Question #1
Have you experienced any challenges spending grant funds in the following categories?

A. Administrative Cost
B. Participant Wages Fringe Benefits (PWFB)
C. Other Programmatic Costs (OPC)

✓ [Grantee] due to the way that we usually run our programming, we've had a major halt. Travel to sites has decreased; it's not happening right now. What we have traditionally done on site for TA [Technical Assistance] and things like that, has shifted as well. It goes back to our Sub-grantees and whether they are bringing in recruitment for job seekers. We are allocating more resources for direct support, marketing and outreach, to bring more people in.

We have been spending more time with training job seekers with manuals and workbooks, to have these in their hands, versus virtually doing trainings and support on a weekly basis. Talking to our sites to see where they are and where they project themselves being at the end of the program year; so there aren't any surprises. We're in a "big pickle' with this so we would love to have any support and advice DOL [Department of Labor].

Some sites due to the pandemic, it's some of the cause, but some that we acquired due to the transition, are severely under-enrolled. Doing a lot of targeted recruitment and marketing for those areas and just more outreach.

> *[Facilitator's question]* So are you shifting your dollars that you previously may have used for travel to provide additional resources?
> *[Grantee's answer]* Yes all of that as it relates to marketing and outreach.

✓ [Grantee] one of the things that we've done with the cost associated to travel, that we have not been able to use, we moved those funds to provide more training. We had a temp position for an administrative assistant to help participants with training and getting on the computer. That's where we are dedicating whatever is not expendable this year; to provide addition training to participants.

> *[Facilitator's question]* When you say you had a temp position to assist participants in training, what did the person do?
> *[Grantee's answer]* It's a lot of administrative work, since you don't see them face-to-face. So it's a lot of phone calls saying "hey there's a training going on this day or that day and please join." Things like that.

✓ [Grantee] one of the biggest challenges we've had this year as a National Grantee is related to the competition and the budgets being split into multiple grant periods. We operate through Sub-grantees and incremental budgets and contracts we have. We then have to filter these funds down to our Sub-grantees and that's made it challenging to manage all the portions of the budget.

Our biggest challenge in terms of spending is with just managing the PWFB budget this year because it's so different than any previous year we've had. We've made the decision to really try to get as many participants into Community Service Assignments (CSAs) as

possible. So we were on track to do this and then in October, the pandemic situation changed and it just didn't allow us to do it, it just wasn't safe. In November and December, we had almost all of our participants on paid sick leave.

As of now, about 60% [Participants] are back in assignments or in training. We are moving quickly to get everyone off of paid sick leave in either back in assignments or training. All of this has had a dramatic impact on spending. So you know recruitment and enrollment of new participants, people exiting and just trying to manage differences in wages from paid sick leave and working. This at home training is a brand new experience when trying to monitor PWFB budgets. This has been the most time that we've spent trying to monitor and manage our PWFB.

Question #2
Have you reviewed the SCSEP COVID FAQ?
https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/coronavirus#SCSEP

If so, what strategies were developed to address the loss of host agency supervisory hours for In-Kind/Match?

✓ [Grantee]We developed a new form "Alternate In-Kind Capture," and trained staff on how to use it. The form lists out other things that traditionally we didn't capture previously because we were so far ahead in exceeding 10% in supervisory hours.   Things like donated space, donated utilities, and the value of supervisor time spent completing IEP reviews, orientation of a host agency, if a computer is donated, and a training partner gives SCSEP a lower rate for tuition, all this is captured on the form. We still don't think they will make the 10% [match], but we will get closer. This is a form that staff have to complete and submit monthly for their region. I'm very much listening to see if other Grantees have suggestions of how to do this.

✓ One thing that we've been doing, especially with our Sub-grantees, is seeing what types of in-kind they can provide during this time period. Given that many of our participants are still not at a Host Agency (HA), we know we can't rely on HA Supervisor in-kind hours. So in addition to this, we've been looking at bringing in outside trainers to donate time for different things, like virtual job clubs and any kind of Zoom or virtual check-ins with participants. This has helped a little bit, it's these little incremental things that are slowly kind of ticking away between the two grants [Regular and Set-Aside].

