



**SCSEP Peer-to-Peer (P2P)
Session 2 – Skills Training
February 24, 2021
Workgroup Notes – Breakout Room #4**

Question #1

How are you delivering your virtual/remote skills training for your participants? (e.g. online learning, pen & paper)?

- ✓ [Grantee] Slow implementation of getting people back into on-site training. We have probably about 20% of our people back into in person training which is great. Even though the balance is on paid sick leave, they are being engaged through weekly homework assignments and follow-up virtually and by phone. Those without technology, access their lessons by phone during virtual meetings.

We leveraged the Cares Act to purchase Chromebooks. In some states, we have been able to use supportive service dollars to get some laptops. Also, we're trying to leverage the public libraries, Grow With Google and anybody else who is providing technology or access to technology. American Job Centers (AJC's) in our states have not opened and they are seeing people by appointment through Zoom either outside of their location or at a dedicated computer at the AJC.

- [Facilitator's question] Are you doing any type of training in addition to the Community Service Assignment (CSA) training? Are you doing anything that's related to specific skills trade?
- [Grantee answer] Yes some formally and some informally. The formal stuff is usually through community colleges and [Metrix Learning](#). The informal are things that we can't track, like the libraries that offer workshops and AARP who have different types of training. We also use [Grow With Google](#) that you can actually track. For those that can, we try to get them engaged into some type of training activity.
- ✓ We [Grantee] are using training with a lot of different providers of course virtually. With [Coursera](#), we're working with Dynamic Works Institute. They have a virtual training for our job seekers, where they can access it over the phone. It's called "Five Minute Manager" as well as other instructor led series. We are working with an organization called "Workforce 180" and those trainings have been led by staff, and are participant led and driven and [cover] everything about professional development. We also work with an organization and individual by the name of Larry Robin. He has done a lot of trainings on what employers want; how to show up virtually for Zoom; how to dress and how to not have certain backgrounds [virtually] and things like that. At the National Office, we do virtual trainings twice a month for our job seekers. On Fridays they can log in or call in to participate in trainings on various contents and items. National and states have been connecting on content for packets. Kudos to A4TD for leading the way with content for those packets, we've all been repurposing them. What we're going to do is work to get this in some type of print binder format. AARP also has one they have had for years that they give to their job seekers "7 Essential Skills" [7 Smart Strategies for Job Seekers]. That's some of the stuff that we're pushing out. About 70% well as of April 1, [2021] closer to 80% of our



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sites, will be back at their training assignments. However, we still have sites that unfortunately will be training remote and we will continue a lot of that [virtual training]. There will still be an option to log-in and get the professional development that's offered virtually because they like it and we're seeing a big [number] that don't want to go back [to their site]. A lot of people are really enjoying getting together and it minimizes the isolation for this population.

- ✓ [Grantee] About 40% are back at their Community Service Assignment (CSA). We were really making progress until the holidays and then we had to pretty much table folks coming back live to their host agency. We're making some progress with remote. Based on the profiles only about 8% of our participants are in remote [training] and about 10% if I include participant staff. In Massachusetts we've got a terrific Massachusetts Council of Aging 50+ Network group, the council has sponsored, along with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, our state SCSEP entity. It's fantastic because we're really digging deep with guest speakers and real practical [topics]; like "How to Deal With Online Applications". We are unique, because we are also a skills training provider. We've been steering participants that have the ability, the literacy and the connectivity to some of our training programs. The most popular is what we call our "Able Beginnings Program," which is about 180 hours and 6 weeks and it's intense. But when you graduate, you are ready to move on to more higher level training or be able to engage in a job search.

We have staff but our teams are not quite as formal as other grantees, in terms of the check-ins. We are basically doing check-ins by phone with participants to make sure they are progressing. Mostly when we get together for our monthly meetings, we use Zoom. Thank you very much Michi, not sure if you had anything to do with this but we recently got approved for our Additional Training and Supportive Services (ATSS). We are so pleased and this will allow us to really become a lot more formal and organized and have a bit more resources to roll out skills training in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

- [Facilitators comment] Great congratulations on your ATSS approval. I would love to say you're welcome, but I had nothing to do with that. That would be your Federal Project Officer (FPO).

