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WEBINAR

Pre-apprenticeship Programs: A Model for Skill-Enhancement with Strong Employment Connections

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 >> KACIE ALLEN: We'll begin in just a few minutes. If you've joined, please mute your phone by pressing pound. We'll get started in three minutes.

 Hello, everyone. Welcome to this webinar, the apprenticeship program. A model for skill-enhancement with strong employment connections. My name is Katie Allen. I'm just going to go over a few things with you today before we get started on our webinar.

 So we ask that participants listen to today's presentation through computer speakers or headphones, but if you must call into the webinar, please mute your phone. That's to avoid any background noise being recorded through the space webinar. Try closing other Internet applications and logging in and out to the webinar.

 We've reserved time to answer all of your questions and comments. Please type in your questions and comments in the comment box, and we'll address all of your questions at the end. If you would like a copy of the PowerPoint presents as well as other documents, you can download them now in the box where it says resources for download. You can also access the PowerPoint slides on your VR at the website listed.

 If you're a certified rehabilitation counselor requesting credit, you must complete the evaluation in order to receive credit. We encourage everyone to take this evaluation and let us know how the webinar went for you. This will be recorded and archived on the website. I will just talk about the project that this webinar is a part of.

 So the job-driven vocational rehabilitation center has a main goal of approving goals of staff and other professionals and providers of rehabilitation services who provide support. And the JD-VRTAC focuses on business engagement and customer training providers. This is focused on our work-based learning experiences, which is part of the customized training topic area. And the job-driven JD-VRTAC partners include the institute for inclusion, and we're working with jobs for the future, University of currents, University of Washington, the council state administrators of vocational rehabilitation, the United States business leadership network and the national council of state agencies for the blind and the technical assistance center collaborative.

 Now I'm going to turn it over to Tom. He'll introduce the presenters and explain the webinar for today.

 >> TOM HOOPER: Thanks very much, Katie. Well, good morning and good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to today's webinar. My name is Tom Hoover. I work for jobs for the future. We're based in Boston. We work in states to develop and innovate education models. As Katie mentioned, I will be your moderator today. We're thrilled so many of you could participate in today's webinar. Our session today is going to focus on pre-apprenticeship programs, which are a very effective model for helping enhance skills and ultimately position people for apprenticeship programs.

 During our webinar, you will receive an overview of pre-apprenticeship programs, how they're funded. You will learn about different types of apprenticeship programs that are being implemented in different parts of the country, and that's going to give you key elements. You will get specific steps you can take to partner with and participate in these programs. As many of you likely have existing apprenticeship programs in your states and regions.

 Our formal presentation has two parts. It will first provide an overview of pre-apprenticeship, which will give you background on these programs. Then, we'll take a close look at the Arkansas agency's view. From the type of --

 We designed this to answer questions from all of you. We encourage you to ask questions, and we'll address them after our second presentation.

 We have two excellent presenters for our session today. Our first speaker, providing that overview of pre-apprenticeship and critical elements is Deborah Kobes. Our second speaker, who will focus on pre-apprenticeship in one state is Jonathan Bibb. With that background, let's turn to our first speaker. Deborah, take it away.

 >> DEBORAH KOBES: Thank you, Tom. I appreciate the opportunity to be here. I just want to start off by saying there's a lot of content here. So I apologize if I rush through any of it. I'm happy to take questions and to get into some of this deeper, but I want to make sure I at least briefly touch on a number of critical aspects of pre-apprenticeship to lay that ground work. So the first clear question when we're talking about pre-apprenticeship is what is it? What does that mean? Pre-apprenticeship is a word that is used a lot. A lot of programs call themselves pre-apprenticeship, but there's not necessarily a common usage of the term. So there is an effort now to really make sure that when we're talking about pre-apprenticeship, we're talking about programs that connect people who might not otherwise have access to registered apprenticeships and provide them the skills and support they need to enter registered apprenticeship programs. And so to that end, pre-apprenticeship programs are designed to both provide employment skills and specific occupational skills. They're often targeted to specific underrepresented populations, and they have a formal connection to a registered apprenticeship program that can take a number of different forms.

 Historically, they started in the construction trades, which is also historically where registered apprenticeship programs have been the most robust. But as registered apprenticeship has expanded to a wider number of industries, pre-apprenticeship have as well. The registered apprenticeship system, which I think you have had a webinar on already, is really a highly formalized system, and there's a government registration process. That has not been the case with pre-apprenticeship, although there are a number of states that are moving towards really formalizing pre-apprenticeship and having a way to recognize the high-quality apprenticeship programs that are happening in the state.

