Summer Career Pathways:
City of New Orleans

Transcript of Webinar

YouthBuild Webinar Series

Meet the Workforce Innovation Fund Round Two Grantees:
Grant Project Presentations

Wednesday, February 17, 2016
BRANDI EBANKS: Thanks, Rachel, and hello, everyone. I am Brandi Ebanks, and I serve as the program manager for the Summer Career Pathways program, which is what we've named our WIF innovation. The program, similar to what we heard from the L.A. team, is – the lead organization is our workforce development board, but the City of New Orleans Office of Workforce Development applied on behalf of the development board.

Additionally, we provide administrative support. Therefore, we are the entity that will be implementing. The development board will be doing oversight. The funding level, as you can see, is $5.8 million. We will be doing an implementation and impact study via a randomized control study, and our evaluation firm is RAND Corporations.

The innovations we proposed are, first, one of taking individuals who are currently in low skilled, low wage jobs and placing them into medium skilled, higher wage industries. The cross-sector pipeline, additionally; we have targeted industries. So the beginning of the pipeline starts with hospitality and leisure, and our destination sectors are advanced manufacturing and energy. I often get the question of why those two industries, and I'll just take a moment now to explain why.

Hospitality and leisure is a traditional backbone industry of the New Orleans area. Everyone is hopefully familiar with things like Mardi Gras and all the festivals that we host here in the city, but what many people don't know is that traditionally summer is a light period for those industries with many workers being either laid off or having their hours severely cut.

This specific program is supposed to aid those employees who are really faced with a decision come summertime with another option to explore another career. Lastly, the innovation that we are proposing is the pre-screen which is done by our hospitality and leisure firms, our partners.

So our key components, obviously one would be targeted recruitment, being that our entry pipeline is hospitality and leisure. Secondly, having program orientations held by the hospitality and leisure partner so that they can establish a relationship between the summer career pathways program and their constituents on a one-to-one basis so it's more personal and not necessarily coming from a government agency.

The next component is an in depth seminar, which we will be hosting to give pre-screened eligible participants the opportunity to explore the careers, get an understanding of what the day-to-day work is like for someone who's in the destination sector so they really can go through a self-selection process. We're not just placing people in a program where they really have no interest or idea of what they're training for.

Next, we will have a technical skills training, which is of course informed by our employer partners where participants will be receiving three industry-based credentials. And then finally, we'll have coordinated internships in the field so that individuals can, one, get some work experience on their resumes, and then, two, give them a chance to explore another employer. And should things go well, the employer hopefully will seek to hire that person, and they make a career change in the advanced manufacturing sector.
Our key partners are hospitality and leisure organizations. So we have some partners as far as restaurant industry, hotel industry, and then we have education of course. One of our major local community colleges, Delgado, is a major partner, and I'll go in depth about them soon. Then we have some business of course in our destination sector. Our workforce system, as I mentioned earlier, the City applied on behalf of the workforce development board.

And then we do have our local indigenous culture bearers, which is specifically unique to New Orleans, that will be helping us with recruitment as well. Many of these indigenous culture bearers parade and they mask and do things that are specific and unique to our New Orleans culture, but however, they oftentimes have economic issues where they're choosing between keeping up with local tradition or paying their light bill. So this program is really a support to them.

Our targets and outcomes, we are hoping to recruit at least 400 individuals between March and April of this year. The number of participants that will be enrolled and begin training is 90. We'll be doing 90 participants each summer for three years, so a total of 270. And then we will also have 90 individuals in a control group that we'll also be monitoring but won't receive any training.

Our expected number of participants that will complete the training is 72. The number entering employment is 40, and again, the number of industry-based credentials earned by each participant completing the training is three. The average annual earnings – this – what you see is a number based upon two quarters, but the average annual earning is at least $38,000 for a very entry level helper. We definitely hope to help people on that pathway and not leave them at $38,000 but to help them begin that exploration.

Our partnerships and successes, the true success is around engaging our cultural partners and indigenous culture bearers here in New Orleans. As I stated, they are a huge part of why New Orleans is New Orleans. They, in fact, are the people who carry our culture, who attract individuals to the city. So engaging them was very important.

The partnership with Delgado Community College is also very important because they received a TAAACT grant at the same time that we received our WIF grant. So we're collectively leveraging our funds to outfit the courses with the best so participants receive our best model training. They'll also be receiving – while experiencing updated technology.

Some of the challenges we've seen is around engaging our destination sector partners. So I'd love to hear feedback about that. Having some hospitality partners use the program as poaching and that's been an issue. So if anyone's dealt with something similar, I'd like to hear feedback or questions around that. The randomized control evaluation is something tough that everyone is possibly facing and having to pitch that to community partners is an – has been very arduous process.

And then the internships, the inability for us to pay wages or stipends to individuals has come up several times. So if anyone has any feedback about how they've dealt with that, that would also
be great. But I am going to turn it back over to Rachel, and thanks, everybody, for listening to the City of New Orleans' project.