Question #2

How have you assessed the participants' abilities and comfortability to engage effectively in a virtual learning environment? Specifically the following:

- a. **Use of computer equipment**
 - b. **Internet connectivity**
 - c. **Access to and familiarity with virtual meeting platforms (Google Meets, MS Teams, Zoom)**
- ✓ [Grantee] In our state [Iowa] we are a bit unique. We are still very rural and about 1/3 of our state does not have really strong connectivity for the type of internet



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- connection that is required for Zoom. So we really focused on phone calls and teleconferencing. We've had some great success and went that route. But as for virtual, our participants really have not had access. All of our AJC's and libraries have continued to be closed until pretty recently. We've really focused on that pen and paper and call check-in system instead. We've actually just started getting our participants back on site. We are really looking forward to having everybody back in person. We are working slowly on making those shifts like everyone else.
- ✓ [Grantee] So we do Zoom through TEAMS and there are only a limited number of individuals that can access that. We do this every Wednesday. Our coordinators have been doing it really since the pandemic started [in March]. We meet with the small group that has access to Zoom. Otherwise we have smaller groups that meet every Wednesday and have just been doing tons of different things. This is something that we will keep up after participants have returned [to their host sites]. The participants kind of support each other and they're getting to know each other. It's just been more intimate and that's a good thing.
 - [Facilitator's comment] Great so basically if I heard you correctly, you're saying that once things kind of get back to whatever that new norm is, you're going to continue with this kind of weekly or monthly [meeting]; either through Zoom or some other way of connecting in small groups
 - [Grantee answer] 100% we will probably keep it weekly and just keep it going because it's been actually a real benefit. The participants 100% enjoy it.
 - [Facilitator's comment] That's great to hear. That's a great model, thanks for sharing it.
 - ✓ [Grantee] I will forward you our IT Assessment "Able's Beginning Class" that we're steering several participants through. It's pretty well thought out and it's a fair amount of work; to make sure that people have the appropriate equipment and connectivity. It could probably keep somebody on a helpdesk pretty busy.
 - [Facilitator's comment] Wonderful if you can just send that to the SCSEPtechnicalassistance@dol.gov mailbox. I'll put that in the chat as well.

Question #3

For those who do not have the necessary equipment to train virtually, how have you mitigated these deficiencies?

- ✓ [Grantee] There are challenges with technology also challenges within our job seekers if they have government phones because they are restrictions for the minutes and then in the usage. Probably the biggest thing right now that we're working towards is making that obstacle a little better around technology and having more access. I know a lot of the grantees have been really lucky to get Chromebooks and technical resources. We are doing something similar to the one that we provided to you guys



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[DOL], were doing our own accessibility and technology surveys with our job seekers. To get a good idea what access they have; where is it; who provides it and what are their needs so that we can better accommodate the job seekers. That's one part and then also with us being Easter Seals, we also have job seekers who learn differently. Just because you have these platforms whether it's printing paper or virtual technology, you know the way that some comprehend and learn things is very different. There is also the various languages whether English is your native language or not, having those different formats. It's kind of been one of those things that you know to be honest, we cross that road when we get to it figure it out and make it happen. We have one of our staff members who actually reads to the job seekers because he becomes very frustrated with the paper and is kind of freaking out. He was training where he was doing more with his hands. It is more of a challenge for him, so she reads to him and that's the way that she's been engaging with him and asking questions. He [the participant] is working and he's very happy. This situation went from being very nervous to feeling a little more at ease. That's just an example of one way where we take this route; if it isn't working so we drive this way if it's not working.

We have on our list, technology and breaking down those barriers because that's going to help them [participants] to be employed. The more that we can say that our folks are showing up on TEAMS and showing up on Zoom; it shows they have the technology to get the work done and to show up for work. That's going to help stop those myths that employers often have about our job seekers.