 I have seen that many of you are calling in from a number of states, so I'm sure I will miss some. Massachusetts, Oregon, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Washington are all states that recognize pre-apprenticeship programs. And other states like Pennsylvania are in the process of switching to recognition systems.

 A number of organizations can actually be the lead on a pre-apprenticeship program. So a registered apprenticeship program or an employer might want to create their own pre-apprenticeship program, community, and technical colleges, unions, community-based organizations, or state and local government agencies are all examples of organizations that have led apprenticeship programs. And it's also worth noting that even if these organizations are not serving as the lead, pre-apprenticeship are led by partnerships, so it's important to have these different partners involved.

 These partners can play different roles. The writing is tiny on the slide, but I think you guys are going to be able to download these slides, so you can look at it further. But just to highlight roles, industries, union partners, they all create the link between the apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship program and play a variety of roles, including helping identify the skills needed for success, curriculum, even providing instructors and work-based opportunities. Educational partners are also helpful for a refining curriculum and providing instructors, as well as they can be strong sources of recruitment or a way to provide a number of pre-apprenticeships often can deliver credentials or college credit as well. You would need an educational provider to partner with to do that.

 The public workforce system and other public agencies can provide a lot of other wraparound support. So this public workforce system is noted here because they're most often engaged in pre-apprenticeship programs, but they're certainly a space for vocational rehabilitation agencies and others to partner here and identify different funding streams, different supportive services, different recruitment and outreach strategies here as well. That's a segue into a number of apprenticeship programs. There's philanthropic support that can be used as grants. It's important to have access to facilities and instructors and even tools and equipment. One here that I've noted is a little bit more rare, but a strategy that's worth knowing about is when there's project labor agreements or union agreements that are in place, they are set aside training funds, often used for apprenticeship programs, but they could be extended to a pre-apprenticeship program.

 So what is the key elements of a quality pre-apprenticeship program? This has been laid out by the Department of Labor. Again, they're good reference points to think about when you're designing a pre-apprenticeship program. The first is a apprenticeship with a registered apprenticeship sponsor. So I see a question of do you have to have a apprenticeship program first to start a pre-apprenticeship? You as an organization don't need to sponsor a registered apprenticeship in order to create a pre-apprenticeship program, but a high quality will establish a relationship between a apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship. So this could look like a recognition of the curriculum, so you would get advanced standing if you enter a registered pre-apprenticeship program. It could be a precedent for entry. There are any number of relationships that could be established with different variety. This is what sets a program apart from a job-training program. The other elements are common to a number of job-training programs. So they will be a little bit more familiar. I won't go as in-depth on them.

 Pre-apprenticeship are not meant to be long-term programs. A registered apprenticeship program is a year or more. When you're talking about a pre-apprenticeship program, these are usually between one to three months. So they're really just the key skills that you need to create that entryway into the registered apprenticeship system.

 So the first element is having curriculum. There are a lot of sources that you go to identify approved curriculum here. Many of them are free and public. They are curriculum that's been developed specific to industries through a number of government grants. So that information is now public. There are also a number of online vendors that have developed some quality curriculum that can be used to jump start the development of a pre-apprenticeship program. The second element is to have access to industry-recognized credentials. I have a couple of snapshots here of some websites that are really good places to identify some of the credentials you might want to be building towards. One is the career one stop. They sort these credentials by industry, by whether they're recognized by a third party, the degree of specialization in them. And then there are other websites like the national network of city business associations. Here the snapshot is pretty tiny, but just to give you a sense that they provide some additional information so they're not just cataloging the name of a credential but putting it in the context of descriptions of a sector, whether they're foundational skills or more technical skills and where to go to find more information.

 So not every pre-apprenticeship program is going to have a perfect alignment with any of these credentialing systems, but the idea is that even if a pre-apprentice graduates and chooses not to go into a registered pre-apprenticeship program, they would still have a credential that would provide them quality to show to a future employer and still be able to succeed in the industry and get a career.

