

- [Lori] Welcome everyone to today's showcase webinar for the Advancing Innovation in Adult Education project. My name is Lori Meyer and I'm the associate director of education and technical assistance for Manhattan Strategy Group. Today, we are shining a spotlight on the efforts of nine innovative adult education programs. These nine programs are the latest cohort to be recognized by the Advancing Innovation project, which is a three-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 OCTAE and is led by Manhattan Strategy Group in partnership with Abt Associates. We are excited to announce the latest cohort of innovators during National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week. In addition to our nine program directors, who I will introduce in just a few moments, we are thrilled to welcome a special guest from OCTAE Cheryl Keenan, director of the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, as well as Laurie Kierstead-Joseph, assistant vice chancellor for adult basic education for college and career at Pima Community College.

And PCC was one of our inaugural innovative programs recognized last year. After some introductory remarks, we will spend the bulk of our time today in two panel discussions with our program directors to learn more about their efforts to increase access to adult education services, help learners transition to next steps, and discuss their partnership efforts with community-based organizations and employers in particular.

We'll split up our nine programs into two panels so you have an opportunity to hear from all of them today. Finally, at the close of the webinar, we will share details about how to learn more about these nine programs on our project webpages on LINCS. And with that, let's begin. Next, I would like to welcome Cheryl Keenan. Cheryl is the director of the U.S.

Department of Education, 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 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.

Prior to her appointment to the U.S. Department of Education, she served as the state director of Adult Education in Pennsylvania. Cheryl holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in the field of education, has performed fieldwork in the area of special education and served on numerous committees to advance the education of children and adults. Cheryl.

- [Cheryl] Thank you, Lori. And welcome everyone on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, I extend wishes for a productive National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week. This week's a great opportunity to build awareness in your communities about the importance of adult education and to highlight the difference that adult education makes in the lives of our adult learners. You know, a few years ago, as Lori said, OCTAE invested national activities funds in this project because we believe it's important to shine a light on innovative practices that adult ed programs are using to meet the evolving needs of adult learners.

This is the third and final round of practices that we're highlighting. So the nine practices that we're showcasing today are illustrative of the types of activities that adult ed programs have implemented in using a holistic approach in carrying out adult education. The three practices that we're recognizing have to do with integrated education and training models, transition to further education and training activities, and strategies for increasing access to adult ed services for varying populations of learners.

The work of the staff leading these practices reinforces that adult ed programs need to consider adult learners' needs. That includes their intellectual needs, their social needs, their physical needs, as well as their emotional needs. I want to mention that the programs 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 features that helped to make them successful in leading to better employment and educational outcomes for learners. You know, adult education's goal is to lift up innovative program practices that are making a difference, but also to inspire others to innovate. So I'm here today to personally thank each of these professionals that we're going to hear from for seeking out ways to improve services to the adults in their communities.

Services that are taking on a growing urgency as the country moves towards recovery. So many individuals who already had barriers to employment have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Innovation may be more important now than ever to get people back to work and on a pathway that offers real opportunity.

So thank you for making a difference in the lives of our adult students. We all share the common goal of improving the lives of individuals to believing in the power of education. I look forward to hearing from our panel in more detail about their journey. Back to you, Lori.

- Thank you, Cheryl, for that welcome and for joining us today. Today, we are going to hear from nine individuals who are leading efforts to support adult learning in their communities. It is my pleasure to introduce our panelists who represent the nine programs. All of us here today on the panel and for those of you viewing the webinar spend our days striving to improve outcomes for learners. So with that in mind, I've asked each of our program directors to share a favorite anecdote about how their program improved the life of one of their students.

So I will introduce the program directors one by one, and we'll hear from them. First up is Debbie Faubus-Kendrick from the Alternative Sentencing Program in Crawford County Adult Education Center in Van Buren, Arkansas. Debbie.

- [Debbie] Hi. Thank you for having me today. It's really difficult sometime to pick one story, but something that impacted me when we first started our Alternative Sentencing Program is I would go into the classrooms and ask people that were in there if the program was helping them, if it was something in their lot was changing for them. And one class I went into, our basic introduction to construction, there were eight gentlemen in there and I said, "How many of you would have lost your job if you couldn't attend our program?"

All eight of them raised their hands. That was very powerful to me. And so I make it a habit of going in and questioning it. That's not just one story, but that's eight people. They would have lost their jobs because they had to do community service during the day and they couldn't have gone to work. So that to me was very powerful and very telling.

- That is very powerful. Thanks, Debbie. Cristina Marsh from Breaking Barriers, Jefferson Community and Technical College, Kentucky Skills U is from Carrollton, Kentucky. And welcome.

