

Council of State Administrators of
Vocational Rehabilitation
2019 Fall Conference
Tuesday, October 29, 2019
Onsite CART Captioning

Third General Session
8:05 a.m. 9:30 a.m.

>> Good morning everyone. If you could come in and take your seats we're going to get started in about two minutes. Thank you.

Good morning everyone. We're going to get started and before we kick off our panel today we have commissioner Schultz who's back with us for a couple minutes to provide an announcement he wants to make. Commissioner?

>> MARK SCHULTZ: Good morning everyone. So thank you for allowing me to interrupt the panel. I'd like to start with something I was hoping to announce yesterday. So I'm going to read something I'm required to read, I think up front just to introduce the topic.

So the office of special education and rehabilitate active services within the U.S. department of education is pleased to announce the release of frequently asked questions prior approval for OSEP and RSA formula grants. This document is nonbinding and does not create or impose new legal requirements. The department is issuing it in this document on an interim basis to provide grantees with immediate information to assist them in obligations in universal administrative requirement, cost principles and other requirements for federal awards. We intend to publish this further and invite public comments.

So that puts us in compliance with the executive order from the president. So what is -- the FAQ deal with two direct cost categories. There are participant support costs and equipment costs. So let me talk about participant costs first. Those are stipends, assistance allowances, travel allowance, registration fees paid object behalf of participants, on trainees in connection with conferences and training projects, SRC meetings, and services under an IPE.

So as of now you no longer have to submit individual requests for prior approval. This document gives you approval for those costs.

The other area is equipment. And for those which you've been submitting individual costs greater than \$5,000 in terms of the equipment, for consumers under an IEP , whereas part of those services you no longer require individual prior approval. That grants you that.

So we have a tri level process under equipment because there are various kind of equipment. So that covers those services for consumers, the equipment cost, such as vehicle modifications and those greater than 5,000.

So for other general equipment, and these are things like the IT hardware and software, office equipment, IT equipment, systems, air conditioning equipment, et cetera, and the FAQs will explain all this, there is a stream lined approach for that other general purchase -- purpose equipment for all RSA formula funded guarantees. So with those types of equipment, you'll request approval in the aggregate based on reasonable budget estimates for the entire federal fiscal year.

So if within that initial request, when you submit that budget, you're able to cover those costs, you do not have to make another individual equipment request.

If you exceed that cost then you will have to provide a request to exceed that cost.

The third category is capital expenditures. This is one we were not able to change. So for such things as establishment projects, renovation or alteration of facilities under Randolph shepherd, you will still need to have individual prior approval for those kind of projects. So the frequently asked question document will be posted to the web site under the owes center spotlight at 9:30 this morning. You will be able to read the document.

We have a session tomorrow, Wednesday, that we can answer or respond to questions at that time so I'm not going to take any now, but that will give you a chance to look at the document and see if you do have any questions.

So the information will also go out on RSA and OSEP , at about 9:30, so if you're on the list serve you'll get that information as well. We're very glad to provide these flexibilities and hopefully we'll be able to provide more in the future so thank you all.

>> Thank you for that very exciting announcement. I'm Delora Newton. It's my privilege to introduce the panel this morning. There's many people. I'm going to read off the names and if they can wave so you can see which one it is cause I don't think we're necessarily sitting in order up here.

So first we have Keith Bourkney, the president -- system

>> He a he in the audience. Oh, you'll introduce the panel? Okay. I will turn it over to them. Thank you very much.

>> Hi. Good morning. My name is Melinda Mitchell an bureau chief for services for Florida. Want to welcome you to our great state we're very happy you're here and when we knew you were coming my director Allison Flanagan called me up and said we got to come up with something, what do we want to present.

And I said well I think we want to present our BRICK program, it's one of the highlights of the state. It's a fabulous program. These folks on the stage have worked so hard to get this offer the ground, I'm going to explain it to you just a little bit.

We do have another honored guest that will be joining us who isn't here quite yet, and it's Matt Susan and he's with the school board for Brevard County and he's on his way. So traffic in Jacksonville as you probably don't know because you've been in the hotel -- oh, there he is. Yeah. Come on up.

You don't have to run. It's okay. Anyway, Florida is experiencing tremendous growth. Welcome Matt.

Anyway, Florida has surpassed all other states for the number of people moving to Florida on a daily basis. The average now is a thousand people a day moving to Florida on a permanent basis, which doesn't sound like a lot, but you do a thousand times 365 that's a lot of people moving to Florida, never mind all the people who are already here.

So this influx of people has led to a housing shortage, if you will, and again, if you haven't got at the point out of the hotel to drive around the area you wouldn't know, but every time I come to Jacksonville, which is not as frequently as I would like, there are buildings going up on both sides of 95 and all the other roads and condos and homes and apartments. It just never stops, so the building in this area is just tremendous and it's not just Jacksonville, but because we're here I'm talking about Jacksonville.

So this short age of housing has led to a tremendous growth in the construction and manufacturing industries. Which of course leads to high demand for these jobs and yet we have, no matter how many people are living here, a low supply of individuals who are going into the trades and want to work in this field.

So for us, it was kind of a perfect storm with WIOA coming in to place and us having to really reshift some of our focus to serve younger and younger students and more of them.

And in Florida, in the beginning it was a struggle for us to get into the school districts and reach out to the students and start to provide them with the services, that we really wanted to provide them.

So it's taken some time, couple of years for us to get our feet wet and going. And we're there now, which I'm very happy to say we're really right there.

But with WIOA it has provided with us a huge influx of potential employees. Eager and willing to want to learn and many of them wanting to learn a trade.

There are many reasons why a student coming out of high school may not want to enter college. We all know how expensive college is. Is lot of students go into debt. Some of our students get into college, take out loans if we're not funding their program and end up dropping out because they can't achieve academically and then they're left with these loans which leaves their lives in shambles, really because they have to pay back these loans and they don't have a skill or trade to be able to pay back the loans.