 The next element is to have hands-on or work-based learning. So what this looks like will depend on the goals of your particular program and the opportunities in the industry, but you can really think about a continuum of work-based experiences. So not quite work-based learning but to prepare yourself for it, there's career exploration. So the program to be a great opportunity just for somebody to figure out if this is the right career for them, maybe explore a couple of potential occupations or career tracks within an industry or explore some in the front end. Career exposure is through job shadowing or company tours. These still give a good taste of what's happening in the industry. Career engagement is a more intense experience. You can build to a pre-apprenticeship itself or right after a pre-apprenticeship program. So that could look like an internship or another sort of deeper work experience. So unlike job shadowing where there's observation going on. With career engagement, you're able to apply the skills you're learning in a classroom. This is really what your program is setting your participants up for, so once they've completed a pre-apprenticeship program, they're able to move on to something like an apprenticeship program or on-the-job training if they're entering a job through a different channel.

 Then the final element is wraparound services. So here, this is an area where, again, a lot of quality job-training programs already provide these kinds of supports, and a lot of public agencies are Avenues to these type of services, but just to note, there are a wide range of services that can help pre-apprenticeship as they're headed to their next move. This can be about job readiness, about financial supports, you know, transportation and other things. Personal empowerment, like financial literacy or, you know, anger management. Then, finally, career preparation and navigation.

 So those are the basic elements of a pre-apprenticeship program. I just want to return to this idea of employers and sponsors because they really are this defining element of a pre-apprenticeship program. So this is the one relationship that is specified in a pre-apprenticeship program. So all of these other elements we've talked about, it certainly helps to get different partners to contribute their strengths to it, but only a sponsor can provide the relationship with a registered apprenticeship program. So I touched on some of these before, but having advanced standing helps ensure a smooth pathway once a pre-apprentice finishes a program. It provides a clear next step. In order to do that, employers and sponsors can really help define what a pre-apprenticeship looks like. So everything they need comes through the delivery of your program and the occupations are clear. That's even smoother when the employer is providing an instructor or mentor. Providing instructors or mentors also provides an opportunity for these sponsors to really get committed to your participants and excited about taking them on as apprentices upon graduation.

 And then hopefully that will lead to this form of employment support and a supportive workplace is the next step for your graduates. There are a number of places you can identify sponsors. About half of the states are office of apprenticeship states, and the other half are state apprenticeship states. So they have slightly different Avenues for identifying sponsors. I think there's a different webinar that is going to dig into this a little bit more. You can Google which kind of state your state is and pretty easily find those contacts. They can help navigate a number of these other potential sponsors. There are a number of labor grantees right now that are industry focused or have state-level grants to expand apprenticeship in their state. Many of those grants are looking specifically at diversity and alternative pathways as one of their goals, so they're seeking to have more apprenticeship relationships that can expand their audience.

 And then you can look up individual registered apprenticeship sponsors themselves. If you're looking at a specific industry or occupation, and you want to build out that specific pathway. Then, finally, unions have long been involved in registered apprenticeship and are increasingly building out pre-apprenticeship programs. So identifying those local union partners can help you get to the registered apprenticeship relationships as well.

 And then very briefly, I just want to touch on two key examples of pre-apprenticeship programs. I won't go into detail here, but just to highlight. Anew is a pre-apprenticeship program that's been around for a long time. It was created as a way to help get women into the construction trades. It is trade-focused. Basically, women have an opportunity to both get the curriculum and training that they need and to actually rotate among a number of different trades and their registered pre-apprenticeship programs to build those relationships and navigate what their different options are in the industry. There are a number of trade-focused pre-apprenticeships in the country, but there's also an expansion into other industries. 1199 fee in Philadelphia has created a really impressive pre-apprenticeship program that fits in a large continuum. Participants enter a four-week orientation and bridge program to get some initial basics, and then they enter the six-week pre-apprenticeship program in direct support professional. So it's a behavioral health program.

 After successfully completing that, they automatically continue on to a registered pre-apprenticeship program. Here we have the qualities I mentioned. There's the actual skills training that is shown through and certified through an electronic health record certification. They also have the opportunity for job shadowing so that they can start to get that work-based learning experience and feel comfortable with it when they move on to the apprenticeship program. So there are more and more of these pre-apprenticeship programs that are popping up that really have created continuums into these new industries. I would also note that it's a great time to look at pre-apprenticeship programs in these other industries because their registered apprenticeship programs are new and open to creative designs. So it's actually great to start a pre-apprenticeship program from the beginning of designing the registered apprenticeship because then you can have a more cohesive continuum rather than trying to build around a pre-existing registered apprenticeship.

