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- [Lori] Welcome everyone to today's showcase webinar for the Advancing Innovation in Adult Education project. My name is Lori Meyer and I am the Associate Director of Education and Technical Assistance for Manhattan Strategy Group. Today, we are shining a spotlight on the efforts of five innovative adult education programs. These five programs are the latest cohort to be recognized by the advancing innovation project, which is a five-year effort to identify and highlight practices in adult education that lead to improved learner outcomes.

The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, or as most of you joining us today know as OCTAE, and is led by Manhattan Strategy Group in partnership with Abt Associates. We are excited to host this webinar during CTE month. And in honor of all things CTE, our discussion today will focus on the critical role of collaboration between adult education and workforce partners.

In addition to our five program directors, who I will introduce in just a few moments, we are thrilled to welcome special guests from OCTAE, Cheryl Keenan, Director of the Division of Adult Education and Literacy and Sharon Lee Miller, Director of the Division of Academic and Technical Education. After some introductory remarks, we will spend the bulk of our time today in a panel discussion with our five program directors, to learn more about how they have navigated partnerships to enable adult learners to obtain both the academic and occupational skills needed to succeed in college or advance in their careers.

And now for a few housekeeping items. I encourage you to open the participant and chat panels by clicking on those icons at the bottom of your screen. Note that all microphones are muted except for panelists. As you'll hear from our speakers today, we encourage you to put questions in the chat for our panelists.

Be sure to select all panelists from the dropdown menu before submitting your questions and we will do our best to address as many of your questions as time permits. If you have any technical questions, you can use the chat to connect to the host directly. Today's session will be recorded and shared afterward. The webinar will also be posted on the project webpage along with other resources, and we'll provide you with that link towards the end of the webinar.

For all of you social media fans in the audience, on the screen there are a host of ways you can engage with us during the webinar today and continue to keep tabs on our work in the future. We are live posting the webinar on Twitter. To join the conversation, please type @mstrategy and use the #AdultEduINNOVATOR in your post.

With that, let's begin. I would like to welcome Sharon Miller. Sharon serves as the Director of the Division of Academic and Technical Education, known as DATE, within the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. DATE is responsible for administering one of the

department's largest formula grant programs, which currently distributes about 1.3 billion annually for states under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, known as Perkins V.

Sharon, welcome.

- [Sharon] Thank you, and greetings. And on behalf of the entire team here in the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, happy CTE month. As Lori mentioned, my name is Sharon Miller, and my team administers the Federal Perkins Act, which is the department's largest investment in the nation's career in technical education programs at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

I'm delighted to take part in this webinar that will recognize and showcase five sites that are implementing integrated education and training or IET programs, and bridge programs to enable students to achieve positive education and workforce outcomes. These programs that combine adult education and career and technical education are recognized in the Perkins Act.

This means that at both state and local levels, Perkins funds can be used for such activities as developing curriculum, training instructional and support personnel, and administering industry-recognized assessments for students. Of course, central to the effective development and implementation of IET and bridge programs are strong partnerships between education and workforce development that have been forged at both state and local levels.

These are partnerships that are essential to ensure that programs incorporate knowledge and skills that are aligned to in-demand and high growth industry sectors and occupations. And so too at the federal level, my partner in adult education, Cheryl Keenan and I work closely to advance cross-cutting policies and initiatives that support IET and bridge programs.

And as such, I'm delighted to turn it back over to Lori, who will introduce Cheryl.

- Thank you so much, Sharon, for your comments and for being here today. Next, I would like to welcome Cheryl Keenan. Cheryl is the Director of the U.S. Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy. In her role as the National Director, she oversees the office which funds almost 600 million in state and local grant programs to enable adults to become literate and complete high school so they can succeed as workers, parents, and citizens.

She is responsible for overseeing the adult education national programs account, including resources to assist further development of the field of adult education. Cheryl?

- [Cheryl] Thank you, Lori. And thank you, Sharon. And congratulations on having a great CTE month. It's a pleasure to have an audience of CTE and adult education leaders. You know, adults who are seeking to improve their lives through education and training often need services from more than one program. That's why it's critically important to have program models that combine services across programs.

The practices that are highlighted here do just that. Adult educators increasingly are using bridges, pathways, and integrated education and training models that include services from CTE and workforce programs so that the academic or basic skills are not provided in isolation. Who is a better partner to do that than the CTE Community College and workforce world.

I need to mention that the five practices we are recognizing here today not only demonstrated a commitment to innovating but they took the initiative to apply to this project for recognition of their work. The practices they submitted

underwent a review to document the partnerships that helped to make them successful in leading to better employment and education outcomes for learners.

