Audio recording for this meeting has begun.

Good afternoon, everyone. And good morning to all of you out west. Welcome to the explore VR webinar, introduction to customized training in a job-driven economy. My name is Katie Allen and I'm a knowledge translation associate at the community for inclusion. I'm going to mention a few logistical points before we begin our webinar today. First, we ask that anyone calling in today to please mute your phone to avoid broadcasting and recording any background noise in your environment through the webinar. If you cannot find the mute button on your phone, pressing star-6 will mute the phone. Secondly, there will be a question and comment box located in the upper right corner of your screen. We encourage you to type all questions and comments in this box during the presentation and we have reserved time at the end of the presentation to answer and address any and all of your questions and comments. Third, there will be a link to an evaluation that will appear on your screen at the end of the question and answer period today. Please follow this link to complete the webinar evaluation. If you are a certified rehabilitation counselor requesting CRC credits for this webinar, you must complete the evaluation to receive credit. This webinar is worth 1 CRC credit. Finally, this webinar is being recorded and will be archived on www.exploreVR.org after this live webcast. When you visit Explore VR, you can find information about all archived webinars and upcoming webinars. If you have any questions, please type your questions in the question and comment box and please remember to mute your phones if you're calling in today to this webinar. So without further ado, your host Neil McNeil will introduce the presenters and the agenda for today's webinar. Neil?

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our customized training webinar. We have some very good presenters today and I would like to introduce them to you. But first of all, let me talk about the objectives of our webinar. The first objective is we're going to define the concept of customized training as it applies to the national workforce job-driven initiatives. Then we are going to define and provide information about past, present, customized training models funded by the government through grants to businesses, community colleges and agencies. We're also going to provide you with information about and examples of customized training models currently being used in VR agencies across the country. And then lastly, we're going to give you a chance to have some questions and answers about customized training for the VR audience. Our presenters today are Cecilia Gandolfo, coproject director for the job-driven technical assistance center at the institute for community inclusion. Alexandra Waugh of jobs for the future. And Mark Henry, who works for -- he is the director of employment services for the bureau of rehabilitation services in Connecticut. Right now, I would like to have Cecilia Gandolfo tell us a little bit more about the JD VR tech as we call it.