 So how do you get started? First, make sure you're targeting an industry that's in demand and that there are registered apprenticeship programs, either locally or nationally that you can partner with. Figure out what you can offer and where you can find potential partners to build out your other areas of need based on their own strengths.

 If you have a training program already, you will probably recognize a lot of these elements that are already in here. So start by mapping what you already have onto this framework, and then you can just figure out the small elements you might need to refine to align with the pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship system. So that is a very quick overview. If you would like more information, jobs for the future has the center for work-based learning that tries to bring together a lot of relevant resources that can help you see different examples of pre-apprenticeships and help provide some guidance on getting you started.

 So with that, I look forward to hearing more from Jonathan Bibb. I will be happy to answer your questions when we get into the apprenticeship program. Then, I will also provide the link through the chat room for the center for apprenticeship and work-based learning. Thank you so much.

 Jonathan?

 >> JONATHAN BIBB: Hello. This is Jonathan Bibb. I'm the director of the Arkansas career training institute in Arkansas. What we are is a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center, one of only eight in the United States. What we focus on is providing services and also training opportunities for people with disabilities. We focus our training around careers that are in demand. One of the things that we were looking for is a way to bridge the gap from training to employment. So there were some relationships that I had prior to coming to ACTI that I was able to build upon. From 2006 to 2011, I was a program manager for the Arkansas office of apprenticeship through the Arkansas Department of Career Education, which provides funding for registered apprenticeship programs in the state and also tracks registered apprentices and coordinates with the skills trade licenses boards. So there was a lot of contacts, but it still took a while to really build those relationships and bridge the gap moving folks from training into the registered apprenticeship.

 In 2010, there was a group that was developed, called the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition. By fortune, I was one of the original members and still serve in that capacity as ex-officio on that coalition. Because of that, it's opened up a lot of opportunities with the passage of WIOA.

 In looking at a pre-apprenticeship, it's a natural fit and for consumers that really need that hands on component and also prescription to go into registered apprenticeship. Looking at the slide, the pre-apprenticeship program, ACTI is focused on diversion, skilled workforce, a program that was initially developed with the national apprenticeship training foundation and the Arkansas apprenticeship coalition based on feedback from employers. One of the problems that they were having is for each opening that they would have for registered apprentice, they would have to interview and oftentimes bring on board up to 15 participants to get someone that would actually make it through the first year. So the employers went to NATF, the national apprenticeship training foundation, and said, we need a program that gets the foundational skills up to the level it's needed so that the apprentices can be successful in that first year because there's a large investment on the part of the employer on that first year to not only train but also to on-board. When you have a consistent turn over, and in many cases, it was up to 70% in the first year of these programs, they were really losing money on-boarding. That gave rise to the pre-apprenticeship program starting in the early 2000s. So this is a program that has been in existence for quite a while. It was a natural fit and really tied into all of the programs that were sponsored by the natural apprenticeship training foundation, which represents about 1,000 employers in the state of Arkansas. So you've got really good business engagement. So how does VR fit into this model? One of the things that we looked at is, you know, were the students, the clients, the consumers we served, would they be a good fit in registered apprenticeship? How are they similar? What type of support would be needed to really help this become successful? So before we moved forward with the apprenticeship program, my team of CRC counselors met with the trainers and the sponsors that have provided the training across the state for registered apprenticeship and asked what their expectations were.

 They really needed to know what registered apprenticeship was. Some of the downfalls for folks that have gone in and not been successful, and then also how to tailor and recruit for this program and really market it to a lot of our clients and consumers. The reason for that is oftentimes our consumers were not aware of registered apprenticeship. It's not something that's often talked about or marketed in high schools, especially if you look in special education. There's just not a lot of information that was provided during the high school years. So now we do a very good job, I think, of exposing our consumers to the concept of registered apprenticeship, the trades that are represented in the state of Arkansas. As Deborah mentioned earlier, many of our registered apprenticeships are in the construction trades, but that is expanding rapidly in the state, based on grant funding and some of the other things that are going on within the state.