This also may have something to do with our different service areas. With our Set-Aside Grant, we've actually been pretty good and on track with our in-kind. It's the General Grant that we've been struggling with; trying to be as creative as possible in documenting in-kind wherever we can. Our Set-Aside grants in NY and Boston, almost 100% of our participants our back at training and have been and that has gone a really long way in our ability to meet in-kind. In previous years, we struggled with getting HAs to wrap their heads around the concept of in- kind documentation.   Prior to COVID-19, we were really trying hard to get that message out to everybody. So once COVID-19 hit, everyone went away then they came

back and it was fairly easy to engage them. The rates are not as bad in Seattle we're starting to get people back in [CSAs]. In Illinois we are trying to get people back in training it's a slow progress.

In CA, we are not able to return our participants back to their HA because of the situation with COVID-19. On our Set-Aside Grant, we are able to get some contributions from the Set-Aside HA when we offer remote training to participants. These HAs, are able to provide interpretation services as a contribution to our in-kind. We are counting space that the Sub-grantees use and also received laptops so everything so far, we are reporting and capturing.

> *[Facilitator's note] We definitely heard some good ideas in terms of space, equipment, trainings and time. Do you have some strategies, that perhaps you were doing differently a year ago; are you seeing host agencies that are doing things virtually or remotely at all that could still capture supervisor's time for in-kind?*

✓ [Grantee] We are still capturing supervisor time for those folks that are able to do remote internships [CSAs]. It has actually grown in popularity over the last quarter and I hope it continues to grow, I think it's a fabulous practice' since so much work is remote now, I think that internships should be too. We are still capturing but it's so much lower, we'll just have to see how it goes.

A lot of Customer Service positions for example: "Meals on Wheels" delivers the only human contact to some participants, they are very isolated. When the pandemic hit, the meals were dropped at the door so now they had no contact at all. We developed SCSEP assignments that a participant can do at home. They are given a spread sheet of all the Meals On Wheels clients and a cell phone. They call each participate and chat for 15 minutes and ask questions like: Are you getting enough to eat? How are you doing? Do you need any wrap around services? This training helps the participant with computer skills, database management and customer service skills. They are filling a very specific pandemic relevant need and getting remote training practice. Some innovative things like that but also some office assignments that could have always been remote. We are looking at how to continue this. I hope this is a practice that we can carry forward. The remote HA Assignments; when it's appropriate, when it's well supervised and when they're equipped to do it; both in terms of technology and work readiness.

✓ [Grantee] I love the idea of working with Meals on Wheels, they [participants] are so isolated. One of the challenges also is that HAs are in survival mode and don't have the means or opportunity to figure out how to use remote work. We diverted some money to create a training program for HA to learn about remote work and how you can implement this on a small nonprofit basis, since this is the majority of our host agencies are. We want to help them think more through the whole idea of remote work and the possibilities of our participants working for their sites remotely. We are in the planning and development process, but once that goes through, we hope before the end of the year to cultivate more remote training opportunities for both our HAs and trainees.

> *[Facilitator's note] Wonderful idea, please share once you implement it. Any type of training we can provide host agencies is always very beneficial.*

Question #3
Did you experience any challenges and/or successes implementing your OSR(s)?

- ✓ [Grantee] Our challenge has been getting our OSR's approved in the past, so we've stopped asking.

- ✓ [Grantee] Same, would love consistent guidance for Additional Training and Supportive Services (ATSS).

- ✓ [Grantee] We inquired doing it in January and were given the impression it would be a huge burden and difficult to get approved then we stopped. In talking to other Grantees, it sounds like similar request did get approved. So you know whatever guidance we can get that would be great. We want to be able to provide more training outside the assignment and we think we can do that but finding some flexibility and consistency from ATSS would be really helpful.

- ✓ [Grantee] It would be nice to know ahead of time if it's difficult to get approved, we may not spend the time putting that proposal together and focus on something else. So to get some additional guidance to plan for the next program year would be great.

  > *[Facilitator's comment] I understand and will take this back to DOL to see if there is additional guidance that can be provided.*

Question #4
Have you been paying infrastructure-funding cost during the shutdown?

If so, have you been able to access the resources at the AJC's?
What type of resources have been available at the AJC's?