- [Cristina] Thank you for having me. One is... one of the stories that we have for the students that really impacted me when we had started this initiative was our student Betty. Betty lived in a very rural area so then she had transportation issues and she was raising one of her grandchildren.

So she was 55 at the time and was having a lot of technology issues in addition not to be able to come into class. So we trained her on how to use a computer. We loaned her a computer so then she could use it from home. She completed the program from home attending classes virtually. She graduated last month and she enrolled in college to pursue her dream of being an MNA assistant.

So for us, that was a very powerful story of a not traditional student, number one, a problem with transportation, raising a kid at her age with technology challenges. So then our program helped her to complete as well as it helped many others ones in her situation.

But for her, it was very, it resonated with me because she became literate in computers and was able to continue succeeding. If we wouldn't have had this program implemented in offering all these online alternatives, she would never have had her GED, nor enter college.

- It does seem that the name Breaking Barriers is very appropriate here. You definitely are breaking down those barriers. Thanks, Cristina. Next up is another Christina, Christina Robinson from Career4U Academy, Houston Community College, Adult Education and Literacy Programs in Houston, Texas.

Christina, welcome.

- [Christina] Thank you so much, Lori. Yes, Career4U Academy, we have almost 500 individuals in this program and Rashaan is one of those individuals. Rashaan came from Kazakhstan. She started the program with our Career4U Academy ESL because she did not speak very good English. She got that English component and while she was getting her payroll accounting certificate and was able to complete both and then go straight into a job in the accounting arena.

So I just think it's such an amazing opportunity for individuals who don't... I mean, within less than a year of not speaking the language to go out and get a job and in English with a certificate in payroll accounting, I think it's just a fantastic story. And I think it's exciting that we have this opportunity to leverage these grant funds for a program like Career4U.

- It is a great story of how you can change someone's life in a pretty short period of time. Next up is Christy McIntyre-Gray from Career Training, Wayne Township Adult Education in Indianapolis, Indiana. Christy welcome.

- [Christy] Thank you, Lori. We're really honored to be here today. I'm Christy McIntyre-Gray with the MSD of Wayne Township Adult Education Program. And probably the story that inspires me the most is someone that's on my staff. Her name's Sandra Zavala. She came to our country from Peru heartbroken and leaving people that she truly loved behind in pursuit of the American dream.

And you can see in all of her family's lives a positive impact. She came here, she worked three jobs. She was probably the hardest worker you would ever know. And she attended adult education classes on the East Coast. She moved to Indianapolis area where she attained her HSC. She was in our first pilot class back when we had three students learning what this IET program was all about.

She attained her Microsoft Office, came in, and volunteered. She gave her time away and she was our top competitor for our English Language Learner secretary. So Sandra welcomes 700 students every year into our program and they are in wonderful hands with her service to our school and all the students that come through our doors.

- It's a great story of persistence being part of your innovation there. Next up is to Susanne Campagna from the Integrated Education and Training Culinary Arts program with Hampden County Sheriff's Department in Ludlow, Massachusetts. Susanne, welcome.

- [Susanne] Well, thank you today for welcoming me into this program. And it's a pleasure to be here. The student I'd like to talk about regarding our Integrated Education and Training program was a student who applied to the program but was not at the top of our list for being accepted. His test scores were not as high as others.

But during the interview process, he really, he knocked our socks off. He was so dedicated, so committed, so positive about, you know, sticking with the program and making us proud. So we accepted him into the program and it turned out, you know, he completed 100% of the possible credentials that could be earned.

He had perfect attendance. He was a model for other students and he just really was the shining star for the program, a real ambassador. And he brought this program back to others in the facility. And he was our spokesperson. He helped us recruit for the next cohort. He has since been released.

He is working full time. His position at a local restaurant. You know, he started at \$17.50 an hour, which, you know, is a decent wage and he's going on to continue in the culinary field. So just someone we're really proud of. And I'm happy to share that with you.

- It's a great story. I love they're dedicated and committed. Next up is Ivana Stevens from the High School Equivalency Honors Boot Camp college program at Nash Community College in Rocky Mount, in North Carolina. Ivana, welcome.

- [Ivana] Hi, thank you for having me. So, my favorite student that I tell the story of all the time, his name is Willie. Willie came to us newly sober. He had just quit drinking about a week before, after a lifetime struggle with alcoholism. He quit because his five-year-old son who also had down syndrome was diagnosed with cancer. So he decided that it was time to quit and change his life.

So part of his life change was coming back to school to get his high school equivalency. So he came in, he entered our boot camp program, completed our boot camp program, transferred immediately into the culinary department on the other side of campus, and completed his two-year culinary degree. Went on.

