The following were represented:

Arizona
Arkansas
California
Colorado
Montana
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Indian Council on Aging
Nevada
North Dakota
Oklahoma
South Dakota
West Virginia
USDOL/ETA/OWU
TwoTech, Inc.
BCT Partners

Question #1
Grantees have you begun to shift from paid sick leave back to community service assignment training?

If so, describe your strategies and/or challenges with doing so.

✓ [Grantee] We are all only on emergency paid sick leave now. Now that the guidance [from USDOL] is released, that is the direction we're heading. There is a vaccination project being considered for people in the community. To reiterate, all are now on paid sick leave for now. There are about 5 participants whose work assignments align with their Individual Employment Plans (IEPs). They will be working remotely from home scheduling appointments for community vaccinations.

✓ The number of folks on paid sick leave is driven by local data summarizing our participants' ability and willingness to work on-site at their host agencies. We require that those on paid sick leave be involved in some sort of remote training. We've found that many of our participants are using the platform "WeChat" and are slow to transition to Zoom. There are now a lot of other new training opportunities that have become available for remote training/learning.

Facilitator's Question: – Is your training based on job readiness training?

✓ Yes, there are different [job readiness activities] our participants work on separately and come together later to discuss (i.e., drafting a cover letter). We also try to regularly forward mental health information to them. We support participants connecting with family via Zoom which our Zoom training helps facilitate, as part of our efforts to help participants reach their self-sufficiency goals.

Facilitator's Comment: – Sort of like a SCSEP book club!?

✓ Yes, we can rebrand this!!!

Similarly we have a singing club that was formed remotely. Getting people trained to use Zoom avails people to so many other opportunities.

✓ [Grantee] We are trying to create remote Community Service Assignments (CSA) while working with host agencies on additional ones. However, it's difficult in California because of spikes in COVID-19. One way to combat this is to promote remote job readiness programs. Also, we have created 2 positions to support remote training. 1 or 2 positions in each of our project [offices] are being considered.

✓ [Grantee] We are an urban organization and have found that Wi-Fi is not always regularly available to our participants. Consequently, we have to rely on United States Postal Service (USPS) for mailing things like worksheets, etc. For small group meetings of 5-8 people, we usually distribute some materials and have people provide meaningful updates. Fortunately, we do have host agencies in certain states. This has been my life for the past 8 months.

✓ Conference calls for job readiness type training for those with Wi-Fi access. Augmented material for remote participants to come back to discuss the topic of the material; mental health information shared, also includes socialization abilities.

✓ Remote CSAs may not be available to provide a full 20 hours [per week], it may be 16 [(hours per week] so they [will] go to 4 hours paid sick leave and 16 [hours] CSA to offset the remainder.

✓ All participants are on emergency paid sick leave. Now that the guidance has been released, that is the direction we're heading.

✓ Did not use Paid sick leave [grantee] we went into virtual training immediately, computer training vs. printed material. Sub-grantees are having difficulties in maintaining this level of virtual training, we did not expect COVID-19 to last this long. [Grantee] wants to go to paid sick leave now. Would like to get permission to do so and has discussed with Federal Project Officer (FPO) and waiting for an answer.

   [Grantee] I have communicated with my FPO for the past 3-4 months. Not sure if I will be able to do paid sick leave going forward.

✓ Bandwidth – staffing challenges, being the primary providers; case manager's trainer innovators.

Facilitator's Question: Do you have host agencies working with you to develop innovative remote opportunities?

✓ No responses provided.

✓ Since March we have had folks on paid sick leave. Since July, however, we have had some folks get back to work [onsite] at host agencies. If folks submitted a doctor's note [we have allowed them to] continue with paid sick leave.

✓ [Grantee] We did get about 2 remote positions set up. The downside is that those 2 participants were not doing as much "work" remotely as they otherwise would have been performing in-person. Also, broadband is not as available in our rural areas so we don't have the ability to do as much training there. We ended up doing most of our communication via telephone. Moving forward, South Dakota has not technically "closed" so I'm looking at how to decrease our paid sick leave because we know it will not be there forever.

Facilitator's Comment: – You may want to consider the book club idea.

✓ One of the requirements is that participants have to be co-enrolled into WIOA programs. I suggest that other programs try to get partnered with them [Workforce Development Partners] if you can.

If not, describe the reason(s) why?

✓ No responses provide.

Question #2
Other than paid sick leave, have participants been engaged in other SCSEP activities? (i.e. skills training, job readiness)?

✓ The double hats (curriculum developers and CSA facilitators) our staff have had to wear is not sustainable. I know that when I have my check-ins with my subs, [sub-grantee] they are asking what is realistic for us to do in terms of remote CSAs. Most of our host [agencies] cannot do this. For those that can, we end up only meeting the needs of a small percentage of our participants. We are not curriculum developers and that has been a problem in terms of providing job readiness training. We don't always have access to hard copies of materials that we can send out via mail.

Facilitator's Comment: – Coming from your world, I know it's hard to do the work of so many host agencies. How can the duties be shared with the host agencies?

✓ [Grantee] We figured we could do this for a few months, but now it's almost a year!

✓ I don't have any great things to share like the rest of you. Our new [sub] grantee is promoting job club activities on-line.

Facilitator's Comment: – It's good to not rely on paid sick leave.

Question #3
Do you have participants who are not comfortable returning back to their CSA if available?