OCTAE's goal is to lift up innovative program practices that are making a difference and inspire others to innovate. I'm here today to personally thank each of these professionals for seeking out ways to improve services to adults in their communities. Services that take on growing urgency as the country moves towards recovery. So many individuals who already had barriers to employment have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Partnerships may be more important now than ever to get people back to work and on a pathway that offers real opportunity. While all of the partners who work with these professionals are not here today, my thank you extends to them as well, for contributing to making a difference in the lives of our adult students.

We all share a common goal of improving the lives of individuals through believing in the power of education. I look forward to engaging with our panel in more detail about their journeys. Back to you.

- Thank you, Cheryl, for that welcome and for joining us today. Today, we are going to hear from five individuals who are leading efforts to support adult learning in their communities. These programs employ innovative approaches and partnerships that support adults' development of the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to enroll and be successful in post-secondary education or occupational training or in short-term credentials and obtain employment.

The programs which all happen to be part of local school districts have developed strong partnerships with a range of stakeholders, including community and technical colleges, universities, workforce development providers and employers. These five leaders in the field of adult education

joined the ranks of four programs recognized last fall for innovative practices and secondary credentialing.

For this round, we are recognizing three bridge programs and two integrated education and training or IET programs. It is now my pleasure to introduce our panelists who represent the five programs. All of us here today on the panel, and for those of you participating spend our days striving to improve outcomes for learners. So, with that in mind, I've asked Nadine, Drew, Jan, Tammie, and Rachel to share a favorite anecdote about how their program has improved the life of one of their students.

First up is Nadine Holthaus, from Rochester Adult Literacy at Hawthorne, whose program is being recognized for their bridges to careers expansion practice. Nadine, tell us about a memorable student story.

- [Nadine] Good afternoon. I'm going to tell you about Akinyi. She was a single mum with two kids who came to Hawthorne to get her GED. While getting her GED she was encouraged to take some of our college classes and she was so successful in those classes that that really motivated her to continue in an administrative office professional pathway.

When she got into that pathway, she completed her office support certification and we were able to give her some paid work experience. She now is currently working as a case aid worker for Olmsted County within full-time with benefits, and she's able to support those two little kids.

- That's a great story. Thanks, Nadine, for sharing. Next up is Drew Gamet, from Career Pathways South Bay Adult School, which is being recognized for their career pathways IET program. Drew, what's one of your favorite anecdotes about how your IET program has helped an adult learner in your community?

- [Drew] Thank you, Lori. It's just so great to be here with so many wonderful programs. And I wanted to talk about one of our students, Francisco. And just as a little point of background, one of the big industries in our area is Aerospace. So, companies like Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, it's one of the biggest industries we have around. Francisco came to us after being injured at work, and he was looking for a change and started taking ESL classes with us.

But then we invited him to one of our pathway information sessions, and those are always presented jointly by South Bay Adult School staff and El Camino Community College staff from their community advancement and business training center. There, he learned that he can get support with the registration process, which can be difficult for some people and also realized that he could get support in his college classes.

Specifically, he took an interest in our machining pathway. He also realized that he needed help with passing the GED. And so, we were able to provide him with those GED prep classes, as well as with the testing because we're also a Pearson VUE testing center. So, while taking classes at El Camino, he participated in weekly support labs, where our instructors were helping him with his college classes, as well as making sure that he was receiving workforce preparation, you know, working on things like resumes and interviewing skills.

Developing all these skills, Francisco was able to find a job. And the important thing that I think to note about his success is that success begets success. And not only was he able to find a job, but he is happy to report that his own children are now in the process of finishing their graduate and undergraduate studies.

You know, a program like this is only possible because of our partnership with El Camino and the team over at their career advancement and business training

center, with their dean, Jose Anaya. And I also just need to put a shout out to our K12 Board of Education Administration, and to my predecessor, Dr. Anthony Toronto.

And without him, we wouldn't be here talking with you today. So, thank you.

- Thanks, Drew for your great story about how you're connecting the dots for learners. Jan Suding is joining us today from Rural North Vernon, Indiana, representing Jennings County Education Centre, which is being recognized for their CCMA, IET program. Jan, what is a memorable student impact story for you?

- [Jan] Good afternoon, everybody. You know what makes adult ed so remarkable is how quickly we can change someone's life and that was true for our student, Joyce. Joyce dropped out of high school at age 17 and after several years, she finally got the courage to come to our program.

And she was thrilled to find out she could not only work on earning her diploma, but she could also do the certified clinical medical assistant program because it was an IET. On January the 6th, she passed the task test. Two days later, she passed the National Health Care Association exam and it was all done in 14 weeks.

And she is now employed in a local medical clinic.