Has stayed sober. He is now the executive chef at our local events center in the city and continues to advocate for Nash Community College on every single social media site he can ever get on. He is our greatest advocate. And I think just coming into that kind of centralized class to start with, with a cohort really truly started him on his path to finishing up that degree and starting a new life.

- That is amazing. As I was listening to you talk, I heard, "Start a new life." That is an amazing story. Thank you for sharing and welcome. Next up is Cindy Wolfe from the Ohio Deaf Literacy Partnership Delaware Area Career Center Aspire Program in Delaware, Ohio.

Cindy, welcome.

- [Cindy] Thank you. Thank you for having me. I'm honored that we were selected. Our program centers on improving literacy rates for deaf and hard-of-hearing adults. And my favorite story is we had one student who desired to go to postsecondary, but she came in with a low middle school reading level. After completing our program, she got that up to a high, high school level and did go on to postsecondary at the local community college and earned her credential in medical billing and coding.

So I was pleased to see that. Thank you.

- That's a great story about helping someone transition in their career. Next up is Mindy Russell from STEPS, Adult Education Students Taking Effective Pathways to Success for Manufacturing Pre-apprenticeship with Calhoun Community College Adult Education in Tanner, Alabama. Mindy, welcome.

- [Mindy] Thank you so much for having us today. The STEPS program was born out of the need for industry change in North Alabama. There was an outcry for the extreme need for employees in the automotive industry. Our favorite student story is actually about Jeremy. This young man came to us, a very broken young man, a single father on the verge of losing his son.

He was in a dead-end job. He reached out to a new industry in the area, actually Mazda Toyota, and they told him he needed to find some way to get industry experience. He actually entered the STEPS program.

It completely changed this young man's life. He went from a homeless situation, living in a car, to be in an entry-level employee. And because we keep up with them for two years, he has actually moved into supervision, has a home for his son, and is a spokesperson for this program. It's amazing.

- That's a great story. You changed two lives there, right? His and his sons. That's a great story. Thanks, Mindy. Next up is Marianna Geraskina from Transition to College Postsecondary Training, Catholic Charities El Centro in Boston, Massachusetts. Marianna, welcome.

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- [Marianna] Hello. I'm so honored to be here with all these amazing educators changing lives. El Centro is a program for adult immigrant learners. And we helped hundreds of our students to enter college and meaningful post-secondary training. And I have so many stories of spectacular outcomes that they achieved.

However, I would like to share a story of success that may seem more modest, but it really expresses the essence of what we're doing. A woman came to us looking for English classes.

She was a single mother with three teenage children. She worked as a janitor in the evenings. She came home after midnight. She had parents, elderly parents, who were taking care of her children at that time. And she was very worried that the grandparents would not really understand what the children were doing. And she wanted a job in the morning so that she would spend time with her children when they come home from school.

She was an excellent student. And we suggested that she would go to college. And she said, "College is not for me, I am old." She was 38 years old. We convinced her to go to college. And in a year she came back to us and proudly showed us her college transcript was a GPA 4.0. She said that she found a job, an office job in the morning, and could stay with her children in the evening.

And she said that she decided not to stop her education and she decided to continue to major in accounting. She is an accountant now. And once she was a commencement speaker at the graduation and she said, "My school saw in me what I didn't know about myself," and these words were incredibly gratifying for us.

- It's another great story about changing the life not only of the students, but of their entire family. Thanks, Marianna. So thank you, Debbie, Cristina, Christina, Christy, Susanne, Ivana, Cindy, Mindy, and Marianna 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 first-panel discussion with the programs, which will be led by Laurie Kierstead-Joseph. It is my pleasure to welcome Laurie today. She is the assistant vice chancellor of PCC's Adult Basic Education for College and Career Division. Laurie has experience leading all aspects of adult education,

student services, instructional, professional learning, curriculum development, assessment, IBEST, transition programming, grant administration, as well as WIOA collaboration.

She is an innovative program leader who has presented at the local state and national level about educational leadership in IET models, WIOA partnerships, and advocacy. And if you haven't seen the virtual site visit, which was spearheaded by Laurie and her partners at PCC, I strongly encourage you to see Innovation in Action. And we will share details about how to access that webinar later.

Our first panel will include four of our programs Debbie from Alternative Sentencing Program, Cristina from Breaking Barriers, Susanne from the IET Culinary Arts Program, and Cindy from the Ohio Deaf Literacy Partnership. And with that, I will turn things over to Laurie to get us started.

- [Laurie] Thank you so much, Lori, for that introduction, I am so excited to be here and inspired by these programs and these program leaders and excited to learn from all of you today. I want to kick us off with our first question. One challenge that adult education programs face is being able to serve learners from a variety of backgrounds.

I'd like to start out by asking Susanne, could you tell us a little bit about how you've been able to remove barriers and expand access to adults seeking adult ed services?