 Understanding and promoting apprenticeship was a really big focus, but also the understanding that although this is a different training model, once a consumer enters a registered apprenticeship, they're in competitive integrated employment because they're paid for the hours they're working. This is the traditional model that's predominant in Arkansas, is 2,000 on the job learning hours, which are paid, and also around 144 to 160 technical hours that go right along with it. So there's some differences in the apprenticeship models that are out there. Some of the things we look at as well, how can this be implemented in some of the other areas? Some of the emerging industries that are coming on board in Arkansas, the Little Rock police force has just implemented an apprenticeship program. We've seen it in certified nursing assisting. The transferring and continuing on into an LPN based on work-based learning. So there's different models that are out there that have to be coordinated with the offices of apprenticeship, and that's defined by their standards. Again, knowing how apprenticeship works and having those connectors that work with the different business and industry partners is critical. And, also, the coordination of support and the combinations that are going to be needed for the consumer to be successful on the job site. Oftentimes, marketing to the employer to let them know that the client and consumer can be very successful at that particular occupation.

 The role of employers, I can't state this enough. Without employers, pre-apprenticeship just will not work. You not only have to listen to them, but you have to have them actively engaged in the pre-apprenticeship training model. One of the things that we do is the trainers that come in are actually employers and skilled professionals in their trades. So when they're speaking to our consumers, they're speaking to them from a context of, This is what is expected on the job site. This is what is expected out of you from my management standpoint. This is what I expect out of an employee, and I'm going to evaluate you based on that throughout this entire training. While there are specific steps and specific training, one of the most important things are the soft-skilled developments. Showing up on time and showing up ready for the training because that directly relates to how you're going to be prepared on the job site when you're hired. So this is something that's evaluated by the trainers and employers that are actively involved in the pre-apprenticeship program. The curriculum, all the curriculum is reviewed and approved by those employers. The program sponsors have gone in and talked to their apprenticeship committees. Their apprenticeship committees have evaluated this. They have tweaked it over the years of what's really important. And, more importantly, they saw the benefit of these results because they went from, in many cases up to 70% turnover, to a 90% retention in employees and registered apprenticeships for that first year. So it benefits their bottom line by reducing that turnover and having to constantly replace folks.

 One of the great things about having employers on our campus and working with our consumers is it's a direct conduit. It's a direct tie between the potential employee and the employer. And it also dispels a lot of myths about hiring people with disabilities in the various occupations in which we have registered apprenticeships in the state.

 Some of the key components, you want to have an approved curriculum that aligns with the standards. Bottom line, you have to have those tie-ins, and you want it to be to develop that individual and also to evaluate them and how they're going to be a good fit in registered apprenticeship by having that experience with a company like NATF or a program sponsor of apprenticeship. They have been training apprentices since the 1990s. So they are very familiar with what it takes to be successful in registered apprenticeship. They walk through the expectations on the first day. And they hold students that are in the pre-apprenticeship classes, or pre-apprentices, to a high standard. Not everybody who begins a pre-apprenticeship finishes it. They're very strong ties to employability skills. If you're not demonstrating that, then you will likely not successfully complete that class. One of the reasons is when you have that certificate from a registered sponsor, what they're doing is they're putting their name on the bottom line saying that this person is ready to be an apprentice. You can invest in them. You can make sure that they're going to be a great employee. They're going to be a great apprentice, and they're going to successfully navigate the challenges that they need.

 So we'll move on now to some of the competencies that are in that curriculum. Employer expectation, employee responsibilities, team building, work safety, workplace scenarios, and interview techniques. We'll kind of take those in order.

 Employer expectations, a lot of times when a consumer or anyone goes through or has an opportunity to learn skills, learn those hands-on skills that are needed for an occupation, they may not be able to bridge that gap or know exactly what the employer expects. These employers come in, and it's no fluff. This is our expectations. For that first month and the latest pre-apprenticeship training program, lasts a month, you're expected to show up. If you can't show up, you have to call in. This is what all employers expect. You need to show up before it's time to start the class. You need to show up prepared. They are given three tools that they have to carry with them and bring with them to class. That's a folder with all the training materials, a pencil, and a pen. If they do not show up, then it's one of those things that is just like showing up for work without your tools. You will not be able to successfully complete that class. Again, evaluating what employer expectations are and employer abilities. Each has the ability to participate in team building. That includes being both the lead of the team, a team member, and how your interaction works together. It's a great opportunity to see how the consumers interact with each other, how they're demonstrating their leadership skills, how they're working through problems. Are there areas we can provide additional training and guidance while they're going through this pre-apprenticeship training that's really going to help them in the future? And also taking notes that can be provided to the vocational rehabilitation counselor for future development. Workplace scenarios, there's a wealth of knowledge of things that have actually happened on the job site in different jobs in those career fields, and they bring those in and have the consumers work through those as a team and also assign responsibilities. Some days they may be an employee that's been missing a lot of work because of a specific issue, and they have to explain that to their boss. Or they may be the manager of an area, and they have an employee that's not meeting all of the expectations and have to work through that. So it's a really good opportunity for them to demonstrate those skills but also for the employers to see how the individual consumers would handle that and make those recommendations for further job development.