So with all of that and all the factors that I just mentioned, our business relations, one of our business relations representative, who unfortunately is not working with us any more, but was terrific when he was here, met Matt sue sues is a, who mat was from the school board in Brevard County and very well connected within the community and knew the people on the business relations dish I mean new the people on the builder's association and introduced our business relations person to the building association.

And that then grew into vocational rehabilitation counselors and staff getting involved, Matt also opened the doors for us within the school district to reach out to the principals who were at first reluctant to want to bring in a whole bunch of rehab counselors and have us meet with their students, but then they did and then the gate just opened up. It was amazing. The schools allowing access for our staff to go in and start to meet with these students and at the same time we needed to have our providers that we contract with to help us with this. To be the employer of record for us so we could pay these students for their work-based experience, learning work-based experience.

So that's pretty much how it all started. I mean it was kind of magic it was but a supply and demand type of thing. It was perfect timing for, because we were entering the world of WIOA and working with the students, so the partners really worked together wonderfully and did a fabulous job working together.

And they developed this program called the Brevard internship in construction knowledge, which is what the BRICK program is all with. So instead of me standing here babbling at you, we're going to show you a video with most of the people at the table in the video. And our students in the video and how excited they were to be participating in this program.

And then we are going to do lessons learned because of course when you start something new you always learn from your mistakes, what we could do better. And then we will of course introduce the panel, and then we'll take questions and answers.

Now we are sharing this time slot with our sister agency, blind services. And they also have a presentation, so we're going to take about maybe 30 -- 25, 30 minutes because we're running a little bit late.

So let's start the video, please.

Thank you.

When most people think of Florida they think of sunshine, theme parks and alligators, but this former Spanish colony is much more, bordered by the gulf of Mexico, Florida has 15 deep water seaports and airports. If Florida was a country, it would rank as the 17th largest in the world.

By the year 2030, there will be a projected 26 million Floridians with an estimated need for 1.7 million additional jobs. At the same time employers are facing a critical need for workers with the skills to do the job.

The number of Floridians with disabilities or who are something approximately 170,000. Skills and abilities of Floridians with disabilities who are help meet businesses need for talent.

The BRICK project with the home builders and contractors association of Brevard, HBCA is Florida's first partnership with an industry association.

It is consistent with secretary sore strategies which focus on partnerships and solutions that address the skill needs of in demand industries.

BRICK is a partnership between HBCA , employers, the local school board, contracted provider in Florida, Employ U and VR.

BRICK is designed to engage students in the trades and provide them with work experience and the opportunity to gain valuable skills while building a talent pipe line in the industry trades.

BRICK works experiences occurred during the summers of 2018 and 19. The BRICK partners met monthly beginning in the fall of 2017 to plan for the summer

work based learning experiences.

The work experiences provided internship opportunities for Brevard County students with disabilities, ages 14 to 21. VR contracted with employment services provider Employ U to coordinate the details with the students and employers at the work sites. Specific internship opportunities included carpentry, electrical, HVAC welding, installation, sales, administrative and other related home building occupations.

Work experiences varied between eight and 30 hours per week, depending upon employer preferences. Students earned 11 dollars per hour or 12 dollars per hour if promoted to student team leader.

Coastal mechanical has been in business for over 33 years. We've grown our company from two employees to over 360 employees. I myself started as an apprentice over 33 years ago here and through dedication and hard work have worked my way up to being the president of a 90 million dollar mechanical contractor.

This year from our apprenticeship meetings, we got involved with the star program which fed us through Employ U some students from the high schools. We created an OJT program where the students would come in and learn about our trades, sheet metal, plumbing and piping. It's been a very good experience.

We have one of our five that will be staying on with us as an apprentice and that's what the goal is, to introduce the younger generation to the trades.

I learned how to put the stuff together like hangers, piping, we welded a little bit.

The main thing I liked was welding. I liked learning how to weld.

We start out 64 years ago with my dad in the garage and then today we're currently employing 90 something people but multiple people start out of high school, now holding management positions.

While we are members of the Brevard County home builders association so when we heard about the program we thought it would be a great opportunity for Richard's paint to contribute to the community so we were able to find several openings and put some really good kids to work.

You get to meet people, learn their backgrounds, where they came from and all that. It's like a big family.

What I really liked about it is that it was like a blue collar type of job, so I was always up, I was always moving. I got to interact with others, help others.

It's a good program. I'm glad we're doing it. We'll continue to do it.

It's actually given the students a little bit of character, a little bit of responsibility. They actually have to be on time. They actually have to work.

This whole program has been great for all the students. They've learned skills that they don't typically learn, on a typical job site. This just gives them one more avenue to explore for a possible career.

I really love it cause I'm doing something different every day, learning something new.

The program is wonderful. I wish other kids you know had this opportunity to be able to do this, as well. One thing it definitely teaches responsibility, how to get up. We definitely want to do this program. He came to me about this program. I'm like okay, if it's what you want to do, let's do it.

We got to go out there and see what the electrician actually does to put lights in and the digging and, and how it feels to be out there in the sun for eight hours a day.

Pro source has been around since 2002. We have a showroom here in Brevard County. We are extremely busy so it's good to have programs like you have in place.

Hey, is there a way you can actually put these tags on the cabinets the way you did yesterday?

I love this program because it helps when, like you want a first job and it helps you, like, get to know what you want to do in life.

So it's been an absolute pleasure having her here and hopefully we can continue this program. I would like to see you know other students come through. I really think it definitely helps them to see how a business runs. And so it's been a pleasure.

We've gotten a tremendous amount of involvement and interest from parents, students, the employers. There isn't one person that is at the table that had a negative attitude towards this. And it was so forward thinking. I think that this is going to reverberate through the entire state.