- Yes, I'd be happy to answer that question. At the Hampden County Sheriff's Department under the leadership of a very progressive sheriff, Sheriff Nicholas Cocchi, we have been challenged in education to develop vocational and educational programs that will help our returning citizens gain access to postsecondary education, adult basic education, and employment as they return to their community.

So with our IET Culinary Arts Program, we chose on purpose a CORI-friendly program in the hospitality industry. So our learners have hands-on experience, you know, gaining those culinary skills and earning credentials that will help them transition into the community, into an industry where they can go to school to earn a certificate or, you know, find employment in an industry where they'll earn more money with the credentials that they leave our program with.

So they all leave with a ServSafe credential. They leave with the allergen training credential. They leave with a certified kitchen cook credential and some other, you know, hospitality credentials. So we help them build a resume to overcome the barriers of employment for those leaving incarceration.

- What a great example, Susanne, of how to help our learners overcome barriers to employment, including thinking of which career sectors are the right fit for your learners. That's fantastic. Cindy, I wonder if you could share a little bit about what you all do at the Ohio Deaf Literacy Partnership.

- I'd be happy to. We at the Delaware Area Career Center Aspire Program partnered with the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disability office and the Ohio School for the Deaf to run our program. Research has shown that many students who graduate from high school who are deaf or hard of hearing have, like, third or fourth-grade literacy levels.

And a lot of them would like to go on to postsecondary or if they have a job they're not being promoted because of their lower literacy levels. So the purpose of our program was to help these students increase this literacy rate or level. It has helped remove barriers because a lot of the classes or the classes are done virtually.

So we're able to reach out to everyone in the state of Ohio. And the classes are taught with a teacher who has 30-plus years teaching the deaf community. That's also coupled with homework and they do American sign language during the classes.

So the students for deaf and hard of hearing students, English is not their first language. It is their second or third it could be. We have some students that are also non-native Americans. So it is challenging for them to learn our language or to learn to be able to communicate in the workplace or enter postsecondary.

So this program has enabled them to hopefully, meet their goals. And again, we've been able to reach out to students from across the entire state. Thank you.

- Thank you, Cindy. So impressive when you can reach folks all across the state with one program. Fantastic. For our second question, I'd like to ask about wraparound support services and partnerships. Debbie, I wonder if you could talk to us a little bit. We know that implementation of supportive and

wraparound services requires strong partnerships often with community-based organizations and other partners to fully meet the needs of our adult learners.

What strategies have you used to help manage your partnerships to keep them committed and engaged to support learners?

- Well, I think it's really important to have people on your campus and involved with your students. So some of the things we do is we have them come in because we do interviews with our students before they get jobs. So we use local business industry to interview them and hopefully, even get them a job, but also get them on my advisory board.

So that way, you know, they know what we're doing and they're engaged. Some other things we do is we have a newsletter we email all the time to stay in touch. We do speaking in the community. We're a member of both of the Chambers. We are in a pretty much rural community so, and I'm from here, and I'm old enough that I know everybody, you know?

So it just happens that way when you get old. But anyway, so we try to reach out to everybody. We have speakers coming in from all levels our, of course, our WIOA partners, Arkansas Rehab, Services for the Blind, DWS. And we're going to have the DWS mobile on our campus now. So I just really try to get everybody here under the same roof.

So because, you know, with some of our students, if we say, "Go here to get help," they're not going to go there. So we have, you know, TANF and SNAP, we have what we call 100 Families, which is a wraparound in itself to help people get housing, automobiles, food, whatever it is that they need.

So I try to open it all up, like I said, under our one campus. And, you know, ours is the Alternative Sentencing Program which was stated earlier. And we now have a resource room, which is about half the size of a basketball court. And we are going to have resources set up in there for our community. We are in the same building with the court.

We partner with them. We're here to help them whenever we can. We help with driver's license, paying fines, whatever it is we need. But I think it's just really important that we have everybody here to see what we're doing. And we'd go out and visit them. We'd go out and go through the business and industry. And it's work.

I mean, you have to keep those lines of communication open because as you know in business and industry, people change all the time. The leaders do. Leaders change in all your non-profits so you have to kind of stay on top of that. So my people go out and they visit with them. And like I said, we bring them on campus to speak as much as we can. Thank you.

- Wow, Debbie. That's incredible. So not only do you bring the services on campus so that they're there for the learners, but it's a chance for those partners to engage with learners and stay connected to why this is important work. Wow, what a great example. Debbie, I appreciate that.

- Thank you.

- For my next question, I'd like to talk a little bit about where we are with online learning. I think we've all experienced during the pandemic how important it has been to provide online programming and services to ensure access for all of our adult learners. Cristina shared a really powerful story about her student Betty earlier. Cristina, can you tell us a little more about how you structured your program so that you could expand access to adult learners and support high-quality learning and wraparound services?