Hi, everybody. As Neil said, thanks so much to all of you for being with us today. I do want to reiterate just a reminder to everybody on the call, please, please, please mute your line as soon as you dial in so that only presenters are being heard. We are recording this session. We'll archive it, but it would be really helpful if we could have it as clean as possible, a recording. My job today, and I'll get rid of my picture on the screen. My job today is to set the stage for what the center is about. This is our first content-specific webinar that we're running. We did have a webinar focusing on the request for participation process for the J DVR tech's intensive technical assistance. But this is the first one that's really focusing on some of our four content areas. So let me tell you about the JD VR tech, what our center goals are, and what our four topical areas are just really quickly. And it's -- our goal is to improve the skills of state VR agency staff, other rehab professionals, and providers of VR services who are trained to provide job-driven VR services and supports to people with disabilities, employers and customized training providers. And the four core areas of our centers focus are business engagement, employer support, labor market information, or LMI, and then customized training providers. I will note that everything we communicate about our project, about our tool kits that we'll be developing, et cetera, will be done through our explore VR web portal and the address there is www.exploreVR.org. So keep an eye on that site for upcoming webinars for information and resource materials. The JD-VRTAC is funded by the rehab services administration and we list the grant number on this Power Point slide. The job-driven centers is a collaboration of many partners. First, the institute for community inclusion, or the ICI, which is part of UMass Boston. But we're partnering with several really critical players around the country. First is jobs for the future, or JFF. They are a partner and you'll hear later from Alexandra, Lexi Waugh, part of the JFF staff. They are a partner that's done a lot of work in the LMI arena, as well as customized training arena. They are Boston-based and DC-based. Great group of folks, and we're thrilled to partner with them on this project. In addition to them, we have the university of Arkansas currents, University of Washington. We have the US BLN, the United States business leadership network. We have the association of university centers on disabilities, AUCD. And we have Bobby Silverstein as part of a law firm in the DC area. We're also collaborating with the council of state administrators of VR, CSAVR, and the national council of state administrators -- I'm sorry, state agencies for the blind, or NCSAB. I wanted to set the stage with a little bit of what we know from some of the data that sort of drives the mission in charge of our center. First, as we look at labor force participation rates and we're looking at ages 16-64, 75.7% of the general population versus 31.1% for people with disabilities are participating in the labor force. And that's from 2015 data. Unemployment rates in the general population, we hear this in the news a lot now, 5.7 unemployment, percent unemployment rate, versus 12.2 for people with disabilities. People with disabilities are consistently in low-paying occupations and overrepresented in slower-growing and declining occupations. And they have poor and lower projected employment growth rates. People with disabilities also are underrepresented in 16 of the 20 fastest-growing occupations. We also know that students with disabilities who participate in internships increase their motivation to work toward careers. Their knowledge of career options, job skills and accommodation strategies, and their ability to work with supervisors and coworkers. And about apprenticeships, we know this is a great pathway to employment. 87% of apprentices are employed after completing their programs and an average starting wage for apprentices who graduate -- graduates of apprenticeship programs is over $50,000 annually. A lot of other countries have looked at the value of apprenticeships and so from some of their studies, they found that employers reap an average return of $1.47 in increased productivity and performance for each dollar spent on apprenticeships. Few US workers and employers have access to the apprenticeship option to prepare for better careers and meet the needs of skilled workforce. That came from the Biden report. President Obama sent a memorandum about job training to the secretaries of labor, commerce and education. And this was some of the driving force behind our centers being initiated. And I pulled this directly out of what he had to say in that memorandum. Giving workers the opportunity to acquire skills that they need to pursue in-demand jobs and careers is critical to growing our economy, ensuring that everyone who works hard is rewarded, and building a strong middle class. Despite recent employment growth, far too many hard-working individuals still have not been able to find a job or increase their earnings, and many businesses report difficulty in hiring workers at the right skills for the jobs that they want to fill. And our charge is to be sure that folks with disabilities are included in that workforce in a meaningful way. So we exist to help VR and other rehab providers do a better job getting our folks represented. Today's webinar, I'm going to hand things over to Alexandra Waugh. And she's going to start introducing a little bit more on this topic. Our hope is that this webinar will be the first among many to help kick off a conversation about customized training and the impact it can have on helping prepare folks with disabilities for the workforce. Go ahead, Lexi.