 At the end of the training, and this is the most important part, the interviews. The employers that have registered apprenticeship openings, all the participants that have successfully completed our interview, there are typically not as many job openings for folks going through the training, but this gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and be evaluated on how they're doing and be able to provide that direct feedback to the parent but also to really build that relationship and know if this student could be a great apprentice and get those opportunities available for him or her.

 Outcomes, again, the primary focus on this is competitive integrated employment. It's about improving the success of our vocational, educational training on site. It's about getting documented skills gains while they're going through their training. We've been able to see results from our first cohort. We had a group that started in September of 2016. It was our first training. We had 20 that started the program, and 19 successfully completed it. Out of that 19, 14 are now employed. We also had 10 that are employed in skilled trades. We had one of our participants that is now making over $60,000 a year, which in Arkansas is a very good salary. So there's a lot of opportunities for our students to progress and move through different training areas. You will notice on the picture on the outcomes, this is a young man that went through our pre-apprenticeship program. He had a lot of difficulty communicating and struggled quite a bit with the interview process. He learned from that and actually asked to go through and just participate in the second cohort. He demonstrated incredible improvement from that first pre-apprenticeship class. He went on to compete at skills USA in the post-secondary level and was a gold medal winner at the state competition. He's in the construction trades and also represented the state of Arkansas at the national competition where he had a top 10 finish. Now, skills USA is an organization that's co-curricular. It gives students a chance to demonstrate their leadership and career skills. He did not compete in trades, carpentry, electrician, plumber. He actually competed in prepared speech. This is something that's an incredible testimony to the amount of training that goes in but also his development as a potential employee, really demonstrating those leadership skills. There's a lot more involved in it.

 Funding, oftentimes we look at ways in which we can work with partners. The funding that's been used up to this point has all been U.S. Department of labor grant dollars that were available through the Arkansas apprenticeship pathway initiative. They're able to meet the eligibility requirements for those two grants. Because of that, there was no additional VR grant funding that has been used to provide this training. One of the great things about having these partnerships is that you get to rely on some of your WIOA partners, and they're able to see the benefits of hiring people with disabilities through the VR system. It's been a great partnership. One of the ways you can get involved, there are oftentimes requirements of these grants for inclusion and diversity. We were approached to provide support letters. In those support letters, we offered up that we would love for the consumers that we serve through VR in the state of Arkansas to participate and get not only pre-apprenticeship but to become involved and become employed as apprentices in the state of Arkansas. This, again, has been a great opportunity for our consumers, primarily at ACTI. We're looking at different occupations and apprenticeships that are available.

 Customizing the model for people with disabilities really wasn't that difficult. What we found, as we started going through the same challenges that the trainers had with their typical folks, we also had those with our consumers. We worked through those. I think the added advantage is having a VR counselor that did a very good job of working with our students in the beginning to get them really ready for this training and also to let them know not only the expectations but to follow them and to really receive that feedback from the trainers so that they could be implemented into their individual plan for employment and also provide additional resources and services after they're trained to be successful.

 Implementation challenges, I think the building of relationships is critical to this. Without those close relationships through registered apprenticeships, the program sponsors, also knowing the representatives at the office of apprenticeship to find out what apprenticeships are available in our area, there are a lot of different business sectors that are out there; but you want to make sure that the apprenticeships that you're working toward and really trying to get involved with are backed up by labor market information. All of our training areas and who we've partnered with are in demand in the state of Arkansas. They also have a fairly high wage compared to some of the other training areas and occupations that are out in the state. So I think that's looking at the labor market information and also having the relationships with employers in those areas and knowing and building that level of trust. Again, looking at developing consumers so that they can be successful in registered apprenticeship. Again, this program was developed to assist employers to improve their bottom line by reducing turnover and helping them get top-notch applicants for the registered apprenticeship slots. Again, communication, talking about managing expectations, really keeping those lines open and also, as things are developing for our consumers and the challenges they're facing, you know, talking with them. One of the things that's great about NATF is they also survey the folks that they are training. So that's one of the ways in which our training is adapting based on the needs and the expectations of the consumers that are going through the training as well.