- Yes, absolutely. I am the director of a region of eight counties. All the counties are very rural. Some are larger than others, but they have the same issues. So in 2019, July 2019, we started thinking about how can we ensure that students have access to education not just by coming to the center because it was always the same issue, "I don't have a vehicle," "I have childcare issues."

So it was always something that's stopping our students from succeeding. So I sit down, got all my programs, all the schedules, and evaluated what works, what is actually really working for the students, what doesn't so then we can implement it. We had started an online registration process.

It was user-friendly not just on my computer, but also from a cell phone. And everybody, now, they have a smartphone, whether it is more fancy or not, they have a smartphone. So we taught the students at the center how to use the registration forms. We put it in social media and we start getting responses.

So when we started getting that type of response of people being able to register it online, we seen an influx of the students. I just start asking the students, "So what is that makes the difference for you and instead of coming into the center

just to do it online?" So most of the answers I received was, "You know, the problem is I'm intimidated. I'm an adult and I don't have a GED. So going to your center, as I haven't had my GED, let's go ahead and register. It was scary and it was easier just to go ahead and submit something online, click the submit button, and then wait for somebody to contact you."

We then started changing the classes to make it online and at the same time that in-person. So my instructors were teaching concurrently online classes via Zoom platform at the same time that they have the students in the center. I'm not going to lie, it was challenging, but it was effective. The students were participating.

We had the students coming in one week because of the work schedule to participate in in-person classes, the following week, they were doing online, but they were on track. So then that helped a lot. In addition, we added tutoring labs and what we call the helpline. So if you have a problem with your homework or your assignment, just call this instructor that is available at this time.

We also added a college and career navigator that was able to follow up with the students 24 to 48 hours after they completed the online registration. So then that engagement also occurred in which a person can virtually meet with you, whether it is through a computer or is through a cell phone, just to engage you to come into classes. Remote testing was added.

So the program runs fully online or it could be adopted as a hybrid option. When COVID hit on March 16th, 2020, we closed doors and we reopened March 17th, 2020. So then, we did not have any break. The students were already trained.

So initially, instead of having a class of 10 or 12, we only had 1 or 2 because it was kind of something new, but they were attending. And we were able to continuously run the program without any problems, submit assignments, via Google forums. The students were able to complete those on their cell phone if they did not have a computer. We added some laptops that we were able to loan to students that needed something more.

As part of looking into all the programs that's online platforms that were user-friendly for cell phones, so then we added all of that and we're still improving upon what we see. But what it did is it opened the doors for everybody to

participate regardless of the condition, regardless of the situation, regardless of whatever, they didn't have transportation or did have transportation.

So that it was very powerful to see. That was one of the issues that was deterring our students from continue with their education. So, and one very important thing that we did as well was the fact that everybody had their schedules for classes. So we are a region.

So we function as a region where one instructor can be teaching from one of my counties to the other seven counties. So his students do not have to travel to get quality instruction. The students don't really have to travel neither to get that tutoring help that they needed. They just connect with a person that can help them in whatever location they are.

- Wow. Cristina, thank you so much. Everything from intake to wraparound supports and loaning devices to how it's impacted what programming you can offer across your whole region, really incredible. And certainly, it points you ready to respond during the pandemic. Thank you for sharing that example.

- Thank you.

- I'm taking notes myself for some lessons learned I can employ back here in my own program. Well, I feel like we could do another round and hear from all of you again, but I know we need to wrap up. I just want to thank you all for sharing these best practices from your programs on these models. You're doing such incredible work.

- Thanks again to Debbie, Cristina, Susanne, and Cindy, for sharing your insights and to Laurie for facilitating the conversation. Next up, our second panel will include five of our programs. Christy from Career Training, Ivana from High School Equivalency Honours Boot Camp, Mindy from STEPS for Manufacturing Pre-Apprenticeship, and Mariana from Transition to Postsecondary Training.

And with that, I will turn things back over to Laurie for our second and final panel discussion.

- Thanks again, Lori. I'm excited to be here now with the second group of panelists to ask another round of questions and continue learning from all of you and your innovative model programs. For our first question, I'd like to start

with Mindy. In your STEPS program, I'd like to ask you a little bit about how you're doing some career awareness and employability skills work.

I know all of our adult ed programs we're working to provide opportunities to explore careers and in-demand occupations and the local labor market. How is your program working with learners to identify their interests and develop skills? And what opportunities are you providing for your learners to get industry credentials?

- One of the reasons that STEPS was born was because of an extreme need in the automotive industry. But what we learned very early on because STEPS started as one program about four years ago. STEPS is the combination of three adult education programs and then some other certifications that are added in.

