

- Welcome, everyone. We'll get started in a few minutes. Thanks for joining us today. For those who are just joining us, welcome. We are going to get started in a few minutes. All right, we're going to get started. Thank you to all of you who have joined. Hello everyone and thanks for joining us today for our Preparing Justice-Impacted People for Infrastructure Jobs webinar. This webinar is a part of a wealth of different programming provided to you this Second Chance Month through the National Reentry Resource Center. My name is Kayla James. I'm a Senior Program Associate at the Vera Institute of Justice or Vera and I will be moderating today's discussion. A note of housekeeping before we get started. This session again is hosted by the NRRC and will be recorded and shared. It's my pleasure to introduce our first speaker, Jessa Wilcox, who serves as a Senior Policy Advisor for the US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance. Welcome, Jessa.

- Thank you so much. Hello. As Kayla just said, my name is Jessa Wilcox and I'm a Senior Policy Advisor at the Bureau of Justice Assistance or BJA. Thank you for joining us at this webinar, one of many that we will be hosting as part of Second Chance Month. Before our presenters get started, I just want to spend a few minutes providing some background on BJA. Next slide. BJA is located within the Office of Justice Programs or OJP, which is part of the US Department of Justice. OJP provides a wide range of services to the criminal justice community in the form of funding, training, research, and statistics. Next slide. Under the direction of Director Moore, who was appointed by President Biden in February 2022, BJA's programmatic and policy efforts focus on providing a wide range of resources, including training and technical assistance, to law enforcement, courts, corrections, treatment, reentry, justice, information-sharing, and community-based partners to address chronic and emerging criminal justice challenges nationwide. BJA's mission is to provide leadership and services and grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support state, local, and tribal justice strategies to achieve safer communities. BJA works with communities, governments, and nonprofit organizations to reduce crime, recidivism, and unnecessary confinement and promote a safe and fair criminal justice system. Next slide. BJA activities support five major strategic areas related to improving public safety, reducing recidivism, integrating evidence-based practices, increasing program effectiveness, and ensuring organizational excellence. Next slide. And BJA supports these activities through funding, education, provisions equipment, and supporting partnership and collaboration. Through Second Chance Act funds, BJA supports a suite of competitive grant programs available to state, local, and tribal governments, as well as nonprofit organizations to support the implementation and expansion or enhancement of reentry programs. Each of our Second Chance Act grantees benefits from the expertise of training and technical assistance providers who support grantees in the implementation of their grants, as well as provide training opportunities and develop resources for the field at large. And before I pass it over to Kayla,

I just wanted to make note that BJA also funds and supports the National Reentry Resource Center, as Kayla mentioned, or the NRRC, which is the nation's primary source of information and guidance on reentry and the host for Second Chance Month. Please visit the NRRC to access Second Chance Month resources, which include webinars, videos, podcasts, and publications, and continue to visit the NRRC after April to learn about the latest reentry-related news, funding opportunities, learning events, and resources. So now I'm gonna turn this back over to you, Kayla, to talk a bit about the Second Chance Act. Thanks so much.

- Awesome. Thank you, Jessa. And so I mentioned earlier that I work with the Vera Institute of Justice and Vera's mission is to end the over criminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, immigrants, and people experiencing poverty. Vera harnesses the power of evidence to pilot real world programs and drive effective policies and practices, both in the criminal legal system and in the great immigration system in collaboration with government partners and community advocates. As Jessa mentioned, there are training and technical assistance providers that work with Bureau of Justice Assistance grantees. Vera is one of them. We provide technical assistance to grantees that are implementing education and employment programs. Vera is also working to connect those grantees to peer networks, best practices, and resources that will help them reach their implementation goals. So now that we have gone through our welcome, we've gone over housekeeping, heard from Jessa Wilcox about OJP and Bureau of Justice Assistance Investments, and I've shared with you a little bit about Vera, we are going to get into our discussion for today. So first we'll start off with some background and context about the infrastructure in the US, investments that have recently been made at the federal level, and the Second Chance Act. And I will briefly introduce our panelists for our panel discussion today. We will be including a questions and answers session. So please, as we go through the discussion, if anything resonates with you or you have any questions for our panelists, please ask a question using the question and answer feature located at the bottom of your screen. And finally, we'll conclude with some closing remarks and key takeaways. So the Second Chance Act. The Second Chance Act provides funding to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for youth and adults leaving detention and incarceration to return to their communities. Signed in 2008, it supports state, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations. It was reauthorized in 2018 and includes over \$500 million in grants to develop, implement, and test strategies. Today's panelists represent some grantees that are receiving investments from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, particularly under fiscal year 2021, Adult Reentry Education, Employment, Treatment and Recovery Program Grant. There were a total of 23 awards made, totaling \$20.4 million. And the goal of the grant is to improve the academic and vocational programs for incarcerated adults and result in improved educational outcomes. And to do this, there is work that is happening to