- It's amazing how quickly you can change someone's life. Fourteen weeks is pretty quick. Thanks, Jen. Tammie Hickey from Great Falls Career and College Readiness Centre is joining us today to share more about their Connections 101 Bridge practice. Tammie, you're up.

Tell us how Connections 101 has had an impact on one of your students.

- Well, thank you, Lori. And it is an honor to be here with everyone. So, my student example is Ben. He was 31 years old when he entered our program and he was part of our very first Connections 101 group. He did have a high school diploma, and some college credits. He was in recovery and actually needed a solid career direction.

He learned about the Connections 101 program from the college admission office, and thought he would take a chance. Through the career exploration class, the self-assessment, self-discovery, and taking part in his industry connection course, he was able to narrow down a career that aligned to his future goals. We've had Ben speak to every Connections group since he completed that program.

He tells them the number one thing that they can do is to suit up and show up and trust the process, that every piece of the Connections program is needed to transition successfully. We truly love Ben. He will actually graduate with his associate's degree from Great Falls College MSU in three short months.

So, great success story.

- Thanks, Tammie. That's a great story. He's now serving as a mentor. Fantastic. And finally, last but certainly not least, Rachel Ambrose from Pennsylvania Regional Education Program, is here to represent PluggedIn Virginia or PIVA. Rachel, what is one of your favorite student impact stories?

- [Rachel] Thanks, Lori. I'm going to share the story about Tin, who wanted to enroll in the nursing program at our local community college, Thomas Nelson Community College, but she was really nervous about her English skill. She

decided to participate in our healthcare boot camp and there she was able to improve her academic and industry-specific vocabulary.

She went on and successfully passed the certified nurse's aide course and her licensure exam and she then went on and now has a job at a local rehab center and is enrolled in the nursing program at our community college. So, she is well on her way to the pathway that she originally had identified in healthcare.

- Thank you, Rachel. So, thanks again to Rachel and Tammie and Jan and Drew and Nadine for sharing those inspiring stories. I know we could spend the entire hour and then some hearing about how your efforts are improving the lives of so many adults in your communities.

Now, let's transition to our roundtable discussion with the program, which will be led by Cheryl Keenan and Sharon Miller. We will begin with questions from Sharon and Cheryl and we hope to have time to answer some questions from the chat as well. So, as we get ready to start, I'm going to ask the hosts to move us all to live speaker view. If you're an attendee, as you see us move away from the slides and speaker view, I would love for you to be able to see all of the panelists at once.

For optimal viewing, we recommend the grid view. To find that, you'll move your mouse up to the upper right-hand corner of the whiteboard in front of you. Next to the video strip, there's a small white circle with black boxes. That's where you'll select the grid view from one of the three options.

And remember to put questions from the panelists in the chat. With that, I will turn things over to Cheryl to get us started.

- Okay, thank you. This is the fun part. I so much enjoyed all of those stories about our students. Thank you all, you selected such wonderful success stories.

You know, anybody who's been in the business for a while or in the biz for a while knows how much work it is to develop and maintain partnerships.

And in the models that we're talking about today, those partnerships are just instrumental to being successful. So, my first question is about the strategies that you have used to manage your partnerships and to keep your partners committed and engaged.

So, Tammie, do you want to start first?

- Thank you, Cheryl. And that is a great question because it does take all of us. We can't work in our silos, it truly takes partnership. So, our motto here is, learning is a process that leads to change. Through workforce and education partnerships, Connections 101 changes lives every day.

This innovative program was created with a shared vision to give individuals the employability skills, technical skills, academic skills, and transitional support to connect them within their career path. Keeping students at the center of what we do, truly, and focusing on participants' goals, and respecting what each involved organization brings to the program is paramount.

Instructors and partners work together so students see the relevance of what they are doing in all areas and this is very important. Each organization has its own set of outcomes they're trying to meet. Adult education is tied to WIOA, the college is focused on enrollment and retention, the Department of Labor is focused on job training and placement. But really, when it comes right down to it, we all want the same thing.

And that is to build a strong industry-focused pipeline that is aligned to our community labor force needs and adds to our economic viability.

- Yeah, that shared vision is just so important to maintaining a partnership over time. Thank you for sharing that. How about others? What are your strategies?

- If I could jump in? You know, I think it's really, really important, a couple of key practices that we have in place. First of all, I think it's really key that we have regular meetings, weekly meetings between both staffs from both schools so that we can address issues as they come up in real-time. I think it's also really, really important that when we're promoting these activities and these programs that we do it as a team.

So, when we have information sessions, where we're going to talk to students about that, I think it's really critical that they can see a team of people from the South Bay Adult School and a team of people from El Camino Community College. And I think that has been really, really powerful. And then the last piece about that is always ongoing and working, is that I mean, really, what we're talking about in terms of the product for these students is high-quality, rigorous instruction in the classroom.