We actually, as far as certifications, our students have the potential to get 20 industry-recognized certifications. It makes them very, very employable by the time they're done. One of my favorite parts of our program that works so well for the students is our interview process.

When they come in, they interview with the coordinator of our program. She sits down with everybody individually has a very, very long conversation to figure out which of these six career pathways they might fit into.

Are they somebody that wants to go through and actually go into the pre-apprenticeship program? One of our career pathways even focuses them towards a four-year degree with the potential of even going further and getting a master's. One of the things that makes this interview process so, so very important is that when we go through the interview process, not everybody fits into the automotive industry, even though there are going to be next year around, well, there are 3000-plus jobs right now that are looking to be filled by one company and their tier-one industry partners. But that does not mean that the student that sits in front of my coordinator is wanting to go into the automotive industry. So what we have figured out very early on is that because part of our job is to focus on the student is if the student does not fit directly into automotive, we have two of our career pathways that can take them into other industries.

And they have at least 10 certifications that are industry recognized in other industries that also make them excessively employable. So the interview process is super, super important. Another thing that we do in our program is

when a student is going through each cohort every week and one of our industry partners comes in and talks to them about what they do.

So it gives that student the opportunity to learn about what's going on for that company, make a connection, and get the information about that company, asks questions about this company and, you know, they get to decide if they want to be a part of that group.

I'm trying to think. We did career inventories as well, so.

- Fantastic. I didn't mean to interrupt. I just wanted to acknowledge that that's such a great example of mapping students' interests, helping them get to know what the jobs look like, what the careers locally look like, and helping them map to these in-demand careers. Fantastic example. Thank you, Mindy.

For my second question, I want to ask about implementation of adult ed programs and how... We talked earlier with Debbie about partnerships and maintaining strong partnerships. It's important that we're working with our partner workforce agencies and employers to meet the needs of our adult learners. I'd like to ask Christy, what are some of the strategies that you've used to manage your partnerships with employers and workforce partners and keep them committed and engaged?

- I know we started our IET program in 2017 and our state asked us to move 20% of our students into IET classes. So that was going to be a big move because before we had only had 45 students referred out to training programs.

So the first thing we did is built partnerships. We brought in Vincennes, Ivy Tech, Hope Training Academy, Truck Driving Institute, CDI, or C1 trucking and created pathways in partnership with other collaborations that we could host. And we also worked to move from three students, and in pilot that first year to today, we have around 300 students moving into career pathways.

At Wayne, we offer nine different programs in the area of medical, construction, business, logistics, and education. And we have built out corporate partnerships. So in the area of health, we have 58 partners that are ready to host externship students.

We have about 45 students completing medical assisting classes. And one of our feature cornerstone partners is IU Health, Riley's Children's Hospital, host HSE classes right on-site with the purpose of growing their current workforce.

So there are employees that may be an environmental services, nutrition are stepping into our classes.

They're building academic skills and they have their mind targeted on the career training class that's going to elevate their career. So it's a really exciting partnership where we nurture that relationship through weekly phone calls, we're doing monthly outreach sessions and those students are completing and then are, you know, part of that, someone mentioned, students recruiting for you.

They are out there recruiting other IU Health employees as well. We have a similar partnership in the area of heating and cooling. We partner with an amazing industry partner called Duncan Supply. They work with local heating and cooling companies to supply their needs. So they're an amazing asset for us.

That leadership there, those Chris and Linda Hendrix have been involved in giving us warehouse discount prices. They make our classes extremely affordable. They work on recruiting talent as far as our teachers to make sure we have a cutting-edge teacher that really can equip our students with the needs of the industry.

They make sure our curriculum is calibrated, that we're actually hitting the targets of what their providers think is most essential. And then they also host an annual job fair. So we actually came up with a kind of an innovative approach. We do professional headshots of all of our students.

They turn in resumes. We do live link resumes with their contact information. And then we're able to send that out to all the different providers. So our hope one day is that employers are competing, you know, to have our students come to their companies. And then, we also have one partnership that's really dear to our hearts here at Wayne Township.

Kyle Fessler is our deputy human resources officer who hires all paraprofessionals for the districts. So we are actually filling an amazing need by recruiting in bilingual students that are really able to better serve our public.

So we've had great retention, really strong skill development, and a really great partnership within our own school corporation. So those are just a couple of things that we've been doing.

- Oh, that's fantastic, Christy, thank you so much.

- Yeah.

- Christina, how about at Career4U Academy? How are you maintaining your partnerships and working with Workforce?

- I was going to say the landscapers just got here I don't know if you can hear them, but, hopefully, you can hear me okay. We are doing similar things to what was just discussed I wanted to mention. So I think the biggest thing is when Career4U was developed, we worked with our partners to identify what were those high-need occupations, right?