demonstrate increased collaboration between both educational providers, their corrections partners, community supervision partners, and other various reentry stakeholders. And so we're talking a little bit about the US infrastructure. So what has happened recently that brings this issue to the service? And so in November 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to strengthen US infrastructure in key areas such as green energy, roads and transportation, and more. The total investment is approximately \$1.2 trillion in spending, so a really large investment, and the investment itself is expected to create nearly 1.5 million jobs per year over the course of the next 10 years. So a really big impact. And so this slide provides more information about the areas that the investment will support. So for example, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will support advancing access to clean water, roads and bridges repair, tackling pollution, and improvement public transportation. And with all of these investments in infrastructure comes the need for workers to support implementation of these plans, especially those who are skilled in the industries of focus like clean energy, construction, roads and transportation, and utilities. Recently, Vera released a new resource highlighting the work that corrections departments and their employment, education, and reentry partners are doing to create critical job training programs for individuals while they're incarcerated to prepare them for high demand, high wage jobs post-release. Many of these jobs are in the areas of focus from the infrastructure bill. You can find this resource using the link that's located on the bottom of the screen or you can visit our website at vera.org. And so keeping in mind with these themes, new investments coming from the federal government, there's new surge and energy around getting folks into jobs pre-release, training, focusing on that to connect folks with employment post-release, and connecting all of these things together with the high demand for workers in the infrastructure. We wanted to highlight our panelists for today and so they'll have a chance to introduce themselves in a little bit more depth, but I wanted to highlight the great set of panelists joining us today. And those folks are Tracie Hightower, Education Administrator at the Oregon Department of Corrections, Andrew Cortes, Executive Director of Building Futures Rhode Island, and Joshua Steele, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education. So welcome to you all. And so now we're gonna transition into our panel discussion. So I'm going to take down our slides. I'm gonna ask the folks who are joining us for the discussion to turn on their cameras and introduce themselves. So we can begin in a moment. All righty. Awesome. So I can start with Andrew, if you could please introduce yourself, tell us a little bit more about your role and about how your program is preparing individuals for jobs.

- Sure. Thank you. I'm Andrew Cortes. I'm the Executive Director and founder of Building Futures, which is a nonprofit that's focused on leveraging the registered apprenticeship model, not only to meet employer need, but also to meet the need of our diverse community

residents who are experiencing poverty. And as part of that mission, we operate a comprehensive, construction-based pre-apprenticeship program which connects directly the participants and graduates of our programs to the jointly sponsored registered apprenticeship employment opportunities within the building trades. So all of those Infrastructure and Job Act sectors that you mentioned are near and dear to our hearts. Those are the places where we place individuals. And recently we've expanded our programming to be pre-release, behind the walls, and doing apprenticeship readiness programming to prepare currently incarcerated individuals for a smoother transition to our community-based program and on to careers.

- Awesome. Thank you. Tracie, could you do the same? Introduce yourself and tell us about the work that you all are doing in your organization to prepare justice impacted folks for jobs.

- Sure. Thank you. My name is Tracie Hightower. I'm the Education and Training Administrator for the Department of Corrections in Oregon. And what we're doing is we are using simulators through Baker Technical Institute to train heavy equipment operation. And so we're giving out certifications for passing all the tests that they have to have for the heavy equipment. And at a couple of our facilities, we're actually bringing out the heavy equipment and finishing off the 80 hours of hands-on training. So yeah, that's what we're doing.