Deer Valley is the county seat for Jacksonville which is the fourth largest metropolitan area in Florida. Centered on the St. Johns River in this state is a military and civilian deep water port. Jacksonville a rail air and highway focal point and busy port of entry with an international airport, shipyards and freight handling facilities.

The success of the BRICK program in Jacksonville, led.

Employers are excited to launch our program in Jacksonville. We have been working with the northeast Florida builder's association and they have been a fantastic partner.

They're the largest homebuilder's association in the State of Florida. When I first heard about Employ U it's right in line with our mission. We are working with three businesses this year and they have really taken our students under their wing. They've provided great opportunities, great support.

American electrical was founded in the year 2000. We've been in business for 19 years. We've grown from a three truck service company all the way to a 20 million dollars a year electrical company in northeast Florida.

We've been in business for 55 years. We're one of the largest residential contractors in Jacksonville. Imagine of our work is residential, commercial as well as industrial and underground work. Right now I could use helpers and sometimes it's hard to get them with the way the market is. Nobody wants to do construction any more.

One thing I learned in the trades is that there is a deficit of employees, especially up and coming. We really felt we would be able to help the industry by providing the youth and giving them experience and exposure to what that industry is all about.

I've been trying to get a job for with three times. I failed every single one and now since I'm in Employ U they've helped me with my contracting skills, conference skills and I've become a better communicator.

So far my experience has been good. They have me organizing restocking, cleaning, helping out.

It was very interesting to me cause I went -- I always like had a dream of building like a house and, like, putting electrical stuff inside my own house one day.

This internship has helped me gain experience for real life stuff in the future. Like answering phone calls, how to interact with customers.

I would absolutely do this as a career.

I was pleasantly surprised. These students, they are passionate. They've got that fire in them. They want to be here. They're excited. They're learning something new.

With the success of the BRICK program word spread among employers about the opportunity to work with students to build their talent pipeline on a cost free basis.

BRICK's positive outcomes led directly to a partnership with advanced manufacturers in Brevard County who wanted to host work based learning experiences at their companies.

The business case for a partnership with advanced manufacturers in Brevard County is strong. There are over 25,000 vacancies, which are increasing steadily.

Manufacturing jobs comprise approximately 13 percent of jobs, but make up almost 25 percent of all wages. The average annual salary of manufacturing

supervisors in Brevard County exceeds 61 thousand dollars.

Manufacturing contributes 21 percent of Brevard's GDP and ranks second highest for concentration of high tech manufacturing jobs in the U.S.

This market is thriving, so finding folks to work in production and work in manufacturing can be a challenge.

They didn't teach this in school so what we have to do is we have to try to get some participation and training people to get them in and get them hands on experience.

We have a lot of jobs here that we can self train. So the biggest thing we need is people with a good attitude who want to come to work who are going to be reliable. So that's a challenge for a lot of employers today.

They were not only eager to learn, great workers, came in with a great attitude every day, but they did a great job, followed directions.

It just sounded like a really good idea so we decide today jump on board.

From the work experience here I've learned a lot. It's a good environment.

Engineering is what I want to do and right now I'm shadowing as an engineer. I think it's the best thing.

It's been great. It's busy but it's keeping head strong for the real world and not just in school, and books.

There's always people saying hello to you and always people willing to help.

It's very enjoyable, actually. It's the best first impression I could have of a career.

We're really enjoying this job right here. I appreciate everybody.

Collaboration between community partners, businesses, schools and VR can result in building capacity for an industry by adding to the talent pipe line.

It also creates an infrastructure for clients to participate in inclusive employment, explore jobs, open doors to lucrative careers. Industry certifications an on site training and mentoring by host businesses.

Successful partnerships require a significant investment by all stakeholders, but they outweigh the risk.

Identifying industry need, stake holders are committed to the mission. Stake holders have the internal infrastructure to support the project. And vendors invest in project staff, marketing and other necessary resources to ensure success.

In 2018 to 2019, Florida VR increased competitive integrated employment outcomes by over 20 percent from the prior year. Through collaboration with providers, stake holders and business, 5924 individuals with disabilities obtained or maintained employment. Not only are there more individuals with disabilities in the work force, the average hours worked increased from 28 to 30 hours per week which increased average weekly salary from 340 dollars to 364 dollars.

More than 46,000 individuals were served last year and the number of students being served has grown to over 50 percent of all individuals being served. VR is excited to grow our businesses and support employers talent needs.

>> KATHY DAVIS: All right. Thank you very much. Lessons learned from the BRICK project, first of all we figured out that we needed to make sure to screen our students because we were paying them 11 dollars an hour so we wanted to -- we found out very quickly that it was important to make sure they didn't just want that 11 dollars an hour but really were interested in working for it and also interested in the industry of construction and trades.

We also learned that it was important to assign student leaders. There was better outcomes for all the students as well as the employers when we identified someone on the student team that could be a leader.

We also paid them an additional dollar an hour and that was very motivating for those students, as well and really much more like the real work experience.

We figured out that employers need to have a clear plan of the duties to be assigned and learned for each work experience.

Business sponsors for the program would be beneficial. We were fortunate we had the home builders and contractor's association that provided some of the expenses for things like graduation, they also assisted with an honorarium for the instructor who caught the OSHA class which occurred between internship sessions and also paid for the OSHA cards for students.

Parent participation in orientation and graduation were very beneficial. As you can imagine, parent buy in is critical and key to success.

Employers benefited from their own orientation session. We had monthly meetings for planning, but it was really important to give employers the space to ask questions without fear of retribution for questions that maybe were perceived as stigmatizing, so it was important that we give them their own safe place to ask those questions.

The program needed a name for promotion purposes, and as a team, we came up with Brevard intern ships and construction knowledge. And the tag line was Michelle's, brick by brick, building our talent pipe line.