Great. Thanks so much, Ce. My name is Alexandra Waugh. For those of you who know me, most people call me Lexi. If you hear both, I will respond to anything pretty much. So I just want to say thank you, first and foremost, for having me on. I'm a senior program manager at jobs for the future in Boston. And we are thrilled to be a partner on the J DVR TAC project. Before I dive into customized training and common models, I did just want to provide some information on JFF, who we are, the work that we do, and use that as an introduction to the customized training discussion. So JFF is a national nonprofit that works to ensure educational and economic opportunity for all. So we work across the entire education and workforce development pipeline to develop career pathways, educational resources, public policies that are really designed to increase college readiness and career success. So we're going all the way from K-12 through post-secondary, through workforce training and beyond. With the goal of really building a more highly-skilled workforce. So much of our work focuses on bridging education and work to increase mobility and strengthen our economy. JFF, this slide is a map of where we work, and we work in over 130 different communities across 40 different states in this country. And if you're interested in learning more about some of the projects and where we might be doing work, you know, if we're in your state, you can go to JFF.org and check out the map, as well as the project descriptions for the different types of work that we're doing. This next slide is a little bit, again, about our mission, which really is around ensuring that all young people and workers have the skills and credentials that they need to succeed in today's economy. So all of the work that we do is really centered around this mission. So this certainly fits, again, with the goals of the JD-VRTAC work, and again, we're thrilled to be a partner. So I did want to provide just a little bit more on our goals. Again, this will kind of be the segue to customized training. So we have three primary goals that we focus on to achieve our mission. And the first one is preparing for college and career. So this is our work that focuses primarily on the K-12 system and opportunity use that might not currently be in the K-12 system. This next goal is around earning post secondary credentials. And this work is centered on strategies to ensure that all underprepared students are gaining the skills that they need to earn post secondary credentials to have real value in their local or regional labor market. And then the last goal, this is where I personally do my work at JFF, it's around advancing careers and economic growth. And so this goal is really, again, all about getting lower-skilled workers to obtain education and training required to move into families sustaining careers that have a very clear path for advancement. So this is where for JFF a lot of our work around customized training comes into play, as well as with the earning post secondary credentials. So this is where I really kind of want to start digging into customized training. And again, we'll open it up for questions at the end. If folks have any questions about who JFF is, what we do, we would be happy to answer those. But for now, we're going to dig go customized training. And what we wanted to do first is start with a definition so we are all on the same page. So for us, for the JD-VRTAC project, customized training programs are designed to meet the specific skill needs of an employer or a group of employers. And for the purposes of this project, we're actually keeping the definition of customized training pretty broad so we can include a wide variety of different types of training, because many of them are just so valuable. They are all a little bit different. So in thinking about that, again, we're going to be broad throughout. But customized training programs are partnerships. They are partnerships between employers and local training providers. This could be a community college, a community-based organization, or any other type of organization. And ideally, these partnerships also include additional organizations like VR agencies, like American job center, and again, other nonprofits or community-based organizations. And these partners are critical because they are often the ones that are performing the critical tasks around managing and convening a partnership, doing recruiting, doing assessment intake, providing languages to support services in the community. So again, we really just want to emphasize that when we talk about customized training, it's not just the training. It's the full partnership that we're focusing on. We also wanted to provide just a little bit of history around where customized training got its start and a little bit about what it looks like today. So before we dig into those, to the examples I referenced, we just wanted to give a little bit of history. So customized training began in the southeast primarily, in the '60s as an economic development strategy designed to attract Northern manufacturing companies to the area, so this is really around North and South Carolina. And the thinking was that customized training would benefit businesses with low-cost training for their workforce. It would benefit the state and local economy with new jobs, and the individuals gaining the actual skills for those jobs. So again, this is really around North and South Carolina. They designed short-term training programs delivered by their community colleges. This was at the same time that community colleges are really getting, having a boom and getting their start. And the key here is that a lot of this was funded by state funding. So over time, that has changed. And it looks a little bit different now. Again, we're keeping the definition broad, so there's a lot of variety. But a lot of states across the country did adopt similar models. So by the late '80s, there's a national survey that found that 93% of community colleges offered some kind of customized training. And then by 2006, 47 states offered some kind of state-funded customized training. So again, this is training that's happening everywhere. And one last point, we just want to emphasize some of these examples are state-funded customized training. Customized training can also be funded by federal funding, by private funding, by a mix of two or three of those. So again, we're really trying to keep it broad here. So they can access multiple kinds of funding and a lot of that depends on what the model is. So I would like to spend the bulk of my time actually talking about a few examples of customized training. There are many different types, as I said. Each program has its own goals, partnership and management structure, its own funding streams, its own specific target populations or not, and its own training design. So some customized training might be designed to meet the requirements of a particular industry sector and others are based on a specific employer's needs. So what we wanted to do today was highlight three common examples that we see quite a bit across the country. And the first type you can see here is community college training. So as I mentioned, community colleges all across the country offer demand-driven training programs in partnership with a number of local and regional employers and other stake holders. This model really is based on the needs of employers or a group of employers, as we said. And I'm going to go over one quick example here with Miami-Dade College in Florida. And this is a really great example and one of my favorites to give. So in the spring of 2014, staff from Miami-Dade medical campus started to look at in-demand jobs in the Allied health field in South Florida. They were thinking, you know, what do we offer in terms of curriculum and does this line up with demand in the labor market? So college faculty and administrators met with a number of local employers to get information on their specific needs. So they meet with, again, big, heavy employers in South Florida. Citrus Health Net work, behavioral science research institute, University of Miami, South Florida Behavioral Health Net work. From these conversations with employers, it became a clear need for behavioral health technicians in Miami, Florida. Miami-Dade, what they did on the medical campus, they worked with these employers and a number of others to design a behavioral health technician certification program by new students and incumbent workers in the Allied health field. So this again was last year. This spring, the college actually began offering their 32-hour program to prepare individuals for the state-wide began administered by the Florida certification board. They actually have folks that are going through the program now and we think this is such a great example of how to take all of that employer feedback that you're getting and actually design a program to meet the needs of those employers. And this example is one where multiple employers were involved and they really came together to say here are our common needs. So this is customized for a group of employers to fulfill that demand in the South Florida region. The second common example we'll touch on is one that Ce mentioned in her introduction around registered apprenticeship. As Ce said, this is just a phenomenal opportunity for folks that can get access. It's an earn and learn customized training strategy and if we're talking about registered apprenticeships, this is something that is run by the US department of labor. I think many in the apprenticeship, we think of construction or the building trades. It's actually much, much, much broader than that. So there are a great number of examples in healthcare, manufacturing, IT, and a number of other sectors. .

