use here in our lab basic chatbot programs. The one that we like most right now is Claude. And, you know, making sure that folks are aware of what prompts to use, and things like that are kind of vital to really optimize something like these chatbots. Yeah.

>> That's awesome. Any other recommendations?

>> And this is Luis. I would just say since a lot of places already use Microsoft tools, that Copilot, that's built into the Microsoft Suite, can also be very helpful. What I would say is you can guide it a little bit in the direction of creating universally designed and accessible resources by including a couple of things in the prompt. So if you're developing a website or any kind of resource, make sure that as part of the prompt you include, "Refer to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Version 2.1 level AA," right? So that you're guiding the AI to, like, the development of accessible content. And if you're developing anything that has to do with instruction, then you could also say as part of the prompt, "Refer to the UDL Guidelines Version 3.0," right? So it's not referring to some older version of either the accessibility standard or the UDL Guidelines. We want to make sure that we use the prompt to guide the AI to creating accessible, inclusive information.

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>> Thank you. Thank you so much, Luis. This is a good question, Luis. I know you already answered it, but just hang on real quick. And Jack and Kelly, if you have an answer too, I'd love to hear. Question came in, "What questions can we teach job seekers to ask themselves before using AI so they understand why they're using it and what they want it to help with?"

>> Yeah, I think Jack on one of the screens had some of the great questions there, right? Is this a job for AI, right? Sometimes it's much better for a search engine, although many of them are using AI, whether you like it or not. But just being, like, careful about, like, not using AI for things that you could do in other ways. For me lately, as I answered in the Q&A, for me, it's come down to the environmental cost. That has made me much more intentional about the use of AI. I always ask myself, "Is this worth a gallon of water?" And the reason why I ask myself that is because it makes me more intentional about using AI. And it also makes me more intentional because some of those environmental impacts are being felt the most by our communities, right? By marginalized communities, communities of people with disabilities or those who live in poverty and in areas where these AI centers are being built. So we want to be intentional. I'm not saying don't use it, but let's be intentional about its use. And for me, asking that environmental question has made me more intentional.

>> That is a great question. I had this conversation with my children recently, where I thought if something was in the cloud, it just disappeared in a cloud. But no, it exists

somewhere. There are resources being dedicated. So, everything you save, like, there
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is physical space. I'm old enough to remember floppy disks and, you know, hard drives. So, I think that's a great question to ask. There's a few questions around this and I want to address this as well. And I know this is a concern that we have heard. "How do you address issues around privacy and online safety when you're providing digital or AI literacy? How do you make sure that people are behaving in a safe environment, they're not getting scammed?" I know a lot of financial scams using AI are abundant now.

[Silence]

>> So a rule of thumb that we always teach when using AI tools, when given the option to connect it to various other services like on ChatGPT, you can sign in with a Google account. We recommend not doing that, and just making an account straight through OpenAI. Kind of keeps the information a little tighter, a little bit closer to the vest. And then just best practices at large when talking to AI chatbots especially is never putting your personal information in there, trying to be as anonymous as possible when talking to an AI chatbot.

>> Thank you. Just really quick, Jack, and you probably, if you wanted to answer in the Q&A, there were some questions about prompts to use with Claude and the information about the resume building. So, I want to make sure if, like, we can get that to them, if there's a link available, if you wouldn't mind sending that. I will try to get something so we can get some more of these questions answered, because they are fantastic. But we are about ready to wrap up. So if we want to move to the next slide. In case you didn't

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know, the LEAD Center offers technical assistance. So, if you are looking for some expertise to improve access, form stronger collaborations, expand positive employment outcomes in your area, please reach out to us through the LEAD Center's WIOA Technical Assistance Center. LEAD operates as a national technical assistance center funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy to support states, workforce professionals, American Job Centers as they implement WIOA for people with disabilities. There's tools, training, technical assistance. We are always collecting best practices. We are really learning from the field all the time what's working, what's innovative. And we really want to help teams strengthen career pathways, improve economic outcomes, and meet employer needs. And we support programs in improving how they collect and use disability-related data under WIOA as well. So, if you're interested in implementing that and you want assistance. whether it's strategy development, program alignment, capacity building, we are here to support that work. So, if you want to go to the next slide. With a little QR code there. So we offer options, whether it's universal, targeted, or intensive TA, we want to support needs where you're at or whatever is best for you, but reach out to us. You can scan the QR code or there's a link and I'm sure someone will share that link in the chat. So we have a request process. Come reach out to us. Let us know what's going on and what you would like support with. We would really love to hear from you. I'll leave it for one second and then we'll move to the next slide. Also available on our LEAD Center website, leadcenter.org is our state-specific policies and data pages. This resource map, it lets you select any state and quickly see its current policies, initiatives, and available services related to

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disability employment and workforce development. It is a great way to understand what is happening in your state, identify gaps or opportunities, and compare approaches across the country. It is continually being updated, so if you're involved in planning, policy, or program design, you've got a proposal you're writing and you want to learn about what's happening in your state, this is a great resource that you will want to bookmark. And we go to the next slide. And of course, shameless plug, if you are not already subscribed to updates for the Lead Center, what are you waiting for? We are always, we've got newsletters that come out quarterly. We're always doing great events, webinars. And so we would really love if you would go to the leadcenter.org and sign up for our information and notifications. And of course, if you go to the next slide, we're on all the social media places. So please follow us and reach out to us. And on behalf of everyone here today, from the Office of Disability Employment Policy, to Employment and Training Administration, to CAST, to the Carroll Technology & Innovation Council, and Penn-Mar Human Services, I really want to thank you all for being here today. Really appreciate it. I know we're running a little bit over an hour, but I really appreciate everyone's here today. Again, please reach out. And I hope you all have a great rest of your afternoon.

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