- Awesome work. And Joshua, could you share with us the work that you do?

- So I'm Joshua Steele. I'm a Regional Director for the Skill Centers Division of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education. And what the Skill Centers do is they basically operate tech centers inside of the penitentiary system. So we've been around since 1971 and we use the grant to expand and try and get a little bit larger footprint in the community corrections part. But we teach trades from transportation distribution, logistics, welding, precision machine and tool, carpentry, cabinet making, HVAC, plumbing, electrical. I'm sure I'm leaving out something, but we got our hands in a little bit of everything, so.

- Amazing. Well, it sounds like you all are prepping to do and doing some really awesome work. Andrew, I want to share a question with you. For folks in the room who may not know or have heard the word apprenticeship used before but aren't quite sure what it means and you've now introduced to folks who aren't familiar pre-apprenticeships, can you tell us a little bit more about what a pre-apprenticeship is and how that differs from a registered apprenticeship program?

- Yeah, sure. And just to highlight, 'cause I never like to assume people know registered apprenticeship either, a registered

apprenticeship is a very time-tested and proven model of workforce development where occupational learning for a career happens on the job, which means that you earn and learn at the same time. So there's always a few critical components to a registered apprenticeship program, but it's always driven by an employer sponsor. There's always structured on-the-job learning. There's always related instruction that goes along to complement what you're learning on the job. And then there's always wage progression as a result of what you've learned. So it's a really equitable pathway to gain full competency in a career, which is why we love it so much and why we leverage it not only in the construction sector, but beyond the construction sector. Now, pre-apprenticeship is an oft-used term, but often misunderstood as well. So pre-apprenticeship is a set of strategies or programs that is directly preparing candidates and applicants for at least one registered apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with that program to do exactly that work. Now, beyond that basic definition, there's also a quality framework for pre-apprenticeship programming, which I encourage folks to take a look if they're interested in establishing a program in their own area. It's called Training Employment Notice 13-12. It's my favorite of all government documents and it outlines what it means to be a quality pre-apprenticeship program, not just a preparatory program, but one that provides supportive services, one that has an equity lens in terms of how they focus their efforts and ensures that there are proper preparation and handoff to ensure successful placement, retention, and completion of apprenticeship program once somebody enters employment. So those are sort of the key differences. And just to take it one step further, our community-based pre-apprenticeship program operates obviously outside of the walls and inside of the walls, we're doing a slightly modified version of a pre-apprenticeship program, which we would call apprenticeship readiness, where we're really exposing people to the balance of the construction trade career paths they may want to explore, getting them ready with some of the basics so that we can ensure a stable re-entry for that participant in terms of their social service needs and giving folks the leg up they need to understand what careers are available through construction.

- Awesome. Thanks for that distinction. It sounds like there's a really great opportunity to get folks as prepared as they can be to working on the outside in the fields that they're interested in with also a mind towards, like you mentioned, the quality of these programs and the equitable access to these programs for folks, wraparound services and supportive services, whether they're in the community or they are in our communities that are in correctional spaces. So thanks for that. Tracie, I wanted to ask you another question about your program model. Could you tell us a little bit more about some of the hands-on opportunities that there are for folks who are enrolled?

- So like I said, they're getting the simulation training on five different pieces of equipment. So they learn, I mean, it's pretty

interesting. They sit there just like you would, as a pilot would learn on a simulator how to fly a plane. They learn how to do the heavy equipment operation. But we also do forklift, flagger, and First Aid/CPR. We also do the resume writing. We connect them with our local WorkSources so that when they get out, they can look for jobs. And we also have a partnership with our Department of Human Services where if a student gets out and they still need that 80 hours of hands-on, that our Department of Human Services will pay for them to get that last 80 hours of training to finish out their certification.

- Awesome. Great model of having kind of partnerships across state agencies to be able to get folks out the information and resources that they need. Joshua, I wanted to ask you about the program that you all have. And you mentioned a bunch of different sort of industry areas and career pathways. And so what types of information and courses maybe are folks learning when they're in some of these career pathways, like certified production technician, welding, getting their commercial driver's license?