And that is really, really key for us to be pairing up and having teachers working with teachers on that. And that goes without saying that, obviously things like, you know, million-dollar machine labs we're never going to have, and we need to collaborate in order to get our students access to those types of programs.

So, it's really about that collaboration piece.

- So, thank you for that perspective, Drew. So, I wanted to switch gears and talk a little bit about expanding learner populations and access to services. So, one challenge that adult education and CTE programs face is being able to serve

learners with a variety of background so you can succeed in CTE and obtain employment.

It is also sometimes difficult to make integrated education and training services available in rural locations. So, my question is, how have you been able to address those challenges and, Jan, perhaps we can start with you on this one.

- developing and giving occupational training. One of them was we found that training providers, of course, wanted larger cohort, you know, they wanted to cover their costs and so, they were going to the bigger towns.

And here in Jennings, a lot of our students here do not have reliable transportation or funds to travel to another county where there may be trainings. And so we analyzed all these barriers and very quickly decided that we needed to come up with some very strategic partnerships.

And then if these partnerships are going to be sustainable, we really need to make sure that there were mutual benefits so that there's something in it for everybody or it wasn't going to last. And we found a very good partner, who's Vincennes University, a community college here in Indiana, that would provide the Certified Clinical Medical Assistant curriculum, the teacher, they would set up the clinicals, they would set up a certification test.

And we had the leverage or something as simple as classroom space, free, free classroom space. And it was just such a simple, little idea that I...it was almost unreal that that could really get a training going in a rural area but it worked.

So, we leveraged free call to space. We also...we build the cohort, we find the client. And that is just a fantastic thing for Vincennes University. They're not located here in North Vernon but you don't have to do the marketing, we do it.

We sell the class. We provide the classroom space. We also partnered very closely with WorkOne.

They also assist in finding clients and sending them to the class. They assist students with barriers and with all kinds of job search activities. And our regional adult ed providers, we have a very unique situation here.

We're very close, and we collaborate, and they send their students to our trainings as we send ours to theirs. So, we found out strategic partnership is really where it's at.

- Jan, thank you for that. And does anyone else want to join in response to that question?

- Actually, I have been able... But we're not a rural community in Newport News, Virginia. We have been able to address some of those challenges and giving, expanding our populations and access. Our PIVA boot camp expands the access to occupational training and employment to populations that otherwise might not have been enrolled in those training programs.

These populations include adults with lower educational attainment, lower-income such as our Tana for Alice populations, as well as those with disabilities. Our adult ed program has a long-standing history and partnership with Thomas Nelson Community College.

The community college had an opportunity to apply for funds that expanded the access of training to students who may have had more barriers and less access than those that they were currently serving. Adult education knew that some students need to develop academic skills, improve digital literacy, as well personal and professional staff skills before they enter into the community college training.

Our thought was, if they can't get through the adult education boot camp, then they probably were not ready to commit to or successfully complete a training program. Each of our boot camps has an industry focus in either healthcare, information technology, or logistics. Once a student has completed our boot camp, they're able to enroll in any of the in-demand training programs at our community college.

And it really has become a great model and an even stronger partnership with Thomas Nelson.

- Great. Thank you for that Rachel. And shifting now to a little bit, having to do with incentives to enroll or for students to continue in post-secondary education and career and technical education.

So, as many of you know, adult education learners often consider the prospect of enrolling in post-secondary education or training to be very daunting. And a particular concern are the costs and the amount of time it takes to earn a credential. Increasingly, adult education programs are working with their post-secondary partners to develop policies that can facilitate adult education learners' college participation.

So, what strategies have you found to be effective in supporting adult learners' college participation? And Tammie, maybe we can start this one with you.

- Great. Thank you, Sharon. That's a great question because I'll tell you they're navigating college and even most public systems can be difficult. We often find duplication in circles services in assisting those with multiple barriers. Our solution was to work together and build on our already collaborative foundation.

Like Jan mentioned, in Great Falls, Montana, we are fortunate that our workforce partners, our education from K through 12, as well as the higher education, we work very closely together. And so, we've built on that. The result of that was the Connections 101 and it truly is a holistic framework that front-loads instruction and skills and strategies underprepared learners need.

You know, this program instills high expectation and accountability in a structured, supportive, and safe learning environment that fosters success. I think engaging in career exploration and assessments that are tied specifically to them is essential. You know, most importantly, helping them develop a different mindset to persist and see themselves as being successful, I got to tell you that's the magic of the program because those that come with barriers, they don't even see themselves coming and navigating these systems or coming to college or being successful in that way, you know, building their self-awareness, their self-esteem, work ethics, and technical skills, work skills, while increasing their academics in specific career paths.