 All right. Tips for replication, again, I talked about key stakeholders. You have to find those registered apprenticeships in your state and build relationships with them. I agree with Deborah, if you're able to find a new apprenticeship or emerging apprenticeship, that would be a great opportunity to blend the component of pre-apprenticeship into it because they are going to need a pool of eligible applicants to fill those registered apprenticeships.

 Also, I think one of the things that hasn't really been talked about but I wanted to bring up is that when you have a registered apprenticeship program, there's some requirements within those standards to increase both diversity and the inclusion of people with disability in those registered apprenticeships. Not to give you a huge lesson on federal regulations, but CF47 outlines the goal that 7% of employment of qualified individuals with disabilities as apprentices for each major occupation group. One of the things we've been able to assist, the program sponsors through NATF, is to meet that requirement. Each time before we have a pre-apprenticeship program, they come in and recruit and do targeted recruitment of our students, explain the expectations, and also talk about the different occupations available through registered apprenticeship in the state. And then actively engage in providing this training to people with disabilities. One of the great things that's associated with this program as well is it's not just VRs responsibility to help with the placement of our consumers. When they do a pre-apprenticeship program, it's built into the program with the expectation of students that complete to go into registered apprenticeship. So they track those numbers and also provide that feedback. So I think that this is a great opportunity for VR to help the registered apprenticeship program and while registered apprenticeship is assisting our consumers to find competitive integrated employment.

 And that is the end of my presentation. I know that we have a few minutes at the end for some questions. So I will turn it back over to Tom at this point.

 >> TOM HOOPER: Thank you very much. Thanks to both Jonathan and Deborah for two really great, rich presentations. So much excellent info in there. We have a lot of questions that have come in. We'll go through them. If we don't get to all of them today, we'll provide contact info at the end and make sure we answer them after this session is over.

 So first question that came in was: How would you go about getting this type of program, a pre-apprenticeship program, started in the union production. Deborah, do you want to take the first crack at that and then Jonathan?

 >> DEBORAH KOBES: Sure. The thing I would say here is start with your union. Whatever union is involved is also going to have training programs and a training fund. And so they are going to be an important partner that's going to need to agree to all of these things, but they're going to be a helpful partner that can proactively make things happen. I would start with them. This sounds like it's a manufacturing kind of setting, so I've seen manufacturing pre-apprenticeship programs created for incumbent workers who need help to be able to qualify for apprenticeship programs and outside agencies and partners can be really helpful in providing those initial services to help prepare those workers. I've also seen pre-apprenticeship programs that help people as job seekers get placed into these kinds of union settings, and then after they've been on the job for a little while, they would then be able to qualify for an apprenticeship program. So there are definitely multiple ways to help job seekers and current workers, but I would start with the union.

 >> JONATHAN BIBB: I agree with that. Find out who your program sponsor is for the union program. If you're working with a particular sector in a particular area, there may be multiple employers that participate in the union program. Tying into that program sponsor, finding out the local, and talking to the business agent, oftentimes, they can put you in contact with the right person to really integrate pre-apprenticeship. Also, they're oftentimes looking for potential applicants and the pre-apprenticeship model really prepares that pipeline for them. And some of the programs may already have pre-apprenticeship programs and you are just not aware of it. One of the benefits in Arkansas with the Arkansas apprenticeship coalition, it's 50% non-union, and the other 50% is union. So this pre-apprenticeship model works for both the union programs that are involved as well as the non-union programs. I know that that's kind of unique to the state of Arkansas, but, again, you may find that there can be good collaboration if you have the right partners at the table. Also, union and non-union programs are often represented on the local workforce development boards and the state workforce development boards. So that is also an opportunity to find out who those key partners are, by participating in those meetings.

 >> DEBORAH KOBES: If I could just build on that because that's a perfect segue into one of the questions about identifying sponsors. I think that's a large answer to that question. I would also note that you have a handout in the downloads that's identifying pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship partners, and that includes links. If you're in a state that is managed through the office of apprenticeship, you can just look in their database of all the sponsors. If you're in a state apprenticeship agency state, then many of them have lists online. Otherwise, you can just contact the apprenticeship office, and they can provide you with the relevant sponsor information as well. So that's just another way to get started, and there are a number of different partner links and ways to sort of orient yourself to the registered apprenticeship system, according to that handout.