- So basically when we start our program, almost all of our students start in what we call a career readiness program. So that offers the basic life skills, the mock interviews, resumes, communication skills, and all that stuff. And once they get completely done with that, then we move them into the trade that we feel best suits them. So our welders, we're teaching them to pass, we have state competencies and those state competencies align with what it's gonna take to pass a weld test when they get out into the real world. So when they get done with our program, we send them out to a job, they have all the tools they need to pass a weld test. When we received the grant, we wanted to try and get a larger footprint in the community area. So when we did a background of what really the jobs that were around that area to where we could actually put them to work while they were still incarcerated, we identified that there was a lot of warehouse in that area, welding in that area. And then they were looking on anybody that could work on equipment in the warehousing industry. So along with our TDL program and we offer everything associated with the warehouse, forklift training, we also get all of our people an OSHA 30 card. And then from there, they decided, well, we'll expand the TDL portion with the certified production technician. And that kind of teaches them how to work on almost all the equipment related to the warehousing industry. So they learn poise and low voltage electrical and everything it takes to keep that equipment operational.

- Awesome. I appreciate you mentioning that you all sort of did an assessment to see what's in demand and what's the need in our area locally because we know that can change varying by jurisdiction and then matching up the program components to match that education, but then also to make sure folks have all the certifications that they need to be able to start right when they get out and be active members of their industry and employment. So we talked a little bit about your

programs' components overall. So maybe let's talk a little bit about eligibility. So who's eligible to participate in your programs and how do you all work to identify potential participants? And maybe we'll start with Tracie.

- So in our program, we have an application that we put out for our adults in custody, but they have to at least be two years before release. So that way, their certification, when they walk out the door, they're still good and that they're able to get a job with those certifications. We also expect them to have their GED or high school diploma already to do this program and then there are some disabilities that might keep them from this program if they're not able to get up onto the heavy equipment, they're not able to lift certain amount. So we have those conversations with them to make sure that they meet those requirements. But those are really the only requirements that we have.

- Other folks, Andrew or Joshua?

- Yeah, happy to weigh in. So with our pre-release programming, we're really looking at people who are at least three years from release, but ideally they have 12 to 18 months remaining on their sentence. And the main reason there is we have 120-hour curriculum, plus a therapeutic curriculum, which is working on some of the employability skills necessary, and we need about six months to cover that ground. We currently are piloting our program model within the minimum facility before expanding to all correctional facilities within the state. So we have a small group we did orientations. I brought in some of our folks with lived experience who have gained a good career path and become union officials as a result of their work through pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, on to become journey workers and now into their union officially as officers. They helped us make presentations. We gained a lot of interest. We had a selection process from there. The real candidate selection criteria sort of, yeah, you gotta express an interest in construction. It's not for everybody. It is definitely not an industry where you want to try out your first job or not be sure that you want to enter that industry. Apprenticeship is a career path, so we're screening for that. You have to be physically able to perform the work and that's just the nature of the physical nature of the work. In terms of a couple of case by case issues, candidates who either need a GED or a high school diploma in order to get accepted into a registered apprenticeship program. So if somebody is working or close to completing their GED, we'll take that on a case by case basis, depending on where they're at. And similarly with driver's licenses. So driver's license is required in order to work within construction. You go where the projects are and there is no public transportation which are gonna meet those needs. So we need to make sure that any of those potential employment barriers are handled prior to actual placement into employment as a registered apprentice. So we look at those issues. There are some great relief programs, but

if somebody owes a certain amount on their license, we may have to have a hard conversation around whether it's the right time to engage the programming, not because we are looking for them not to engage it, it's just that somebody else might benefit a little bit faster. So if somebody comes to us with a, never have held a driver's license, but it's pre-suspended with \$15,000 owed on it, it's gonna take us a while to work through those debts in order to get somebody their license restored. So we look at those issues and unfortunately, just because of the nature of the industry, we do need folks to be able to read, write, and speak English for the most part. This is non-residential heavy and highway construction. Some manufacturers' information data sheets around hazardous materials is all in written English as well as the vast majority of their supervisors, et cetera. So we have no problem with folks who are learning English as a second language. We may work with somebody once released on English language skills to ensure that they're successful once placed. So those are some of the basic requirements for the pre-release programming.