It opens up a whole new world for them. Doing all of these things on the college campus is a huge bonus. They are interacting with the instructors, advisors, student activities, and they see firsthand how our organizations partner and how we support each other to cultivate student success.

And that is powerful, not just having our students, you know, talk about it and mentoring those that have gone through it but they truly see our collaborative effort. This gives them confidence and trust in our system. And it also challenges them to change their previous perceptions and believe and invest in themselves.

- Want to weigh in on this one?

- Yes. So, we have many developmental and college-level transferable articulation agreements with our Rochester Community Technical College and
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we feel very fortunate to have those. And we're so fortunate to have them because we feel this allows the students the opportunity to try college in a risk-free, safe environment.

They don't have to worry about getting into financial aid issues, which is always a problem if you get into financial aid issues. They get to try these classes and if they're not successful the first time then we work with them to find out what was the issue?

What barriers did they have that we can try and remove and then we wrap them back around and we put them back on the pathway. You know, there's so much data out there right now that shows that if you give high school kids some college credit before they transfer into higher ed, they're way more successful.

And we have absolutely proven that this is true with our adult learners too. They never thought they would go to college, they never thought they'd be successful in college. Now, they're saying, "I can do it. And you guys have been great, and you helped me. I can do it." We're also really lucky in that we are partners with our community college. We have a transition advisor on-site that helps transition our students to college and that whole system is very difficult to navigate.

So, we're very fortunate with that.

- There are stories that we hear a lot in adult education about just helping a student to envision themselves in a college or post-secondary environment.

And so, I really appreciate the fact that as school district programs, you have such strong partnerships with the colleges that you can help the students to see that. And that's so instrumental in their future success. You know, there's a lot

of other things that are involved too, in supporting learners and once you get them there, how do you ensure that they complete?

How do you ensure that the transition really works? So, I know that the staff in your program are working really hard to ease the transitions that students have to make. So maybe we could hear a little bit, Drew, I'll ask you first because I know you have some really interesting things to say on this subject.

So what is your program doing to support learners' completion and their movement to the next step?

- Yeah, it's tough. And that that is one of the pieces that you embrace, that it's going to take some hard work. In collaborating, you know, you're looking at the issues, operational issues, scheduling issues between the two institutions and overcoming those. And overcoming them in a way that really serves students because they're at the center of really what we're trying to do.

It's also important to make sure that we have regular contact with the students in our lab classes because those are designed really to provide that specific help, help when they're struggling academically, help, and help moving on to the next steps, you know, making sure that those job skills are there.

Making sure that resumes are there and making sure that they're feeling supported. Making sure that if they get stuck, we have a CISCO pathway. Maybe the student might need math support, we want to make sure that we're there and we're getting that help to students before they reach a point of frustration because that's always going to happen.

The other piece that is just really important to remember is that life happens. Clearly, it happens. We're all on a video conference right now, rather than doing this in person. And so, we actually have someone on staff who's really

tasked with helping the students make the transitions once this is all done into other groups, like with the Workforce Investment Board, or the American Job Centre, or one of those types of organizations.

So, we have a career planning, placement, and support coordinator who's working with students, who's reaching out to them, and who's going to help them and assist them with those things or other things. Like, for example, struggling with childcare and eldercare, struggling with rental assistance or access to, you know, food, those types of real issues that are affecting our students right now. It's just so important that we're, you know, we can't provide it but we can give them access to those resources, and just really support those students so that they can continue and finish.

- Yeah, I think they're all things that are just so important and the literature and the research is really pointing to the importance of providing adequate support services to students so that they can continue on the pathway. Rachel, do you have anything from your PIVA boot camp that you want to add here?

- Yeah, Cheryl. And you know, we certainly, I think we are doing similar activities that Drew is doing as well. Our learners receive advising and support from our prep career coach, in both our phase one of our PIVA boot camp, and then phase two, which we consider our IET.

In 2020, we realized that we really needed to add job search assistance to be delivered by our career coach to enhance the PIVA model. So, this change expanded the role of the career coach to build a partnership with employers by inviting them to conduct presentations in class, participate in job fairs, and share information about job openings.

The career coach helps learners write resumes and cover letters, and emails students about available job openings. The Thomas Nelson Community College

also provides job search support as well, and works collaboratively with our staff so that learners accept... have access to employment opportunities.

The employer and the outreach coordinator collects resumes from learners in the program and they share those with employer contacts where we're developing into different micro internships and externships, with employers like our CVS partner.