I failed to introduce myself. My name is Kathy Davis. I'm the business relations program manager for Florida VR. And it's my pleasure to introduce some of the rest of the panel to you.

First of all I want to apologize to some of the panel members because our agenda went to print while we were still finalizing who would be on the panel. So please know that these business partners who are here, I think it's an incredible statement of their commitment to work based learn experiences and building their talent pipe lines because they have taken their own personal time and travel expenses to be here today and I encourage you to, if you have further questions for them, come meet them and get their business cards so that you can share their experience with some of your employers.

So Andreas Glover is at the end, he is also with VR. He's our area two supervisor.

Matt Susan if you'll raise your hand, he is our Brevard public schools district four school board member.

And Michelle Masline, she is our home builders and contractor's association of Brevard president and very instrumental in getting things started for us.

And then Lindy Sinka is our transition program director with Employ U.

And I'm going to have her introduce the rest of our panel.

>> LINDY SINKA: I'm short. All right. Thank you all. Thank you Kathy for that introduction and thank you everyone for being here today. We couldn't have done this without business participation.

These businesses have been extremely instrumental in this program's success and we appreciate all that they've done and continue to do for students throughout the state.

I would like to introduce Kalem Krim, she is one of our manufacturers, raise your hand, she is a wonderful partner and we appreciate her being here today.

Next to Kalem, we have Christina Thomas from the northeast Florida builder's association. She was very instrumental as was FEFTA in creating this program in the Jacksonville area.

Seated next to Christina we have David Iaccerelli from American electrical, he was one of our partners for our Jacksonville program. We really appreciate you being here today.

And our moderator will start the panel discussion, so please feel free to ask additional questions as we move forward and thank you for being here.

>> We got in one going. Allison

>> We're out of time now, thank you very much.

>> Getting my steps in this morning. Yeah, I want to thank the panel and when I first heard about this project, I thought this was amazing cause we're really dipping

into the industry that normally we don't dip in, so this has been great.

I have some questions I can ask the panel but I really had rather open it up and ask any questions you all may have about this. Anybody? Oh, Joe?

>> So amazing project and Joe, I'm from California so a little bit away from here, but for the business partners on the panel, if I was going to be engaging with business out in California to do a very similar project, what's your best advice to me?

>> For me? Your best advice on how to engage with business partners? Okay.

One of the things that made this very successful for us at united space coast cables is working with Employ U. Again I'm not sure if Employ U is out there, but maybe it should be. But we were connected through Employ U into vocation rehab. Having an understanding of the companies you're working with the understanding the culture within those companies and fostering that kind of rapport where you know what they're like and how they work, and understanding the students.

And knowing who they are, what they're capable of, what they're key care-about are, what are their interests?

Because when you connect the right kids with the right companies, you're going to have that success model. That's my best recommendation. Anybody else?

>> Ours -- my recommendation would be two fold. We're the northeast Florida builders homeowners' association so we are the largest home builders association in the state, but trade associations exist not only for the construction industry but all other industries.

And it was a great opportunity. I work with over 200 employers in the area. And it's a great way to get a lot of people. You kind of cast a wide net and have a couple of your larger employers interested. So I would tap into those resources, community organizations and associations in your area that might meet regularly.

Secondly the other thing that made this attractive for us was we have an adult apprenticeship program. We do a lot of outreach in the community to engage young people through the schools and through different avenues so that might be another avenue as well, find where there's some adult pipe lines that these students might eventually feed into.

>> So as a school board member in Brevard County I can tell you cause I sit on the economic development council's executive board, I sit on a couple of the other associations, you have to have all your ships going in the right direction in the stream.

The other piece is, so with that respect you have to have a representative from each one of those association, because of the personal touch they have to the businesses.

When an individual that they trust goes to them and says hey, this is a supported program that you might want to take a look at, it's a whole lot different than a cold call coming in from the outside.

That supportive association along with other individuals inside the community are the key to getting that door opened. And then showing a small success which they did in Brevard County. I wanted to build it to a thousand kids, but they said keep it small and successful and build it from there was the ultimate so that people like united space coast cables would come on board see the success and come on.

You have to have your career sources, your vocational rehab, working together, home builders, manufacturers associations all of them coming together and a lot of that has to do with driving it through the schools because you can't have a success if you can't get the kids. So you can have all those people out there and then you don't have the school board driving it, that's the issue.

And if I could say there's one key we're seeing in Florida was the issue was us giving the referrals to the business toss get it out there. And I think that's a huge, huge step to go through and I have no problem with anybody here wants me to contact their local school board members so I can tell them about this program and

join on board.

They're doing a derelict of duty if they're not working with these kids. If they're not out there trying to get these kids jobs and working with vocational rehabilitation organizations, then they have a dereliction of duty and one of the biggest things I can see -- one of the biggest things that you see when you go to the homeless shelters, especially inside my district I see a lot of the kids with disability that were never given the opportunity who are lost souls, we cannot have that happen.

We want to talk about graduation rates and other things that are going on, but we're not talking about what we're doing with kids with disabilities. We have a federal stand aside that 12 percent of the work force and some of our manufacturers that are doing government jobs in Brevard are supposed to have people with disabilities and they're never audited to do it.

So it's a combination of getting all the ships in alignment, call out your school board. Start doing it, say this is for your kids. You'll get the parents of those kids standing up and get those elected officials through. Then work with the business partners once you've got them all in alignment and the sky is the limit.

If I can do anything you want me to call your school board member out, I don't mind doing it. All the wait from Brevard County.

We're kind of loud in Brevard, but the other thing is I'm bringing this as a national issue, or a statewide issue to the Florida school board association so that is going to go on in May when we have our statewide conference and I'm going to be presenting to all the school boards there, all 67 counties. So it needs to start within and move on from there so that's all. Sorry I talked a little bit lodge

>> That passion right there is the reason this program is successful

>> That's exactly right.