- Thanks. And Joshua, how about you? Program eligibility and getting folks enrolled.

- It's kind of all over the board, needless to say, where we're at the medium, minimum, and community level. So it changes a little bit at each one. One of the consistencies is they'll all fill out an application and then we have what we call an ability to benefit for them. So we score them on a scale of 250 and everybody that scores over 200's automatically in. If they're below that, we give them some things that they might be able to do to get their score over 200 and then they're in. But at the minimum level, we want them to be less than a year from discharge because we are training inside the facility, so we want to train them right up to the point of discharge so that we can lend a hand in getting them a high wage job as soon as they get out of prison. So part of our deal when we're trying to go to the community level is we might send some of our minimum guys that become community eligible down and just touch them up on the welding deal and then immediately put them out to work release 'cause we identified welding programs that'll hire our students and warehousing areas that'll hire our students. So that gives them the opportunity to make money so that we can address issues like paying off driver's license fines before we get out. So that was part of our big picture going down that way. Hey, let's see if we can get some real money in these guys' bank accounts. We'll give them a financial planning class towards the end of their incarceration, maybe guide them towards paying off some of these fines 'cause it's gonna be more beneficial to them and maybe point them in the direction of, hey, you still got first, last month's rent, we paid off all your driver's license fines, so now you're ready to get your driver's license. As you get to the medium, we have just a little bit longer because at our medium, most of those guys, we're trying to teach them to a actual journeyman's license. So they need two years. We have a electrical, HVAC, and

plumbing where the curriculum's been approved by the construction industry boards and therefore, it covers about half of their apprenticeship and then they have to get half of their apprenticeship through OJT training. So once they complete the curriculum in the OJT training, then we can bring someone in to actually from the state and they give them the journeyman license so that that way, when they get out of prison, they have a journeyman license in their possession. So some are a little bit longer, but for the most part, we're trying to keep our guys right until the moment that they discharge and then we have employment transition coordinators, four of them stationed throughout the state that helps get them upon release and helps them with maybe finding a place to live, maybe helps them with some food stamps to get some food to start off with, helps them find employment, and maybe helps them with transportation for the first little bit when they get out.

- Awesome. So when we're thinking about your programs, we mentioned some partnerships that might be going on. Tracie, you mentioned working with DHS. So thinking about that, what other key partners other than your organization help to keep your program running and who of those partners do the students interact with?

- Well, I can chime in. Needless to say, we got CDL on ours. So we partner with a couple of our technology centers. So the startup that we got going at the program funded through the grant, we partnered with Northeast Technology Center and they offer our CDL program. So not only obviously we partner with the Department of Corrections, but when it comes to transporting our students to and from the job, we've got a staffing agency that helps with transportation. We've got the DOC that helps with transportation. We're having to take them down to DPS to get their licenses reinstated 'cause they gotta have a regular license before they can go get a CDL license. And then we partner with the technology center themselves that actually provides the training for our CDL classes. And I'm sure I'm leaving out some other partners we got scattered throughout the state. We partner with anybody that wants to help our students.

- Yeah, as I mentioned earlier, we have the Department of Human Services that we partner with. Well, Baker Technical actually is partnered with them and we partner with Baker Technical and our WorkSource partners and then ODOT, our Department of Transportation has come on board. They will be taking over at least the training for our female facility to pay for that over the next four years for sure and probably longer than that, but they have decided they're gonna take that on and make it permanent for us. So that's our biggest partner, which we're happy about, so.

- Yeah, and much like my colleagues here, we have an awful lot of partnerships. So I neglected to mention that we're actually a latecomer to BJA and we're very happy to be a grantee. We've been in