They developed partnerships with local businesses and industry to offer sponsorship training in four different areas. They do aprinciple disships in healthcare, IT, advanced manufacturing, and they are starting to get into other stem science technology and math, other stem fields. Vermont high tech, they develop these partnerships and then they develop partnership program that include technical skills, as well as academic skills and the hands-on training with their local business partners. The programs are designed to lead directly to advancement or partnership with the sponsoring employer partner. The other piece of this training is Vermont high tech actually offers individuals the ability to earn a certificate of apprenticeship completion from the US department of labor, as well as depending on the program, a national certification, so they do certifications in medical coding, flee bought me, and then for the advanced manufacturing, they do the national institute for metal working skills, NIMS certification, and they started to partner with local post secondary institutions to offer credit for some of these programs -- also thinking about how to offer certifications and possibly college credits. The last example I would like to talk about is one, again, that is very, very common we hear a lot about and that's on-the-job training. OJT, it can be for one participant or more, is a method of customized training, where the training, again, takes place directly on the job site. So much like registered apprenticeship. Training is our learning how to perform critical tasks for employers, with the ultimate goal that they are being hired on at the end of their training. Sometimes OJT is used in conjunction with classroom training. Sometimes not. The example I'm going to talk about here is around manufacturing. So this is the Boeing manufacturing on-the-job training project. This is sponsored by the national workforce solutions and JFF. And so they did this project for about a year from 2012 to 2013 and they -- the partners focused, led by Boeing, the partners focused on placing 101 unemployed adults into OJT programs at 39 different advanced manufacturing companies across the country. So they had eight different regions of the country represented. They had Seattle. They had South Carolina and everywhere in between. And workforce industry partners actually provided employers with a 50% wage subsidy during the training period, which most of them were between 10 and 15 weeks. So based on this model of providing on-the-job training for 10 to 15 weeks, subsidizing the cost of that, they have 101 participants. As a completion of training, employers retained 91 in permanent positions. So highly successful. And in fact, the average employee income actually rose slightly during that time and continued to rise even further after. So, you know, again, we think this is a really great example of how you can use a model across the country with a variety of different employers, but still having the same kind of overall goal. So this is actually my last slide. So we just wanted to end by saying that all different types of customized training that I've talked about, they are effective strategies that, you know, are really important and have good results. And again, we just really want to emphasize, and you'll hear this again with Neil and with Mark, this is all about precipitation. It's not just about the training piece. It's all about partnerships. And we really hope that this will give you some good ideas on the ground and we hope you want to learn more. With that, Neil, I'm going to kick it back over to you.