>> Yeah. And I know we need to move along but real quickly, two words, tell me what would make this better, just tell me two words. How can we improve this? More students?

>> Yes so I'll speak to that. My name's Michelle Masline, and this was my little brain child. So it really does come down to all of the ships in alignment, just as Matt said because if one of those ships turns, it all falls apart.

So collaboration, that would be my first word. Everybody has got to collaborate and work together to make this successful.

The next word would be students. Matt hit the nail on the head when we didn't have enough students this past summer, we were very -- we were successful on a small scale in 2018 with our first project.

But we -- in 2019 we had no idea how many employers were going to join us in this program and they were begging for students and we could not get enough students to join us.

And that was -- it was disappointing. Fortunately for us, we had our superintendent attend graduation and he heard it firsthand so we can address it on a local level but it's got to go across the nation. It's got to go across the state.

So collaboration and students would be my two words.

>> Very well said. Anybody else want to say anything?

>> I do, it's more than two words though.

I wanted to add to -- one of the reasons why U.S. cc had embraced this is where we are, and I don't know what it's like throughout the rest of the country in different counties, but there's an aging talent pool in Brevard County and there's a short age of talent.

So particularly when you're a small business, and you've got large companies like Harris corporation, DRS, Collins, Lockheed Martin you've got all these large companies around, they suck up those experienced skilled workers. They absolutely do.

So what you need to do is find, as a business, creative ways of adding to your

talent pool and building talent for yourself and grooming folks to work for you.

So my recommendation also would be direct -- you know work with smaller companies in your area if that's a challenge. We look at it as an opportunity to not only give back to the community by working with these students and giving them the on-the-job training they'll need to be successful when they graduate. Our hope is that they want to am could back and work with us. That's our first priority. We'd love to hire them. We have several that we've worked with that 23 they want to come work for us when they get out of high school, absolutely they have a job.

If they don't, and they find a job someplace else, to me that's success as well. It doesn't matter if it's with us or somebody else.

And if we could be part of the success of these kids' futures, say they work with us for a couple years, and then go on to get higher-paying job at a large company, that's success as well.

It's providing a career path for these students who may not necessarily have had a defined career path for them already established.

>> I have just a couple more minutes.

>> Hi. As the facilitator and as I've worked with all of these organizations and others, one thing that was really important was planning to scale up, and planning to scale up means several things.

It means building your capacity with all of the partners. It means building your capacity as an organization. And it also means education.

It means educating the parents about these industries. It means educating them about the opportunities, the pay scale, and the future in these industries as a growing trade.

And growing industries, in their specific geographic areas. We are talking about students and if the parents are not supporting their sons and their daughters to participate in a program that maybe they didn't think would be a good fit for their son or daughter they be the program would not be successful.

So having the parents support through education and giving them the information they need in terms of the industry growth, the salaries, the benefits, the credentials, the certifications and what a future in manufacturing or the trades would look like for them, it's really instrumental because I think there are a lot of misconceptions about manufacturing, about building, about construction and trade.

There are so many jobs in each of those industries from project managers, admin, logistics, production, engineering, the jobs are really countless in each of those industries and I think that education piece is really crucial for success in whatever industry program that you're looking to implement in your area.

>> Thank you. I would like to thank our panel on this project -- oh, yeah.

>> So I made the offer for you guys to reach out to me and I'm serious about that. So I had them in the back put up my name, my office number and my e-mail. If you guys can put that up now. My first name's Matthew, Susan is my last name. My phone number, they're about to put it up there.

Do you have the card back there? I want you guys to reach out to me because I'll tell you this: What we're going to do in Brevard is I'm writing a school board policy that every kid as soon as they turn 14 will have to fill out the form or sign a form for vocational rehab that says they opt out, but every student is going to have the opportunity in Brevard County.

The next step is regional job placement and job fairs geared not only around children with disabilities, I would love to talk to your school boards about this, and any of you that so I can help you understand.

Did my number get up there? Okay. Thank you.

>> And I have to say a lot of these are going to hang out a little bit if anybody wants to ask specific questions afterwards but at this time we're going to -- I'm going to call

my colleague, Robert, up. We're going to shift panels. And let you hear about a successful partnership with the blind services of Florida.

>> Oh, and also, Employ U you have to have a good agency and they are amazing. All right. Sorry. We have other agencies that aren't so –

>> All right. Welcome back everyone. Great job to the folks over at the division of voc rehab really share that program, so I want to give them another round of applause if we can. Really good stuff. And Matt Susan we've got your phone number so we'll be reaching out.

So the division of blind services we're actually going to be presenting on two different success stories this morning. And the first of the success stories, it really involves some work that we had looked at the Vermont progressive work project a number of years ago and it kind of builds on some of the engagements that we learned through that process.

And so we've got a great team here from our Jacksonville office, Dan O'Conner who is our assistant district administrator, actually is going to be our new district administrator coming up soon and he's going to help lead this presentation, but -- he and other members of our team, so I want to recognize our team members as well. I see Stacy here and Madeline and the folks here on the panel as well.

A really high production team. I really do want to recognize them for all the high production but they're going to be sharing first of all a work experience that went from that progressive employment strategies and really showing how, use those strategies they were able to take an individual who really was not getting, seeing a lot of opportunities and moving forward where she ended up seeing multiple students and we're going to start there and then talk with OMNICOMMANDER and then a division of voc rehab with a deaf blind student and how we were able to work with her in the school. So without any further delay I'm going to turn it over to Dan.

>> DAN O'CONNOR: Can everyone hear me?

In looking at this, I was trying to look at some situations where there would be some true collaboration, also looking at the employers that would be receptive and kind of maybe looking outside the box. And also just the various steps along the way that I just want to explain.

When we're working with clients, there is the up front piece that is very important. We contract with centers community rehabilitation programs around the state to adjust to people's vision loss and have the skills to be as independent as possible and also job ready.