> ### *If yes, how are you addressing this?*
>
> ✓ [Grantee] We asked hosts [agencies] to develop a policy governing participants returning back to their host agencies.
>
> *Facilitator's Comment: – If your participants are not comfortable going back to their host agency for various COVID-19 related reasons, have you [as staff] considered going back there yourselves to check out the agency's opening status firsthand?*
>
> ✓ Many participants are now ready to go back, while others are not because of their age. Also, they are receiving mixed messages about not going out in public. We have one host agency that will not let anyone come back until they are vaccinated. It's a particularly large host [agency] in the metro Denver area. So we have constructively lost that particular [host] agency because of their stance on not letting anyone come back who isn't vaccinated.
>
> ✓ [Grantee] We developed a policy to discuss whether their fear of going back to [their] host agency was reasonable. We also allowed them to get a doctor's note and people have been okay with getting those. My project site in Boston has had similar issues regarding vaccination. Additionally, I've already had some participants who refuse to get a COVID-19 test. There are a lot of populations that we work with who don't want to get the vaccine. How do you go about imposing a rule that they would have to [be vaccinated]? This will be a big problem.
>
> ✓ [Grantee] We have restrictions on what we can make them do or not do. Or what we can ask or not ask without violating HIPPA laws? We can ask if they've had a vaccine, but we can't punish them if they don't want to tell us. We just can't place them in those agencies that require vaccine documentation. We also don't want to risk exposing participants to folks that have not been vaccinated by placing them somewhere that doesn't require vaccines. Colorado, at the moment, does not receive many vaccines overall. Consequently, this is a big problem.
>
> ✓ [Grantee] I fear there will be a big disparity between those folks that received vaccinations and those that don't. We are encountering this now especially between our rural and more urban participants.
>
> ✓ Wealthy areas tend to have access to vaccines, while poorer communities do not. It goes beyond just being rural or urban.

Facilitator's Comment: – We want to make sure we provide this information to US Department of Labor [USDOL] on your behalf. We want to share your best practices as well as the challenges you are facing. Thanks for sharing this. I hope you will continue to provide this valuable information.

✓ The 36 counties I have our very rural. In those rural areas, those not-for-profits have not survived so there is now nowhere [for participants] to go back to. We now use the Department of Human Services [DHS] offices as host agencies – this is a new process. We are now working with our child-support division to work with non-custodial parents.

✓ Had a host agency open but participants were not comfortable; vulnerable group not sure of the host agency and its safety. In Colorado, host agency tried to reopen COVID-19 [guidance] shut it down; guidance by the government to stay home. Host agency open with limits; host agency will not let participants come back until they have been vaccinated.

Question #4
Which types of host agencies are available and fully operational? (i.e. Community based organizations, AJCs, Senior Centers).

✓ Smaller counties [have] no place to go back too. Nonprofits have shut down completely. Now using DHS in counties for virtual CSAs. Working with Child support division for recruitment purposes.

Question #5
Are host agencies (HA) able to continue with the CSAs as they have done prior to COVID-19?

If yes – how are they ensuring that the facility and participants are adhering to the CDC's COVID-19 safety practices?

✓ No responses.

Are you and/or the HA providing safety supplies (such as PPE) and other pandemic-specific supportive services to participants?

✓ [Grantee] We were able to provide it at first, but our governor put an end to that.

Are any HA offering virtual CSAs?
If yes – what are they doing virtually?

✓ No responses.

Are any HA offering modified CSAs?

If yes – describe the modified CSA model (i.e. on-site and virtual, minimizing contact with others, flex hours)

✓ No responses.

How does the use of remote/virtual CSAs impact those participants who are not computer literate?

✓ Received a donation of computers and loaners and 1-on-1 sessions with participants just started in the 2ⁿᵈ Quarter. [Will use with participants with] no access to computers; can do a small purchase, the budget may cause constraints.

✓ Sacramento [sub-grantee] received some donations from the regional office for 50 laptops. They also worked with volunteers to provide 1-on-1 tutoring on basic computer skills. This just started in the 2ⁿᵈ Quarter. These opportunities however are few and far between. For the sites that have the ability to do social distancing 1-on-1, they will bring folks in to get them acclimated to Zoom so that we can build on that skill. Otherwise, we are reliant on donations.

Facilitators Comment – As SCSEP grantees, we don't have the ability to get 5 Chromebooks.

✓ [Grantee] We could do 5, but not 50. Which is what we have needed to do. We tend to do that for our direct service site, but not for our sub-grantees. Even if we could, we are talking about 5 per site, which wouldn't really meet the actual need.

✓ What do you do when laptops get damaged? How do you maintain the technical support?

Facilitator's Comment – Some of these questions are the same ones we grapple with too; questions around sustainability.

✓ Also, how long can you sustain providing Wi-Fi? It's not sustainable for us as an organization

Facilitator's Comment – Some programs in different states provide Wi-Fi access. I don't know how it works, but we can research that for you.

✓ Also, how do you determine who to give laptops and/or other materials to (i.e., laptops, Wi-Fi access)?

Question #6
What else is happening that you would like to share (challenges, successes, and promising practices)?

✓ Host agency requiring participants to be vaccinated.

✓ [Grantee] We have participants who refuse to go get a COVID-19 test.

✓ Is it fair for grantees to require testing and vaccination or can a grantee require it or have proof of vaccine or testing?

✓ Volunteering – [What are the] HIPPA requirements?