Thank you very much, Lexi. Just to go back to my slide here, as we have been developing resources for our technical assistance to states around customized training, we have discovered that a number of VR agencies have some very creative customized training models that feature partnerships with different entities. And on this slide, we have three examples of that. One is in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission. And they have a partnership with a business, so it's VR plus a business and the business is CVS Pharmacy. And they developed a pharmacy technician program, which is an on-the-job training program plus some classroom training as well to create a really excellent pharmacy technician program which CVS needs badly. And there are links to all of these on this page. The second model is from Nebraska. The Nebraska rehabilitation agency partnered with a business and a community college to create their Nebraska VR middle skills certificate program. They use businesses to inform the curriculum for the training program, which is delivered by the community college. There's also an on-the-job training component and they have such programs as construction, electrician helper, auto tech, HVAC, and auto welding. Very, very successful program out in Nebraska. And the third one I want to talk about is vocational rehab agency plus a business plus a CRP, which is a community rehabilitation provider. So these three entities work together in Connecticut and their vocational rehabilitation program created industry-specific training and placement programs. And our next speaker, Mark Henry, is from Connecticut, and he is going to talk to you about that program. Mark, take it away.

All right. Thank you, Neil. Just wanted to thank ICI and the JD-VRTAC for the opportunity to talk today about customized employment. I am, as Neil said, I am the director of connect-ability staffing here in Connecticut. We are a business services unit for Connecticut VR that currently consists of about nine employment consultants and myself as the program director throughout the state. We are essentially responsible for statewide business outreach within the bureau of rehabilitation services, or Connecticut general VR. Connect-ability staffing was created in large part to promote more customized training opportunities for the individuals that we serve. Historically these programs had the highest success rate for us for people not only to find jobs, but maintain jobs and grow into more career-oriented positions. I thought it would be best to review how we , how the customized training here in Connecticut has evolved over the time period since we came into utilizing it on a more pronounced way. As you can see, in 2005, we -- please hold on for one second. I'm going to try and make a switch here. Okay. Can everybody hear me a little bit better now?