Once they get to that point, then we do what we call qualifying job assessment, QJAs, to try and have assurances that they are job ready and also any further guidance that might be needed.

And that's where we have -- I'm going to introduce everyone here in just a moment but we have John Mosley, our employment specialist around the state. Around the state we have employment placement specialist that is work very closely to try and seek out employment opportunities for the clients and also have some further preparing for them. And so I just want to introduce John Mosley here. He does a great job and was instrumental in some of these employment contacts.

Also I just want to take a quick moment to introduce our statewide employment consultant, Stacy Smith. Can you stand up for a moment in the audience, Stacy?

Okay. Stacy has been really great in trying to bring about opportunities around the state. Director Doyle mentioned the Vermont project. I think many of you have known that in the past for harder to place clients.

And really, even though we don't do that anymore, we still take a lot of the aspects of that in what we do with weekly meetings with our employment placement specialist, going through the list of clients that are job ready and really exploring

what kind of employment options could be available, what kind of work experiences, job shadowing many of the things that DVR had mentioned.

So without further ado I'm going to introduce first, I guess, OMNICOMMANDER here and then we'll go to the next one.

We have -- now I did have them provide bios so maybe they can introduce themselves with their own. Is it Kara Tucker right next to me? She's actually chief of disabled services and ADA coordinate for the City of Jacksonville.

And that's the place that we started with, with our client here, former client, Jessica moss. And next to her is Kevin McDaniel. He was the previous chief of disabled services. He happened to be in town here so he's joining us as well.

And then we have James Harrington who is the actual employer that hired Jessica moss with OMNICOMMANDER and that's a business he'll tell you much more, but it was -- their main focus is on assessing different employers. A lot of them being federal employers but also private employers with the accessibility of web sites and even further than that, different forms and types of accessibility.

Then after him is Jessica moss. She is the one that really started by taking this on. First through the division with volunteer experience that we overlapped with a paid work experience with a stipend. We just to help compensate a little bit we have a flat six dollar an hour stipend that we give and DBS incurs any kind of liability that could occur. And then question also helped with any kind of transportation expenses, and anyway I'll leave it at that and I'm going to pass the mic down.

>> Jessica has been one of my employees, she's worked with our 508 compliance. Part of our job at the city to make sure the city's web site is compliant so she reviews the web sites with her screen reader and I know she also working with OMNICOMMANDER. She's a great employee, still works with us and it's an honor to have her

>> All right. Hey everybody I'm James Harrington and I'm from OMNICOMMANDER. We have Jessica as one of our employees, but OMNICOMMANDER is a web site design company, and a fully out sourced marketing agency.

So it's a pleasure to be here.

>> I'm pat tee Tauch. I'm the director at Orange Park kindergarten and I got a call last year. If I could have a volunteer come into my classroom who was deaf and mostly blind.

And I thought it would be a good opportunity for me and for the children, and so I said yes. Lauren came in to the classroom. She's wonderful. She works well with the kids. The children love her. And so by the end of her volunteer time, I offered her a job and she now works with us in our preschool. She works with kindergarten students and four year olds.

Hello again. My name is John Mosley. And talking about Lauren and our situation with Patricia over at her school, Lauren was the excellent candidate for the position that she had open. But in order to get to that point, one of the most important parts of that was her grandparents. When we met with them, before we even went out to do job search, they already had a plan.

They already had a idea on what they wanted to do to assist her in employment. And their idea and the ideas that we put together worked perfectly.

And in a matter of weeks, we were able to find several location that is were willing to bring them into their program. But we found the best. And she is doing a excellent job, but we could never have gotten there without the grandparents so I wanted to make sure that we let everybody know that without their participation, that this process would be a lot harder. So parents and -- play a very, very important role in employing some of our clients with disabilities.

>> Hi. I thought I would say a few words. I'm Lauren's DBS counselor, Nancy bit day and as pat tee has spoken and John as spoken, it is a collaborate effort: Work experience that Lauren was able to do give the opportunity for the employer to see

how well or not how well, a person could do in that setting.

Thank you. She did very well. And shined and she was able to offer Lauren a position and she scooped it up and Lauren's happy working with her group of kids.

I just want to say it's a textbook kind of situation where you do a work experience and offer that employer that ability to see if it's going to work for them.

Then they are able to offer a position or not and they do, and then we go to making sure that the client has everything in place and monitor for that closure, cause that's what we're gearing towards, finding employment for the individual. And we were able to successfully do that and I was happy about that.

>> I would like to say another thing, though. With Lauren in our classroom, not only is she able to work with the kids in the room, but we're also teaching the children sign language. So that they can communicate with Lauren and she can communicate with them.

And I think it's important for everyone to be exposed to everything. And that learning new things like sign language is fine. I know Lauren's a little impatient because it's slow. It's slow with the children, but we're working on it and they are getting it. I think that's important and also something that needs to be told if you're going into the classroom. That it's not just Lauren helping the children. It's the children also helping Lauren so it's a two-way thing.

>> Good morning everyone. My name's Kevin McDaniel I was introduced earlier. I was the previous chief of the division for disabled services currently working in Colorado. I wanted to start by saying how excited I am just the fact that we're all here talking about this today.

I remember when Jessica joined our office what, four years ago, five years ago?

>> Approximately

>> Approximately. You know we -- we had the city of Jacksonville at the time was in the process of working through an incredible culture change from an accessibility standpoint. We were given a mandate of five years to remediate our accessibility issues through our web sites and our pdfs, our documents, among other ADA issues.

But when Jessica started with us, one of the things she talked about was accessibility. And given our programs are advertised through on line programs, it was kind of you know one of those no-brainers, well that should be accessible to everyone.

So one of the first things we asked her to work on was helping us navigate that environment. And I thought that it was really important and we all thought it was important, that we have feed back from the community. It's really one of the requirements.