- ✓ [Grantee] We have continued to pay it, we continue to be billed so we pay it. The staff is doing the best they can, they still provide remote service when they can. The main thing about AJCs is partly being able to use those resource centers, being able to use the computers, get counseling from career staff. It has been a great reduction in level of benefit that we receive and not cost that we've been billed. More are closed than opened. Connecticut may open in the future, but still more are closed than open.

- ✓ [Grantee] We are in 130ish workforce areas so it's hard to say an across the board statement on that stuff. We haven't collected information from our Sub-grantees on infrastructure cost. We do question, how you are charging us rent for offices that have been closed for the entire program year and will be closed for the foreseeable future. We're told that's the required infrastructure payment. We just decided we couldn't invest that time in fighting it.

- ✓ [Grantee] We look at it as: we are saying I'm not in my office they still have to pay overhead costs. We are continuing to pay because we understand the realty of rent. Previously before Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements were in place, SCSEP wasn't included, just on the fringes SCSEP was not on their radar. Now we are being included.

[Grantee] One benefit is that we are seeing more coordinated efforts with inclusiveness and a seat at the table for our participants. Access to training and workshops, virtual services information is now being sent to SCSEP. We're see a lot more presence with the workforce partners. Some sites are starting to negotiate infrastructure cost for next year.

✓ [Grantee] In one region that the virtual connection has brought us together in some regards. They are developing a small pilot to present to their board, to fund a curriculum for SCSEP participants. If it's successful, hopefully it can be used as a model and expanded throughout the state.

Question #5
Additional challenges?

✓ [Grantee] We can't set up training class and online training class, if agency is doing everything virtually, to people who do not have access for virtual classes. This is still a challenge.

✓ [Grantee] We need a case management system that helps us to be compliant with the program, store data in real time and also can upload Individual Employment Plans (IEPs). GPMS was put on a shelf but would have really been helpful during COVID-19.

> **[Facilitator's comment]** *GPMS is still in the development stages and has not been shelved.*

✓ A case management system would be so much easier directly inputting into SPARQ and capture information in real time. We are asking DOL to continue to push forward with GPMS where we will have the ability to upload information into a case management tool to be compliant with this grant. We need a tool that can capture IEPs, to check in with our participants to make sure everything is going okay. Many of our participants are depressed and our weekly check-in calls are phenomenal and much needed. Our participants are still going strong, willing to dialogue and feedback and communication has strengthened. A tool that will help capture this data and capture it real time is really needed.

Also, since we are in the world of virtual reality, can we stop writing grants every year? Let's do grants every two to three years. With all the current issues and the requirements of SCSEP; we ask to do it a on a bi-yearly basis, and just update the grant annually. This is a small program with a lot of huge components to streamline that is really making it even more difficult to do the program effectively so all of our participants are serviced well. We ask that DOL find a way to streamline this; we have the quarterly report, the minority report, it's a lot that makes it difficult for those of us who are trying to implement this program differently so that our participants are serviced well.

The challenges we face are not providing services to those that are computer efficient but how do we find the resources with the lack of administrative funding in this grant to do what we need to do, which is to provide training services adequately to participants that are most in need. COVID-19 and opioid addiction and abuse is through the roof. Looking to see how this program will grow post COVID-19. This is going to be about 10 years to see what this has done to our city and not in a great way.

✓ [Grantee] Agreed. There are places the department can help streamline administrative requirements, so that we can help provide better services to participants. The competition and multiple grant years and things like that have been a huge challenge this year. Now we are going to get bogged down with data validation. One example is about not getting access to Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Records for SCSEP. Other WIOA programs get 98% employment and follow-up measures from UI information. SCSEP has to do 100 percent case management and follow-up directly from participants and employers. It's a huge burden for us; training, monitoring correcting data, etc. It would be a huge burden lifted from us that we could spend providing services to participants. We also have more stringent data validation requirements. (i.e. WIOA data validations requires only getting 2 pay stubs to verify employment, SCSEP has to get records, based on each quarter to verify employment). Even without making changes on the wage records; lessen some of the burdens and have SCSEP requirements be more in line with other WIOA programs.

Question #6
Successes/promising practices?

✓ [Grantee] Use of libraries AJC's are closed but some libraries are open. They do have work related services that people are not aware of. They can take trainings and resume assistance and these services are accessible to folks that do not have internet. The libraries are providing these services and other types of arrangements. We will encourage our participants to take advantage of libraries and maybe others had not thought about this.