And so as a result of that, we came up with five clusters, IT, construction, healthcare, business, transportation, and now we're just adding our newest is manufacturing. So when we think about students and we think about what their interests are, we know that we have to have programs that get them excited, right? That's the only way that we're going to be able to retain and maintain those individuals.

So we were able to build an academy for each one of those clusters. And within those clusters we work with our workforce team, our Houston-Galveston Area Council, they're our partner. So we go to them and say, "Hey, look, we're thinking about running this program. What does the demand look like?"

And then in tandem, we're able to launch that program. And they're having some programs are extending, like nobody's hiring for this program. Although it sounds really sexy on paper, you know, it's probably not going to get hired. So probably not a program we want to run. But what we have done is modified as a result of that and with COVID a lot of remote occupations. You know, and that IT academy has really grown as a result of that.

Another thing that we had to do was we have to look differently about partnerships. And so throughout COVID, we were able to partner with a group called Work Texas. And we put a home builders institute within Work Texas. And so as a result of our partnership, we do virtual job fairs, onsite job fairs, and we do the financial coaching, you know, because they need that as well when they get ready to get to work.

They have childcare on site. They also do professional development with regards to... We have a two-week boot camp that basically gets them out. As they come out of the program, two-week boot camp, we're getting you to work,

right? And so, as a result of that, we'd been able a lot of electrician placements, a lot of...

You know, Houston Community College and our area as a whole, you know, one thing we can always count on is a hurricane. So there's always a need for people to rebuild. And so our construction programs have done very, very well. I'll say, you know, on average, you know, we put over 6,000 students in our program every year. The Career4U Academy program started very small.

You know, initially, we had only about 53 individuals that had an interest, and as we built up those academies and we called it Career4U because we're like they don't want a job they want a career. And that's what we're trying to do is get these individuals careers. And so now we've eclipsed 500. And this year we have a target to expand over 600.

So, you know, I think as we built this out, we've also added the apprenticeship model. And the only way you can do that is with partners. And I'm excited that we have an insurance partner, that the insurance industry is just exploding right now. And they said, "We want to partner with you to build this, to get more insurance sales reps out, more insurance support services, because as our country changes, so did the needs of the insurance business."

And so as we look at partners, it's aligning what we're offering with those advisory boards and with the employer's need. And ultimately, you know, success lies in additional partnerships. And so we just launched one called the Career Connector and so Workforce Solutions which through the Workforce board, they've actually hired career navigators.

And we work in tandem with them, our navigators and their navigators, to not just get the student on the front end, but get them on the backend. To make sure, okay, now you're employed, how do you need to move forward, right? So we get on the job that we're actually maintaining that continuing progress with them. So it's, you know, we look forward to what this year has to offer.

So far it's been interesting, to say the least, and it's only two weeks in. But we look forward to Career4U continuing to grow and providing solid outcomes for students.

- Oh, fantastic. Thank you, Christina. And Christie, I love how you're really showing us these examples of how being responsive to what the local industry

is and needs is really what's helping strengthen those partnerships and leading to the partnership.

Fantastic. So one final question I'd like to do, you know, there's a lot that goes into helping a learner get through your program, transition on to further education, and get to employment. We heard a little bit about some of that from some of our earlier folks. But I wonder Ivana if you could talk to us a little bit about what types of services that your program provides to support learners to completion and help them transition on to their next steps?

- Sure. So our program is a five-week high school equivalency boot camp. Because of its intensity and because they're working now, we obviously don't do an IET program with that program because it's too short and too condensed. When we first started the program, you know, we'd get through students through them, we'd say, "Okay, now go over to curriculum or go over to con-ed and go ahead into the next steps."

And we quickly realized that our sending people was not working. So as you all know that our population needs the most hand-holding to figure out how to navigate processes. And the processes of applying to school, getting financial aid, and figuring all that out are extremely complicated for many of our students.

So we kind of re-evaluated and put in some supports along the way. So all of our students, no matter whether they're in our boot camp program or any of our programs have to do a Tradify assessment. They go in and they do a skills test during their orientation process so that our transition person can kind of start working with them at the very beginning and say, "Okay, so this is kind of where you're looking to go into. So let's talk about that. Here are the programs on campus that have that, here's how much money you might make."

All of those conversations are kind of started at the very beginning. Then for our boot camp, during that very first week, that transition advisor comes in and starts that conversation and says, "Okay, here are the things you need to start thinking about before you exit out."

Then, we get to about the second or third week, and we actually have our campus-wide connections come into the classroom. So based on what the students have said they're interested in, we might have the EMS coordinator come in and talk to the class. Or we take a student or two over to the

manufacturing department and show them and actually give them a tour and let them meet the program directors.