Hello? Okay. We'll try this. So in 2005, we established -- we were approached by Walgreen's to help them with setting up a distribution center training model in Windsor, Connecticut that was a workforce development model that was our first foray into this. It was our first time partnering to create an industry-based training model. Over the years, this model proved to be a very successful successful workforce development program and it provides access to employment opportunities and an avenue for increased awareness and cultural change within a work setting. In 2009, we received some American recovery and reinvestment act dollars to build Connecticut VR's capacity for employer outreach and negotiating customized trainings. That's where we started with one project manager and that's myself, and then six employment consultants throughout the state. The idea around this unit was to go ahead and give us more opportunity, more Manpower to go ahead and do business outreach and to negotiate these individualized on-the-job trainings with employers. In 2010, the two-year project that we, we underwent was met with success and was made permanent. So it was a two-year durational project. It was a pilot program. Because we saw so much success in the very first year of its creation, we made a permanent and not only did we make it permanent, but we expanded upon it and added three more staff to promote more use of on-the-job trainings. So previous to 2009, probably the most on-the-job trainings we did as an agency in a year were about 15. From that after the first year, we did about 89 in 2010 and then we jumped to 155 in 2011. So in 2011, we kept getting approached by a lot of different companies coming to us and they are asking, we wanted to do what Walgreen's did from the 2005 model. They had so much success and they were out there and they were talking about their success of, as a recruitment strategy and setting up a training program such as this, that we had to find a way to respond to how do we set this up since it was such an original venture for us, we didn't really know how to repeat it. We had to do some research and we had to figure out a way to do this on a broader scale. So we put out a request for proposals and asked for ideas from different entities out in the community. At that point, we received three training program proposals, all from community rehabilitation providers. In 2012, we reran the request, but this time we did it a little differently. We did it as a request for qualifications. The difference, the very important distinction between the two was when we first did the request for proposals, we had to accept all the ideas as a full idea as it came to us. We didn't really -- we weren't involved in the creation of the idea. We weren't involved in the location of the projects. We weren't involved in what kinds of jobs or what kinds of industries the projects would be in. So when we reran it the second time, we were able in 2012 to create a vendor list, a vetted list of potential contractors to become the training arm of these partnership projects. It also gave us the ability to have more input and control over the potential projects, like I said, with location, with respect to industry and occupation as well. The two models that we use here in Connecticut VR that are in the customized training realm are individual-based. So the on-the-job training piece. Our individual programs are on-the-job training agreements that we individually negotiate with the employer. So what they do is they take into account the skills, the learning style, and the training needs of the VR participant and in conjunction with their required skills and the expectations that are set forth by the employer and work to make a match there and an agreement and create a training afternoon that specific to the individual. The second that we use is what we refer to as our talent pipeline. And these are the industry-specific training and placement programs, or the ISTPPs that we create here in Connecticut. These are for the most part, are for employers whose business model requires a larger ongoing pool of candidates. So we have this talent pipeline approach. Our industry-specific training and placement programs take the employer's industrial and occupational content knowledge and rework the content into more universally accessible materials and provide a platform for the VR participants to take a learn-by-doing approach and showcase their skills and their potential to the employer. The training programs themselves are flexible, but they typically have certain components to them such as an assessment component, a classroom training component, on-the-job training, as well as soft skills component and then a placement at the end. So I thought it would be important to review, you know, how everybody participates in utilizing customized employment from a VR perspective. So within the partners and roles, we have the RV counselor and the participant. They discuss -- they are going to discuss what the interests and the aptitudes of the person are and match that with realtime labor market info. Through constant communication with the VR employment consultants who are across our state here, they are discussing information with the VR counselors and the VR counselors are able to then utilize realtime labor market analysis and information to inform the VR participants as they are choosing hair career goals. The employment consultants and the training that market these programs, these industry-specific training and placement programs, as well as on-the-job training and individualized programs to both the counselors and the participants. If there is a -- if it's decided between the counselor and the participant that a referral is to be made, then it's sent over to our employment consultant for either one of these particular services of customized employment. So for the VR employment consultant, their role in this process in regards to on-the-job trainings and the individualized model, they are going to proactively market a VR participant to area businesses and negotiate a customized training structure and reimbursement. For the on-the-job trainings, the VR counselor discusses any information about the employment consultant that can assist the VR participant in successfully taking advantage of this model. Items such as learning styles, social concerns or triggers, appropriate work cultures, you know, are some of the things that would be discussed. The employment consultant and the VR participant would then network with employers until a potential site is found. The employment consultant then negotiates an agreed upon training construct that is manageable for the employer, but also then meets both their needs and the needs of the VR participant in terms of training and what skill sets they bring to the table and where they would like to go. As for our talent pipeline, the industry-specific training and placement programs, the employment consultant would prescreen the VR participants to meet criteria of host employers, would also make the referral to the training program and act as a point of contact with the training entity and the host employer. For the industry-based training and placement programs, the employment consultant really plays a critical role as that, as the VR agency representative and point of contact. Like I said, they perform all the initial prescreens that present -- and present a concrete picture of what the program is, what the company's culture is, and what the opportunities that are represented not just in the very first job that they have there, but in the -- in that -- within that company as a whole to the VR participants and they can make an educated decision about it as well. They then pass along that referral to the training program, to the training entity itself for acceptance into the program. And then that employment consultant also maintains contact with trainers, should any issues arise during the training. So for the host employer of the business who would choose to have a training program with them in regards to on-the-job training, their role in this