Prep staff brings our department of labor, or delivery partners, and our WIOA OJT staff into our boot camp so that students are aware of these connections to employers and apprenticeship programs. Thomas Nelson staff give presentations during each boot camp to help students set up required student accounts, understand the documents that need to be provided, provide them with important deadlines, and then our career coach provides support to students as they log into those information sessions, they help answer questions, they serve as that liaison between the community college staff and the students.

And our career coach monitors the enrollment process for students and intervenes when maybe communication or paperwork or other challenges arise to ensure that the students can start their training on time. Really, in essence, our career coaches are really an advocate for the learner in all stages of the training so that if a learner needs additional support, like the tutoring, we are able to just jump right in and manage that as well.

So, we really...that role for our career coach is really there, from the very beginning until completion.

- Great strategy, thank you.

- So, I wanted to talk a little bit more about your process for developing career awareness and employability skills and providing short-term credentials. So,

bridge and IET programs provide adult educators with an opportunity to assist adult learners in identifying the types of career pathways that are a good match to their knowledge and skills, and abilities and interests and the local labor market, and in preparing to apply for employment in those pathways.

Those programs are also considering ways in which adult learners can earn short-term credentials that can bolster their job readiness. So, Rachel, I'm going to start again with you and I want to ask, how is your program developing adult learners' career awareness and employability skills and providing opportunities to earn short-term credentials?

- Thanks, Sharon. Our PIVA boot camp has our instructors incorporate those academic skill-building into workforce preparation activities in career awareness. So, the workforce preparation activities develop the necessary skills that promote success in the workplace.

Learners in our program, in our PIVA boot camp, complete a resume and a career project, which helps them acquire those digital literacy and soft skills by mapping out their personal career pathway. The career project includes completing a career aptitude assessment, researching a specific career, developing tables in Microsoft Excel to compare different job openings, writing different interview questions, planning for a promotion within their new field, and creating and delivering a final PowerPoint presentation to classmates and staff.

Students are using those digital literacy skills that they've developed and apply them to the career project. They also have career exposure with industry professionals speaking to their class or taking field trips to specific locations. Learners take the Northstar Digital Literacy proctored assessment throughout the boot camp as they are determined proficient in that area.

And we also have the opportunity for them to earn a career readiness certificate, which is recognized by our local employers before they leave our boot camp and enter into the training at the community college.

- Great. Thanks for that, Rachel. I was wondering if Jan would also want to weigh in on that question.

- I think early on in the development of our IET medical assisting class, we realized it needed to be an IET because we had a lot of true adults, and honestly, they were out there working, maybe they didn't have a high school diploma, but there were jobs.

They were low-wage jobs but they had a job. But when they discovered they could come in and do a certification class that would be nationally recognized, it could be a start into a career they wanted to come back. And they were willing then to get their high school diploma because then they knew they needed it to get the certification.

So, it was sort of enlightening to us that so much hinged on the certification and not so much on...because to us as educators, everything is, you know, the high school diploma is so important. But to them, it gives them, like hope, like they were going to be able to advance and really have a career.

And I thought that was really interesting that it sort of occurred without us realizing that, what was going on. Academic and career readiness skills, of course, are contextualized to the medical field. During classroom and clinicals, they're learning professionalism, you know, they're learning, they cannot be on their phone, they cannot be out smoking.

They learned confidentiality. And we really found that putting these career skills in that relevant setting, it made those concepts important to students.

Where I've been a high school teacher for a business high school teacher, and you can talk all day about, you know, workplace skills.

And the kids are like, "What do I need to know for the test?" But now we were like, getting ready for real life. And they realized, "I need to know how to handle myself in a more professional way." Fortunately, for us, that when learning career readiness, courseware 2.0 was released, also, and we sort of paired that in with the IET class, and that allows our students to earn that career readiness certification.

And it documents on a resume, it gives employers... And it's important to employers that the candidates are coming with these career skills. And it's a way to document that they've had exposure to all of those workplace skills.

So, we've really ramped up workplace skills. We've discovered it's very important to employers.

- Yeah, great observations. You know, Nadine, I wanted to just jump back to you for a minute, because, you know, as we're talking about employers here, I know, I think I understand that your program has an interesting partnership, where your employers recognize the credentials that your programs provide. Could you talk just a little bit about that?

- Sure. We're, we have two major employers that meet regularly with adult ed, our workforce, and our community college, RCTC. So, Mayo Clinic does come to monthly meetings. They have HR staff that participate.

They're part of the pathway, they're part of the problem-solving of the pathway. You know, it's like you say, common goals. Their goal is that they want skilled workers to come, you know, and work for them at Mayo Clinic. Many of our students want to work at Mayo Clinic because it's a good job with good

benefits. And then we also have... And they've worked, they've been in this journey with us for over 10 years.