 >> JONATHAN BIBB: That's a great point in working with the office of apprenticeship, they can let you know where those contacts are found. In the state of Arkansas, there's a lot of this information that's available online. The programs have come together, and they've given descriptions of all of the apprenticeship programs that are in the state and in that contact information that's available as well.

 >> TOM HOOPER: That's good information. The latter part of those answers there, about where to find information about son sponsors also answers a question about where counselors can get a list of registered apprenticeships. Great information there.

 A separate question that came in was regarding what other industries besides the construction trades are involved in pre-apprenticeship. Both Jonathan and Deborah touched on that in their presentations. Jonathan, do you want to start first with your experience, and then Deborah can provide additional info?

 >> JONATHAN BIBB: Sure. I talked a little bit about Little Rock. There are a lot of them out there. The municipal police force has developed their own registered apprenticeship program. Again, this is something that has just been approved. This will be a great opportunity to tie into pre-apprenticeship for that and working with that individual employer. Again, this registered apprenticeship program is just one single employer. There are others that have started to emerge, and it's based off of grant funding that's available. One that has not been developed in the state at this point is industrial maintenance technology. So there's some opportunities within the manufacturing setting to really tie in with that. National apprenticeship training foundation has a history of working with the state, and they've been on the leading edge of developing that industrial maintenance program. Others, I talked a little bit about certified nursing assisting and the transition from that into LPN, and there's many LPN to RN programs in the state. As you start looking at a much broader scope, there's a lot of new and emerging registered apprenticeships that are out there because the model works and also because of the grant funding that is coming down and the incentives that are available to a lot of employers to look at this model.

 >> DEBORAH KOBES: Just to add to that, I would say there are other 1,000 apprenticeable occupations, and there are new ones added all the time. Essentially any occupation that's skilled enough to need at least a year of training is a rough way of thinking about it. I completely agree with Jonathan in the direction of a lot of the new occupations that are really emerging. Another one I would add is hospitality. I think it relates to a question that just came in. Hospitality is an industry where I've seen, both in Boston and Las Vegas and elsewhere, there are hospitality programs emerging. You know, really anywhere that there's new industries that are getting established in apprenticeship, I would encourage pre-apprenticeship programs, and I would look on that handout again. There are IT contractors and other industries that are flagged to make great partners for building out a pre-apprenticeship.

 >> TOM HOOPER: That's great. We have time for one more question. It's actually the only other question we've got. So that's great. We'll do a clean wrap after this.

 The last question is: Other than the national network industry recognizing credentials for job hood demand, do you know other labor market information that states could use to help identify in-demand sectors. Deborah, do you want to talk about that?

 >> I was going to talk about it broadly, but the chat has done a great job of answering this question. I echo the comments in the chat that state offices have -- like, there are state shops for labor market information, and they're a really great starting point. I would just keep in mind to ask them both for the traditional labor market information that you can get on historic data and wages and trends in industries and then also to use realtime labor market information where you can actually analyze existing job postings to see what is currently available, who the major employers are that are hiring, as well as the skills, competencies, and credentials that are in most demand. I would definitely take advantage of those labor market information shops, but make sure you're asking them all of the questions you need to get the broadest picture of where there's demand.

 >> JONATHAN BIBB: Just to follow up on that, in Arkansas, we have a great team at the Department of workforce services that uses a bureau of labor statistics information specific to Arkansas. They often do not only what the current job market is, but they project out in short-term and long-term projections on how the labor market is going to change. That's an important partner that can provide additional information to you. We also have through one of our colleges, the University of central Arkansas, the Arkansas research center, that has access to this information and can take information about folks that have gone through different training options and actually see how they're performing in their particular jobs and provide that back to us. So there's some opportunities. Again, looking at the big picture of those going through training and also the follow-up that's available, there's opportunities.

 >> TOM HOOPER: That's great. Your local workforce development boards are good folks to turn to as well.

 We're a little bit over time. What a great session today. Big thanks to Jonathan and Deborah for all of their insights and thoughts about pre-apprenticeship programs and getting started there. Katie, I will hand it back to you.

 >> KATIE ALLEN: Thanks, Tom. Thank you, Jonathan and Deborah for your presentations. Thank you, everybody, for attending. Right now the evaluation address is up on the screen. Copy that. Let us know what you think. If you go to www.exploreVr.org, you can register for the next webinar. Thank you all again, and have a great day.

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