And then, fourth week, we have our admissions and our financial aid, and our scholarship people come over and they come into the class. So the students actually do their application to the college before they're finished with the high school equivalency. They do as much of the FAFSA as they can beforehand. They do the scholarship application ahead of time.

So all of those steps are kind of done with the hand-holding, with somebody who can answer the questions right there. And if the students run into problems, say with financial aid, then we've already started that process so they don't get held up after they finish. And they don't hit that roadblock after they finish and say, "Oh, I can't figure it out.

I can't go to college. It's too hard," before they exit our little program. So that's been probably the biggest thing that we do. And I'll say, even though we don't do IETs in that program because of having the other program coordinators come into the classroom, we've really established those connections.

And my most recent example is we had our EMT coordinator come into our classroom because we had two students in that group interested in EMS. And the Night Academy had started that same day. And he said, "I don't need your certificate to start as long as you've got the stores to start." And one of the girls said, "Okay, I'll start tonight."

And we got all the paperwork done, the scholarship filled out everything. And she started that Night Academy that same day. So she's already enrolled and will be halfway through the Night Academy, by the time she finishes her high school equivalency. So though it wasn't set up to happen that way, it just...because we do so much intensive conversation about what's the next step, what's the next step, what's the next step that sometimes it works out that the next step and start right now so.

But just really focusing on that handhold. And literal, like, we walk with you to the other side of campus now or we walk the other side of campus people over here to talk with you because we just find that that intermediate time or navigation is where our students really get lost.

- Fantastic. What a great example of smoothing out those transitions and making sure that they go smoothly. Thanks, Ivana. So thanks, Ivana. And I'd love to just throw this to Marianna and see if there's anything you'd like to share about how you help students make it to completion and transition.

- First of all, I can't agree more with Ivana that very practical assistance in every step of the way is crucial. And it's that all advising should be highly personalized because it's a huge undertaking for one person to accomplish if you have many students who applied for college.

And almost entire our graduating class is going somewhere. So we do team advising. And at this time, when people apply for college everybody on the staff has a specific responsibility. One teacher is responsible for essays, another one for communications with institutions where our students go.

Our advisor is a master of FAFSA because we had so many students who came back to us because they could not study. They made FAFSA mistakes when they did it on their own or with the help of colleges. We have people who are under 21 and they have to submit their parents' tax returns. Their parents have never had any tax returns and they don't know what to say.

It's not even the language issue. They just don't understand what they need to do. So our advisors really trained. And it's just one example of responsibility that everybody takes. Because if you have plenty of people who are applying for college scholarships or 20 people who are writing essays, there's no one teacher or one advisor who can do it, it should be all teamwork.

That's one thing that I wanted to say. Also, I wanted to say that it's very, very important to support our students when they start college. The first year is crucial. So how we came up with one strategy to help our students just stay in college when they go over there.

We focused on their language skills so that they could start college with English classes and they start at college writing.

But they continue classes in El Centro in AB math class because no one of them ever showed high school equivalency level on math. And there are many reasons for that. But they take math and they are in the AB math class, but this way they stay really connected with us.

We see them on a regular basis. And we can continue to provide all wraparound services and academic support and litigating the systems, help them litigate the systems.

Since we started to do it, we always helped on a piecemeal basis, but since that practice, our students seldom have less than A in college writing one and over 80% college retention rate that is very high for community colleges working adult students. So I think it's a very good practice I wanted to share, successful practice I wanted to share.

And also to wrap it up, I would like to say in light of the title of this webinar, Holistic Look at Educational Services, we shouldn't... I think the most important, one of the most important strategies is really to remember what the end goal is and not to really focus on separate services and separate classes and challenges and view all services in the program as pieces of a mosaic that takes students to the next steps.

And this holistic view is crucial for I think program success.

- Marianna, thank you so much. What a beautiful way to wrap up this panel and this whole presentation. Thank you all so much for being here and for sharing your best practices. I'm really in awe.

And I just want to thank you. I'll hand it back to you, Lori.

- Thank you to Christina, Christy, Ivana, Mindy, and Marianna for an enlightening conversation. And again, a huge thanks to Laurie for leading our panel discussions today. We are coming up on the top of the hour. So I want to thank everyone for being here today and say congratulations again to all nine of our programs. I encourage you to visit us at LINCS where you can learn more about the programs recognized today.

Our project webpages include a number of resources, including a gallery of innovative practices, a compendium of innovative practices, previous showcase webinars, and our Advancing Innovation podcast series. Find the Advancing Innovation in Adult Education project at lincs.ed.gov, then click on State Resources and then Federal Initiatives.

With that, today's webinar has concluded. Thank you all for learning with us.