So, like the commitment of that major employer in town is really significant. They participate in the classes, they do mock interviews, they come to us and say, you know, these are the skills we need, let's develop the program around what skills we're looking for.

And then they also guarantee our students interviews. They don't guarantee them a job but they do guarantee them an interview. Olmsted County came on board, they probably been with us five years and it's the same thing. If you have HR sitting at the table with you for these major employers, we are moving our students into employment. And they come back and say, yes, these are the soft skills we want but being part of the classroom and being part of the process, and having a voice in the whole school process makes them feel like they are helping.

They feel invested in the students. And but then they also see the good for their company but they see the good for the community too. So, it's not just about siloing their business and what's best for them, it's about what is best for this community?

- Yeah, and I mean, at the end of the day it's about work. It's about getting people good jobs with opportunities for advancement. So, these pieces are just so critical, critically important. Drew, I know, in your career pathways program, you have done some things to actually get students to, you know, work-related outcomes, jobs.

Could you talk a little bit about that for a bit?

- Yeah, again, that's a huge, huge partner piece. Going back to what I had mentioned before, first, the fact that we have a career planning placement and support coordinator who can work with all the, with whether it's with the group over at El Camino Community College, with their staffs, whether it's with the South Bay Workforce Investment Board, which is our win for our area, we're all one group, the AJCC, the American Job Centre in California, it takes the extra work.

It takes putting someone there who is going to go back and who's going to work back and forth, who's going to check up on students, make sure that they're getting into jobs, and that they continue to be successful. That support is just critical, it's just always going to be needed. And I guess the only other thing that I would say is that, you know, in terms of tracking those students, it's just important to really make sure that we're maintaining legacy records, and we're really able to circle back with them because they want to get back too, you know, they...

I've never worked with a group of students that is just more... They're so, the level of gratitude is just overwhelming. And so, you know, they want to come back and say, and give the same message, "You can do this. This is well within your reach." And it's really important to kind of create those contacts and that community.

And, you know, you do that in person but obviously, over the course of this pandemic, we found, yeah, we're going to use social media to do that, some of those other forms. And it's great to be able to use those for something positive.

- Well, I'll tell you, this is... you've been great. What an interesting conversation. And just as evidence of that, we have tons of really, people wanting more information and have a bunch of questions. So, I'm going to turn back to you, Lori. But I want to thank you all for being just such a fantastic panel, and for Sharon, for joining us and taking her time to talk about the importance of these partnerships.

Lori?

- Thanks, everyone. We have many, many, many good questions. And so, they fall into some buckets, probably not surprising to anyone on. And so, I'll put one out. There are some funding questions, right? Folks have lots of questions about how you're paying for things, how students are paying for things and so, let me put one up here.

Were the partnerships you are referencing existing, or did you have to build them from the ground up? I heard Nadine mentioned articulation agreements. What else is needed for the partnership to work well? So, anyone can take that question. That is not for any particular person but Nadine, they did call you out. They were curious about articulation agreements. But it was really about, you know, when you stepped into your roles, were the partnerships already there?

If not, and you had to build them, this is the how, right, how do you do it? How do you start from the ground and build partnerships?

- So, partnerships, you know, worked for... we've always...adult ed that has always been good partners with your workforce. And we really like our community college but we've worked hard to make good partnerships with our community college. And many times, with your college, it's like you need to find the right person and the right place to see the big vision just to see how the partnership benefits everybody.

And as far as, and that's... The articulation agreements came about and I think somebody asked like, "How can I have articulate...how do we have that and the student is not enrolled?" They aren't enrolled at RCTC. The articulation agreement is an agreement that says that if they get a B or better in this class, whether it's a developmental class or it's actually a college-level class, RCTC

will recognize that experience and give them that credit and they won't have to take that class when they go transfer to RCTC.

They have to transfer within two years into the program at RCTC for it to transfer. So, I don't know all the details of the articulation agreements. I just know that when we start a new pathway, and we're looking at these we say, what college credit, what articulation credits can we possibly give them kind of as a carrot to get them started?

Because once they get some college credit, they are more apt to transfer and continue. And so that benefits our community college. I don't know of today.

- Does anyone else want to jump in on that? I jumped, I skipped over the finance one to go to the partnership one because more people were putting in partnerships. So, anybody else want to talk about the partnership piece, about how the how?

- So, there's a big piece...if I could. There's a big piece in California where we are now operating as a part of a consortium of adult schools in the area, that is connected with El Camino Community College. That kind of top-level legislation really sets up the success. So we have regular meetings.

We have some incredible partners in our consortia and I think it's really important. Yes, there are things that individual schools do but there are things that happen at a higher legislative level, that really engender these kinds of things and I think that has been something has been really helpful for us I would say.