- ✓ [Grantee] I just want to touch on that technology issue. Some of the virtual training we're doing is through Alison.com. They offer eight hands on touch typing training modules. It's step by step; word prompted and it repeats back what you should be typing. For participants that have never touched a computer before, I think a lot of us have that situation, they're doing great they love it. It's at their own pace and it's very calm. They're doing great with it but the other problem is getting technology into their hands; the computers themselves. There is a place in Maryland and other states, that's a nonprofit organization that accepts computers from government agencies or schools. They refurbish them and then based on eligibility requirements, they can purchase the computer. They can get a desktop a keyboard all the cables for relatively an inexpensive price. The only problem is that they are only located in Rockville Maryland. I think you need to get there but sometimes you know that has a way of working itself out with participants and their families. This way they're getting computers into their hands and they can get the training, the very basic touch typing skills and training. That all shows up on a resume and at the job site where they are placed. They are willing to learn and willing to go the extra mile to do this. I've actually become a referral sponsor for Phoenix Computers because they do need a referral from where that person is based for their training. They take the referral to Phoenix Computers, and then they're able to pick up a computer.

- [Facilitator's question] Is that at a cost or at a low cost?



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- [Grantee's answer] For probably less than \$50 they get everything they need to go home, and as long as they have internet access, set it up and start to train.
- [Facilitator's question] What about for participants that don't have the money, do you provide supportive services to purchase the computer?
- [Grantee's answer] Not at this time, but we are looking into it.

- ✓ [Grantee] I just want to add that some folks with very low literacy, it has been a real challenge. It doesn't matter if we send them print material or if we do it through technology. The participation has been interesting. It was said, people learn different ways and different means, so we've been working a lot where we can with literacy volunteers whose resources have diminished considerably through COVID-19. It's a slow process with those individuals

Question #4

What types of training are you providing to your participants? (e.g., soft skills, job readiness, or other skills training related to the participant's goals and objectives)

- ✓ We [Grantee] are using Alison.com, GCF Learning.com , we have skills up in Maryland and recently added Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE). Many of the job centers [AJC's] are offering virtual training classes so those participants at home, who have access to a computer and internet, can join in. They also have virtual job fairs going on, so a lot of it's done virtually. Some of the participants that are at their host agencies, at larger host agencies, like hospitals, can utilize their computer lab to do some training. We've done training that way with them at their site and the host agencies are very cooperative and very helpful. So it all ties in; there's a lot of training going on virtually.
 - [Facilitator's question] Are these trainings focused more on job readiness or is it soft skills? For lack of a better word or term, is it busy work training or is it a specific type of training?
 - [Grantee's answer] Well we start out with specific training based on their assessment and where they're placed and what type of position they are placed at now. Participants that that are training at home online, who the host agencies haven't opened yet or they haven't gone back yet because of COVID-19 situations, we try to make it job specific to what their Individual Employment Plan (IEP) showed their interest are. At some point you do reach a point where you can't be that specific because it's been so long. Unfortunately we move them on to things like Word and Excel training which actually boosts their confidence and opens up to other areas that they may not even know they were interested in. We do start basic, but then we move on as they see fit. They can move on to office support or admin, there's so many opportunities within these companies.



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- [Facilitator’s question] What about those participants that don’t have access to these trainings virtually, they don’t have the equipment or the skills or connectivity. What do you do?
- [Grantee’s answer] Something very similar for them, but in a way that everybody else has talked about; pen and paper teleconferencing. The employment specialist all have been training by phone on anything that well is mandatory training. They’re doing job searches on the MWE and there is phone training going on also.

- ✓ [Grantee] With the individuals that don’t have computer equipment or internet access, one of the other things we do (because this is going to continue for a while) we’re going to start and taking it way back to [Tecknimedia](#). Getting participants the Chromebooks, where the software is downloaded onto the computer. Doing the 6-week course on computer literacy and then moving the Chromebook on to another participant. It helps for those individuals that cannot use the mouse, who need really basic skills. We have not started this yet, but that is coming in the next few weeks along with [Alison.com](#).

- ✓ [Grantee]The MOU groups have been helpful so the WIOA MOU groups again in Massachusetts are making a concerted attempt to bring workforce partners together. The idea and information being exchanged is really interesting. On a call with the Worcester area (Central Massachusetts) they talked about something called [Aunt Bertha](#). It is a platform that you can put up a brochure and it translates it into 104 different languages. I have to see it to believe it, but it’s just some of the activities entrepreneurial training has raised. There may be a participant who might not be great on a keyboard, but might have some good entrepreneurial ideas. It’s amazing the variety of opportunities out there, but if you’re not connected it becomes a challenge and more of a one-on-one process over the phone.