operation for 15 years on the community side. So we've established a pretty robust partnership network. We do our pre-apprenticeship training specifically for our Department of Transportation. We place folks on heavy and highway projects specifically as well as the vertical side of our industry, commercial buildings, civic infrastructure projects, things of that nature, which means that we partner with contractor associations and trade unions quite a bit. We've placed predominantly within 12 different building trades unions. I'm very proud to say that and I saw a commenter with a suggestion that many apprenticeships historically have not had that equity lens or leniency around former incarceration. And I'm happy to say that's not the case in Rhode Island. So over almost 400 participants at this point, over 50% are justice-involved and over 45% are formerly incarcerated, yet we have less than 3% recidivism and no barriers towards placement. The unions are welcoming diverse candidates from all sorts of backgrounds into their ranks and folds. Sometimes you get project-by-project discrimination based on backgrounds, but it's not a barrier to entry in earning while you learn within the apprenticeship system. So there's a lot of different partnerships. We also, we fund in partnership with the Department of Labor and Training Apprenticeship Navigators who work with the WIOA-based system around any service that can be offered through the American Job Centers. As many folks know for many positions, but apprenticeships specifically, WIOA supports are huge. They can pay more than an average on-the-job training contract and to access the eligible training providers list, which provides an individual training account that can help pay for curriculum or supportive services, they're automatically qualified by virtue of the fact that they're a registered apprenticeship program. So we try to make the process as seamless as possible through our partnerships, which also include social service agency, community-based organizations around services that we don't offer in-house, as well as a variety of different employer and union partners. In fact, our building trades president is adamantly in favor of this program and so strongly in favor of it that regardless, they insist on coming in and actually speaking to the direct folks who are currently incarcerated because they want them to know that there is a great pathway where you don't have to return.

- Awesome. There's so much coordination and collaboration happening amongst your programs with other service providers, other state agencies and local agencies. So it's great to hear that you all are being able to expand this work through your BJA grants. So one question that I have, Tracie, that often comes up for DOCs is what changes have to happen to policy, if any, to operate programs like this, such as ones that involve use of equipment?

- So we didn't really have to make too many changes within our policies 'cause it basically, we just had to make sure that what we were gonna do is kind of go through the safety check and so they just wanted to know what was in the trailer. Is there anything that's gonna

be taken out when it gets pulled in and what does that look like? So it was more just kind of going through those safety checks and we basically set up meetings with each of our facilities as the trailer like a couple months before the trailer's gonna get there and start having some of those discussions of what it looks like and where it's gonna get parked and those types of things. But we really didn't have to change any policies for this particular program, so.

- Awesome. And so we talked a little bit about what happens during the program for participants, some of the in-class sort of opportunities and some of the more on-the-job-like opportunities. And speaking of sort of on-the-job and engaging with employers, are there opportunities through each of your programs for participants to interact with folks that are looking to hire folks skilled in these areas? And what are those interactions like? Are they formalized and part of the program structure? Are there informal opportunities for folks to meet with employers? And that question can go to anyone.

- I'm happy to jump in. All of the above. So there's both informal interactions with employers who have interest. We also formalize exposure to different career areas within the actual curriculum itself. And once folks are released, of course, there's an inordinate amount of opportunities for placements. Within formalized union construction, most of the training happens on the job. So our main point is to get people ready, prepared, and highly qualified for success within the registered apprenticeship programs. And generally the union is the gatekeeper into these jointly managed programs, not the employer, because in construction, you create a career out of temporary jobs, right? You move from an employer to employer. The hiring hall is a function of the union serves. So if somebody gets laid off on one project because you work yourself out of a job like you're supposed to, you go back to the union hiring hall, they put you on the list, they send you out to the next employer. So the direct employer connections are strong and plentiful, but it's not so much a direct hire connection. It's really around utilizing the unions as an intermediary structure for the placement and support of the individuals as they move from project to project throughout their career.

- And we, with our employment transition coordinators, as they start getting close to being released, sometimes we'll put them on the phone with employers and stuff like that and give them the opportunity to interview over the phone. As we update our internet capabilities inside all the correctional facilities that we have, we have started to use a little bit of the teams, and saying that, DOC's also reached out to us to start a training program for internet, for updating the internet in the facilities also. So maybe a new program we have coming our way here real quick. But on occasion during our mock interviews, 'cause a big part of what we do is we sit them down and we like to sit them down in front of people they don't know. So we'll bring in

instructors from other sites, but on occasion, we'll bring in actual employers who are looking to employ some of our people and set them on the mock interview and we kind of lay out to them, hey, it is a job interview, but we're also trying to help them with that being incarcerated question, how to answer that. So we're training our guys how to get past that question, not fumble through it so much. So part of our mock interview process, we do bring in places they don't know and sometimes that is an actual employer that's willing to hire some of them, and some of them have got hired there on the spot or said, "You're getting out in three months, we'll wait for you" type of deal.