- Lori, I'll also add, I think it's important when adult ed can maybe demonstrate what we can do that doesn't require the community college tuition funding. So

to do a developmental class or to be a tutor support in a workforce class helps the outcomes for community college, right?

So, if a community college experience for their students is a more positive experience and they have more individuals who complete, then that relationship, it's a win-win for adult ed and for the community college, I think.

- Yes, Rachel, I would have to definitely agree with you. And having that, Drew, as you said, having that supportive leadership, that's been huge. And they think that like we have a just an amazing collaborative mindset, in partnership in Great Falls, Montana and that's continued, you know, to grow.

And so because of that, you know, we're always thinking of different things. The college, yes, for having their retention and their completion outcomes to help that. So our adult education instructors actually started teaching quite a few years ago, I want to say back in 2010, their developmental math and writing courses.

So, we provided the instructor, they did not have to pay that FTE, and our instructors, and it was just part of their schedule, you know, when I would schedule them. And so that was the start of it. And then again, just expanding that Connections 101, you know, it's a 14-week commitment but the results for the students, but not as well as those partners that are part of this is the students can get up to six college credits for free if they're going to continue with higher education.

If they're not, and they're going into short-term training, or an apprenticeship, you know, that's where your workforce partners, like we call the local businesses and say, "We have this person, they want to do an electrical apprenticeship." And so again, it's just working together. We also...part of our Connections 101, again, amazing collaboration with the college, we have a co-enrollment opportunity.

So, those that do pursue higher education, and they've completed the Connections 101, so they can get up to six college credits at no cost, undergrad, both colleges, prior learning assessment, so much, Nadine, like your matriculation agreement. And let's say we have a co-enrollment, they can get 50% off of their tuition fees for the next six credits.

And so, there's incentive which...people need incentive and success builds upon success. These people when they're done, they're so excited, and they're just, they're ready for that next step so...

- That's great, Tammie. It's a good segue. I'll go back to the financial question and then I'm hoping we have time. There's one, there's a pandemic-related question that I think we should close with because it seems very fitting for today, right? So, this is a really specific question about funding but I think you can all probably jump in. And I'm going to read this question. This is from Cory.

When discussing adult education students taking post-secondary classes simultaneously while earning their GED, what financial resources have you found to help students pay for those credited classes? And so, I think, you know, this is a very specific question but I think this is one that has come up a lot in the chat is, where are the resources coming from particularly when you're doing things like you mentioned, Tammie?

So, does anyone want to tackle that question about money and students?

- Well, I know that in Virginia, our PIVA model, both Department of Education, and our community college system came out with a joint letter that basically said that our PIVA model is a recognized career pathway program. And because of that, that means, and that's, you know, as long as it's a

recognized career pathway program, then students can be earning their GED and be taking those college-level classes at the same time, and be eligible, potentially, for Pell funding to help with those classes.

I'll just tell you my, you know, certainly, we use our Apple funding but we, you know, for training, we can certainly, go to our WIOA title, one partner, you know, so we definitely are braiding the funding depending on, you know, the situation for the students. So, you know, one student, you know, they're coming in but there's multiple ways of funding and it does get complicated.

But there's different ways and pockets of money to be able to support students in that post-secondary education and training.

- That's great, Rachel. I see everyone nodding. So, I'm looking at the clock and seeing we have two minutes left. So, I am going to ask this last question. And we probably have time for one person to answer it. So, this is specific to the IET programs. How have you adapted during the pandemic with any dual instruction and how is your remote training going if you do have to pivot?

So, that's the question. Does anybody have a pandemic answer for us?

- I'll tell you what we've done in Indiana is we've bought a lot of Chromebooks and a lot of hotspots and we lend them out to students. And so, a lot of our occupational trainings are medical. And so, they're on top of the testing, and somebody tests positive, they go out, the class goes out virtual, they're on quarantine, you know.

They really... But bottom line is, Chromebooks, hotspots.

- So, we are coming up on the top of the hour. We still have, we have dozens of questions in here. I want to thank you so much panelists for being here today, Cheryl and Sharon. And congratulations again, Drew, Jan, Nadine, Tammie, and Rachel. And as we said, there are questions that we didn't have time for today.

So, keep an eye out for an FAQ that's going to come out after this, along with the recording of today's webinar. I encourage you to visit us at LINCS, where you can learn more about the programs recognized today and we'd love to hear from adult education programs interested in applying for future recognition, and you can find the application on those webpages.

And finally, we ask that you take a very short survey about today's webinar. The link will pop up at the close of the webinar. And with that, today's webinar has concluded. Thank you all for joining us.