would be to hire the VR participant as an employee and provide that one-to-one customized training that meets the business' standard for that specific occupation. What we require for this is that the VR participant is hired as a W2 employee and that the employer is compensated with for their time spent training the individual. At the end of the agreement, the employer will have the opportunity to decide whether or not to keep this person on permanently and progress with them as an employee and, again, like I said earlier on the slide, this has been one of our highest, most successful services that we provide because there's that investment into the person that the employer makes in training them and having them learn the job the way they want them to learn the job. For the host employer and business for the industry-specific training placement programs, they are -- the host of the training program and they have an on-site and integrated competitive environment, they provide industry and occupation-specific content knowledge similar to the on-the-job training, to the training entity. And there's the big difference. They are providing that content, that knowledge to the training entity who is going to then take and make it more universally accessible. And they are also are committed to hiring successful VR participants at the completion of the program. The piece that we like about these programs as well is the fact that it provides us consistent updates and modifications back to the training entity as to what the business needs are and how the industry evolves. So there's this constant communication about any updates in terms of a skill set or required skill set so we can get that information back and have that translate back to our VR participants as they are trying to grow within their careers. So for the next role, the training entity within the industry-specific training placement programs is a critical role and it's a third party organization that Connecticut VR contracts with to establish a universally successful workforce development program on site with a host employer or business that meets specific business and industry standards. So this training entity will go and learn in-depth about the business and the training models. It will take and retrofit the training that may already exist and a lot of times there are a lot of training materials already out there that we then take and, again, retrofit to make it a more accessible training and then customize it toward learning of the individual person. And sometimes we create -- a lot of times actually, we create new trainings from that that are looking at things in a different way so that, again, it gives everybody a chance to be successful in a learning environment. Ultimately, that training entity is also responsible for the placement of each person that successfully completes the program. Hence the term industry-specific training and placement program. Even if the employer has to go on a hiring freeze, these are -- it's supposed to be standard with these programs that they would learn a skill set that would translate throughout the industry, the specified industry for that program so that they could go and get a job in a like organization and it should be pretty sufficient to be successful there as well. Some of the benefits that we found from the customized training programs, we found that it provides VR participants access to employment through a nontraditional hiring model. Some people do better in interviews. Some people don't. But what this does is it gets you past the interview stage from having access to a job and it allows you to get out in front of an employer and demonstrate skill sets and show that you can do a job, not just answer questions, theoretical questions in an interview setting. We love that about this approach. We also love the fact that there -- this hands-on opportunity for learning versus just sitting in a classroom. Again, just takes it out, opens up the flexibility of how you can get out in front of an employer and display your learning, display your ability and allows you to succeed. The training is employer-based and allows for the training contents to evolve as workforce needs evolve, focus on industry and occupational standards, building out a career versus just getting that one-off job, getting in there and learning the way that the employer wants you to learn and to the standards that they see as what's important to their company. The additional structure is also key. The support on site to assist in the soft skills development to be their hands-on to look at certain situations and assist somebody through them as they are just starting out their job within that company and building out their career. We also see it as a mutually beneficial try-before-you-buy scenario on both independence, for the individual and the business. If a person gets into this and feels this is great experience, however it's not the career I want to go in, they will go ahead and be able to change gears. Same for the business. If they see if this person is not a fit for this, well, it, it didn't ultimately work out. However, both sides have a lot more information to then make decisions and educated decisions to go on from there. And finally, the training programs are flexible. They are tuition-based and fee for service. They are flexible in terms of the creation of the training materials. They are flexible in terms of meeting the learning needs of the person. They are tuition-based. And they are fee for service, meaning after you set up the contract, if for whatever reason if there does not seem to be a need or if you don't find that talent coming in through your door since you don't always have the ability to, to tell who is coming in your door, then if you don't use it, then you're not on the hook for it. So it's a very good model that we found some success with. Some of the Connecticut industry-specific training and placement programs we have going right now, obviously we have the Walgreen's distribution center that we mentioned earlier. Walgreen's retail. CVS retail program. We work with the Lowe's distribution center here. Mohegan Sun casino, many different types of jobs there. Homegoods distribution center, the crown plaza and mystic aquarium. There's shipping, warehousing, shipping, receiving, retail, and, again, the good thing that we've seen since we have had this in place now since 2011 is you can see the different array of industries there, but people are not in those beginning jobs anymore. Over time what we've seen is this is their way into the program and, or into the company and then they have grown from there and they have moved up within the ranks and it's been really great to see. So customized training in Connecticut has been our most successful view of our job development services. Since 2010, we've seen over 285 -- well, actually that would be more from 2011 and 2012 after they have been up, so about 2012 when we started to get results from the programs. We've had over 285 placements as a result of the industry-specific training programs. Since 2010, we've had over 800 on-the-job trainings completed. If you remember back in the beginning of this, I told you that we only had about 15 annually as an agency before that. And the reason why this was so important for us to make a decision to go on this direction as an agency was that it historically has still been and holds up, even though we're doing bigger numbers, it still is our most successful services in getting people placed and keeping their jobs at over 67% of OJTs resulting in a successful case closure. So where would we like to take this? As far as the future in Connecticut, we would like to expand the list of training entities, probably move beyond just community rehabilitation providers and expand that open to doing some more things with maybe community colleges or other different training providers. We would also like to expand the types of trainings in different industries and occupations. And we see this as an opportunity to really get involved with other workforce development partners on the front end.