And I think that when Jessica joined us, the value in having the community be part of the solution was so obvious from day one. We were so excited to have her come in, go through the training, learn the position, learn what would be needed from a usability and accessibility standpoint and it just became immediately very clear that -- the value that we have in bringing the community in.

And so you know I want to first just -- I'm going to introduce Jessica, but I want to thank OMNICOOMMANDER and division of blind services for helping us bring that -- it's about the connection, bringing folks together.

There are so -- there is so much work to do. We've come so far but there are so many opportunities to engage the community in building these partnerships, take advantage of a labor pool that's under utilized and is often cut out of the hiring process, the application process.

So this was a very critical point in our division's history, really. Bringing folks from the community, I mean you have to -- you need feed back. You can't assume you have all the solutions. And when I started in the division we had I think four employees and now we're up to 15, 16 and that's engaging the community and

trying to understand what we can do better, given all the work we have to do.

But that said I really am so excited we are all here talking about this but I want to introduce Jessica moss who has just been amazing and I would love to have her perspective, so Jessica, and thank you for everything Jessica

>> Okay. Hey my name is Jessica moss. I was a client with DBS for years who helped me find the position at disabled services which I unfortunately didn't even know existed until it was brought up to me and I went in for an interview and not really knowing what to expect and they hired me.

And I have really been enjoying testing the various portions of the web site for 508 compliance and I started out just having to send massive amounts of e-mails or different things that I found wrong with the sites and things of that nature.

I went from sending a mass quantity of e-mails to just logging things in a spreadsheet and they in turn introduced me to OMNICOMMANDER, which I absolutely love because it's like a new adventure every day.

And I do a lot of the same things, but with different web sites and of course no two web sites are exactly alike. And I like that we're about to branch things out into a new direction and not just limit ourselves to credit union web sites any longer and so that we can avoid things like lawsuits.

If somebody finds a site to be inaccessible and we can do a lot of the heavy lifting that a lot of the designers of these web sites may not know where to even start with, so that's just been a pleasure, just all the way around.

>> And we'll try and capture a little bit with both but just to make sure everyone has an opportunity, can Lauren Blanton also say a few words through our interpreter?

>> Good morning, everyone. My name is Lauren. And I really enjoy working with all the kids. They're wonderful. I enjoy teaching them sign language. They teach me things and I've been very happy there.

>> Is Lauren, thank you for saying that, we know you're happy there and we're happy for you, as well.

It's definitely a collaborative relationship. Lauren, with our sister agency and DBS were able to provide her with the tools she needed to be successful at her placement.

So I just want to use those words, collaborative and we were flexible, director Doyle.

>> Okay. And we'll open up to the greater audience here in just a moment, but also I think to add to what Nancy was saying I believe DVR also assisted with Lauren getting the certification that was needed to be an assistant, is that right

>> Yes

>> All right. Just want to make sure there's the due there that needs to be also they're in the here, but we also work closely with career source, the one stop centers. They're a very important part of WIOA. We meet weekly at a location on the north side. And John is always meeting there with clients, usually we have a liaison in a also helps facilitate employment options, getting people registered with employ Florida, so that's a key linkage.

I think just I'm really impressed with both of these employers just for again giving the opportunity and going back to OMNICOMMANDER, I really see this as an opportunity going forward. I mean with the Americans with disabilities act, I mean if we think what is usually the first thing that comes to mind?

Usually it's physical alterations right? And kind of accessibility in a physical way. I think the last aspect that has just now really started to catch on is accessibility with electronic aspects, web sites, forms, effective communication, which affects various disabilities but probably first and foremost, people with vision impairments.

I was talking with James Harrington just a few days ago and I think it's still pretty

staggering when he told me that the percentage of businesses that are actually truly accessible with their web sites.

Anybody want to have a guess at what that percentage is?

Anybody?

>> 20?

>> Much lower. From what he told me, it's only 3 percent is that right?

>> So yeah

>> Let me have you elaborate

>> Yeah, so we did a forum on a pool of a million web sites and found that less than 3 percent of them actually adhered to WCAG 2.0 level AA. So is there's a lot of web sites out there that need to be accessible.

>> Okay. I appreciate that, and that's just want to be cognizant of our amount of time.

The other thing director Doyle wanted me to emphasize the challenges again with these clients. There was a significant barriers going back to Jessica and you can certainly chime in, Jessica, with me, but she had very limited work history over many years, some work experiences going way back with DBS.

And then she had her own business that she was trying to sell food product, what was she was having a hard time with any significant sales. Then she has a high school diploma but didn't have any education beyond that. Had pretty good technology skills.

But the other barrier is she had -- was a single parent, had some support from her mother, but there was scheduling challenges with a young child where she only had a small window of being able to work.

So the nice thing, you know, she had a couple days of work doing the work experience and then the division of disabled services hiring her on a couple days a week.

But then when OMNICOOMMANDER came about and again, Kevin McDaniel saw the advertisement there, where they were actually specifically looking for people with vision impairments, he facilitated that, but that allowed her to be able to actually work from home and adjust her schedule accordingly.

So it gave her the flexibility that was needed and also a pretty decent hourly rate of pay right, 20 -- started at 20 -- I don't know what it is now but \$20 an hour. So it was not just a, you know modest hourly rate of pay. It was a nice increase there from what she was getting previously. So anything to add on that? Hopefully I captured a little bit on the barriers and kind of that -- the different transition points

>> Yeah. I did used to work the gourmet cupboard for a while. Somebody I met on line got me into that, and it was fun to a point but at the same time the web site was very inaccessible from the main page of the web site to the back office, which was even worse and the bad thing about it was there were -- the verification captures that you had to fill in everywhere and there was no alternative method to use. So I had to constantly have sighted assistance with it or something like -- I can't remember what it is now, but basically it was -- I think it was called web vision, it was an automated tool that worked with fire fox and it was supposed to solve them, but now that's no more.