Question #5

How can the AJCs be more involved in helping you and your participants with training? (e.g., virtual, in-person)?

- ✓ [Grantee] Not all AJC’s are created equally. It all depends on the AJC. In Connecticut, I attend all the partner meetings across the state. I don’t know if it’s through my whining or whatever, but I did get one of the regions to actually do a workshop specifically for the SCSEP population. So we are now working on a pilot for that. It just depends on the receptiveness and some of the areas where the AJC’s aren’t having a huge response to their workshop offerings. My response is “I’ve got a captive audience, let me know and we can get our folks into your program.” This is something that wasn’t quite as attractive before. They look at seniors looking for part-time work as not their target population to make their performance outcomes. So I think with COVID-19, you have to look for that silver lining. It has brought us to a commonality where we’re all struggling to serve people who have similar challenges of technology and transportation.



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I think the Department of Labor (DOL) could perhaps do a regression analysis, I'm going back to the old Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) days, of who did you serve and establish performance measures based on that.

- ✓ [Grantee] In Iowa, AJC's are still closed due to the unemployment high volume. The unemployment teams are processing the average amount of claims they would normally process in a year each month. I would like to see them open back up to appointments even if those are just a lower volume. That is something that we look forward to.
- ✓ [Grantee] I support what Iowa said about the AJC's opening back up on a small by appointment basis would be great. It's just hard virtually. There may be some hesitancy for participants to do a walk in by appointment. Some career centers are open and we are recruiting people right into a classroom or right into a job search workshop. Several of our career centers are open and doing email blast to members and pointing them our way. In the past, they have done SCSEP information sessions for us, they've been pretty amenable. We got a lot more traction when we changed our SCSEP Information workshops to "How to Use Age to Your Advantage." The number of calls doubled and so did the interest. We even got a few young people trying to figure out how to use it.

Question #6

How can you integrate your virtual/remote training delivery strategy into a sustainable program model?

- ✓ [Grantee] Using the same example like educators; a combined blended model. There definitely is a strong need for continued technology and training in this capacity. The pandemic has definitely taught us that we can do things a lot smarter in the work that we do. So a model that is blended like the example I used earlier where a job seeker is still going to their CSA but still participating in some of the things that are learned virtually. We are holding the CSA's more accountable in providing these types of platforms. We are spending a lot of time talking to them about what types of training are you willing to train the job seeker at a different capacity? Traditionally the things that they have done; are you willing to think outside the box at some of your training offerings. There's a need in employment for entrepreneurial self-employment. Some call it the "gig economy." These are often areas that we look at as an alternate option for our job seekers to get employed. But where is the connection from our staff to the job seeker to employment and where can we involve everyone where it is more of an interdisciplinary model. Is there a way that we can get the job seeker to their IEP goals? We really want to go all in and hold everyone accountable for making things better in enhancing what we do. We want to be better and not do things the way that we've been doing it. It's been proven that it can be successful and we want to get to that place.



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Question #7

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

- ✓ [Grantee] We're getting jobs for participants. It's difficult but we're getting jobs. As I mentioned before, on a call with some of our sites; this is a job training program and we need to talk about opportunities as they come about. We also shared the metrics from one of our higher performing locations and asked how they can support us in that direction whether it's training and skills development or additional opportunities that come about.

It could be better but we're getting jobs and we're claiming that victory. At least we've had home health care employment. We've had a lot of success in host agencies of course and we've had a couple of national employers that have reached out regarding On the Job Experience (OJE) opportunities again. So if you're hearing out there that there are no jobs, there are jobs; it's just about us getting our people ready. Also addressing the anxiety about going back out and having those conversations. Having an aggressive approach but have some real conversations about this is a job training program and where we are headed.

- [Facilitator's question] What types of jobs are participants getting in this environment?
- [Grantee's answer] We had a recent placement in Oregon as of Friday with Addus health care. A lot of people don't want to work in healthcare right but they got a job in healthcare. In Alabama they have been open since June and there are jobs in the customer service sector and host agencies are hiring.