Thanks very much, Mark. That was a very informative presentation. We have a little bit of time left in the webinar for some questions. I see one question. One of the questions that came up was what kind of prescreening do you do, Mark, for the clients that are referred to your programs?

In regards to prescreen, we usually take a lot of the materials or information that was put forth by the company for their own prescreening, maybe in their first round of interviews. We'll take some of that information and we'll see what the culture is of the, the attributes they are looking for to be successful. We'll also do a lot of the basic -- you know, they are looking for very concrete information about what's required with a job and interview somebody who is a potential candidate and it's --ic lipped, it's a mutually beneficial interview. They can make a determination whether they want to go forward with the program or if it's going to be a right fit for them and we make a determination and give them good information. It's usually they are choosing whether or not to go forward with it. It's not necessarily worth telling them they can't do if. But it's just giving them a more education on what the opportunity is.

Another question that is being asked is about using -- already existing training programs at community colleges. Did you consider that when you were developing your program?

We did. We put it out for both community colleges. We put it out for anybody. We also have done those in the past. However, we were looking to try and get started with companies that were interested in doing this, that didn't have any programs already attached to them.

And another answer to that question, we have come across states that have used community colleges very effectively. As I mentioned on Nebraska is one and you have the link to that, and another state you should look at, look on the website of Maryland VR agency, have excellent customized training programs. Another question, this is customer of for me, I guess. What legal issues need to be considered when you're establishing OJTs or similar workplace-based trainings?

I think one of the things that helps you is, there's two pieces you need to look at. And we had to do this very closely with the department of labor. One is that you want the person, or at least in our instance, what we wanted to do is have the person be a W-2 employee. It helps with insurance coverage. It helps with any workers' comp issues, because then they are covered, and we tend to stay away from the use of 1099 for tax purposes and just having the person hired with similar benefits as anybody else. It also is an investment in that person and usually leads to hopefully keeping them on afterwards since they are already on board. The last issue is do you want to talk to them about what does it mean when they are during this training period in terms of unemployment compensation.

Okay.I don't know if this could be the final question, but could you talk about the costs associated with customized training programs in Connecticut, and do you share costs with some of the partners?

We do. So usually up front at least in the first, first few times we went through this and established some of the programs, we shouldered the burden of a lot of the upfront costs to get them started. In the second year after we used some of the upfront, some of the upfront dollars and all the programs were up and running, we had some of the other partners out there, so like our department of mental health and addictive services and our department of developmental services, we opened them up so that they could create their own contracts with the training entity and then send over people as well, and we've also had this evolve in some of the other instances, like the Mohegan Sun industry training program that we have, one of the local schools has started more of a preemployment training program there that's geared toward transition kids, but then feeds into our program upon the graduation to then move forward if they so choose. So there's been different partnerships that have been developing as these have grown, started to grow. And again, I think we're looking at more cost sharing and more partnering going forward. That's one of the goals.

All right. Well, Katie, I'm not sure if we've -- it's a little bit after 2:00 now. I think we need to wrap up. Katie, final words?

Yes, thank you, Neil. The evaluation will appear on the screen in just a moment. Be sure to attend our next webinar in the Explore VR job-driven webinar series. It will be next week, information to labor market instruction in a job-driven economy, December 15, 2:00 p.m. eastern time. I will bring up the evaluation right now. So you follow this link to the evaluation. If you would like to download the Power Point presentation, you can do so in the resources for download box at the bottom of your screen. Thank you for joining us today.

[ event concluded ]