And they weren't in any big hurry to get rid of them, make any kind of modifications to the site or anything. I mean everything was pretty much no, no, no. And it just got very frustrating very fast and I'm actually very glad to be where I am now because things are a lot more flexible and I have time to balance my work life with my home life. And I don't know if this is appropriate to bring up here or not, but what I would really like to see happen is for things in the accessibility realm to expand to things like the everyday school system because I have a lot of trouble with that, especially where my daughter's teachers are concerned. And everything on top of that has gone digital.

So there's a lot of up loading of photos and things that I don't have a clue as to

what they are, but yet you know we as parents of course are expected to help with homework assignments and know what our child's agenda is, but if the agenda is a photo that whatever screen reader of choice you choose to use didn't going to pick up then you're out of luck, so that's pretty much it in a nut shell

>> Thank you Jessica and also I want to add another linkage I didn't say previously that we often utilize rehab engineers to further assess the accessibility of equipment utilized and any kind of adjustments that would be needed, whether it's additional software or upgrades with the computer.

That was very instrumental too, just to give input with the division of disabled services as well as her tasks with OMNICOMMANDER. Turns out she was able to -- well we often use additional software on the outside like jaws screen reading software, zoom text enlargement software, she was utilizing the Mac computer that had some pretty good built in accessibility and turns out needed an upgrade with that so also purchased a new Mac computer for her.

I think the other thing, too, I'm going to bring the mic down -- oh. The other reason for choosing the employer with Orange Park kindergarten and having the example with Lauren Blanton is I believe the -- statistically it's got to be very challenging for people that are deaf blind finding employment, especially in that setting.

I think there's been other previous clients with vision impairments trying to be teachers' assistant and there's a lot of obstacles in the school system and even in some cases with child care. There's just a lot of concerns with liability or kind of fear factors with safety.

So I just want to welcome, again, Orange Park kindergarten for being so receptive and really seeing it as an opportunity for the students and Ms. Blanton there to further educate and find ways to think outside the box. So thank you very much.

>> This is Lauren again. I just want to add something. I do want to say thank you to everyone who participated in helping me get this job. Especially Orange Park. Because it's given me an opportunity to be gainfully employed.

It's been a wonderful place to work. I like it very much. I'm very grateful for the opportunity and that everyone was involved to make this happen for me because it's been a great learning experience and I have enjoyed it so much. So thank you to all the individuals who worked so diligently and also to make sure that I had communication available for me while I was there.

And I'm looking forward to being there for a very lodge time. Working with kids is really wonderful, as many of you know. And it's been a great learning experience. I've learned so much, just being there and having this opportunity provided to me, for me -- for my employment.

>> Thank you Lauren. I just want to end all this with saying, yes, we do have challenging cases, if you want to look at it that I way. We usually don't in the Jacksonville office.

Every case is an individual, but our biggest challenge is our team approaching businesses. And getting them to, per se, buy in to we have a qualified applicant that may do well in your setting, give us the opportunity to show you.

And that's what it's all about with businesses. There are many businesses that are reluctant to hiring disabled individuals. And you know with the team we're trying to tap in to those businesses across our district that we need to reach.

But we're very grateful for all the businesses that are here today and that have opened their doors to disabled individuals. And I want to thank you.

>> I understand from director Doyle there's only about five more minutes left. It's always hard to capture everything in the limited amount of time, so I don't know if the employers just have a few words just to kind of capture in essence, what -- any last parting thoughts before we turn it over to the audience for just an opportunity for a

few questions?

>> I'm Kara Tucker, disabled services city of Jacksonville. One of the things I wanted to bring up, we have our mayor's disability counsel. That's 13 individuals that are cross disability that represent and we also have representation from vocational rehab and division of blind services and we have an employment sub committee where we do ADA employment symposiums throughout the year to help individuals with disabilities find employment, and we're working on our partnership with the chamber of commerce, as well so it's important to engage everybody as much as you can in your community leaders.

>> Want to see if James has any last thoughts. >> Given we're talking about partnerships, I think it's important that we talk about how we engage those partnerships. The division hosts an annual job fair and employment symposium, the intent of it is to connect people of all abilities to employers with specific needs.

I say that to say again thinking OMNICOMMANDER and James for being here, because for this particular case from an accessibility standpoint, this is a market that is maturing. It's very far from maintenance mode, in my opinion, and so there are a lot of opportunities for people to receive this training, to go to the training. Well paying jobs and being part of the solution when we're seeing such an up tick in compliance which is long overdue, so with that said I want to -- and James in your experience how is that worked, you know the feedback? What's the difference between utilizing people who have the certification versus citizens who actually have the experience?

>> Yeah. Absolutely. So great question. And one thing that my boss Eric always says he uses the analogy of a chili cook off and we're out here creating content that's accessible and it's one thing for us to put our cookie -- or goodness, our chili out there and judge our own and say hey, let's have individuals use jaws, voice over and all these other forms of the assistive technology and have actual real user input. So that's kind of --

>> Yeah, nothing about us without us.

>> I want to see if we -- Orange Park do you have any comments before we close out?

>> All right. So again I want to give this panel another round of applause, really big could you do to our employers, our district office and the I didn't get a chance to introduce Madeline Davison, all the way in the back. She's in Jacksonville and Gainesville and the team report to Madeline and we have a high functioning team here from John and Nancy. Really appreciate the City of Jacksonville, Orange Park, OMNICOMMANDER because one of the things we've taken situations where we've had folks who were not progressing well, and been able to overcome a variety of barriers and get those individuals into jobs, and also we were meeting a need for the employer. That's a big thing. Maybe something they didn't immediately recognize, but we opened some doors up so I want to congratulate you all, thank you for being here and thank you for giving us your time and attention today.

So I believe we are at a break right now. We're going to reconvene at 9:45.