- So again, we partner with our WorkSource and they either come into our facilities and get them signed up through the, 'cause our students can get online through our AIC net, depending on what it is. So they'll get them signed up for things through there or if it's not at a facility that we're doing that yet 'cause we're still rolling that out, then they'll connect with them on the outside. But we also do teams meetings with them, so we'll introduce them to the folks that they need to know on the outside. We've had a few employers that have come to our facilities to talk to people 'cause they were close to getting out, so they actually showed up and interviewed them at the facility. So it just varies. Baker Technical is a great partner. They've been around for a long time, so they have a lot of the connections with our trades folks and folks that need the heavy equipment and so they really just call them and let them know that we've got a class of folks that are leaving and try to help them get hooked up with interviews and jobs before they go.

- Awesome. That's great to hear that folks have the opportunity, whether it be on the outside or even before release to be able to be in front of employers, get connections to the unions who will get them connections to employers and be able to make some headway on the employment piece. That's great. And so we mentioned a little bit earlier about some supportive services that are available. Maybe talking a little bit more about that, what are some other services that are available outside of the instruction and job training that helps folks be better prepared for the workforce upon release? And we talked about a couple examples. I heard some work to secure documentation and identification, resume writing. What are some other services that help kind of support the holistic nature of your programs outside of the traditional instruction and training?

- Happy to jump in. We develop an individual service plan with each person we're working with, which sort of outlines the major employment barriers that they may be facing. And then we create a plan and triage that together and then work that plan together on solving those particular issues. One of the largest issues that is most difficult to work on is housing. It can be a significant challenge. We have a strong affordable housing crisis within Rhode Island currently. And for folks who are reentering the community, the earlier we can get a

jump on working on those issues, the better. We offer, there's a lot of great programs that we leverage in terms of supportive services. So we're able to, first, we are tuition-free. Second, we offer income support through a stipend once somebody is in our community-based program, which also helps on some of those other barriers. But we will arrange for English language services if necessary. We do math tutoring. We do math classes every day, but we'll do specific tutoring if somebody is choosing a trade that has a high degree of math requirements, like the electricians for instance requires a year of passing algebra. So if somebody doesn't have that, we'll work with them to get that. But then there's also the issues like food supports, so supplemental nutritional assistance programs. So SNAP benefits will help people access those. We'll also connect them to local farmers who will double the value of their SNAP benefit for locally produced organic foods. We do nutrition coursework, we do health and welfare work, we do workouts with a physical trainer. We do financial literacy. Much like Joshua and I'm sure Tracie as well, you have to treat the whole of a person if you want to see them succeed. Just dealing with some of these specific skills that are tied to an occupation is not enough. We have to deal with the context in which that person is living and operating so they're successful once placed.

- So yes, as previously stated, we have four employment transition coordinators scattered throughout our state. So much like the other, once we enroll them, we put them into our computer tracking system. So once we do that, we have what we call a life success plan. So once we fill out the life success plan on that student, it assigns them one of the employment transition coordinators from the very get-go. So constantly, you know, hey, you still getting out going to the same place because the geographic area determines which transition coordinator they're gonna wind up at. So we want to keep up, hey, you haven't had any change in plans in where you're going when you get out of prison, have you? So when they say no, they still got the same employment transition coordinator and they help with everything. We got two of them that are in the larger metro areas, the Oklahoma City and the Tulsa area. So they're able to get bus passes and provide transportation support. They're able to get the SNAP benefits, the food stamps, all that stuff lined out for them. We got Goodwill. They actually kind of provide training. So if you get somebody hired on with Goodwill, they kind of work in that warehouse industry, the TDL part that we instruct. So it's kinda like getting them a job, but they're good about handing out clothing vouchers and helping the people get some clothes along the way and everything. Like I said, it takes a tribe to make it work. So we have a lot of partners, but our employment transition coordinators are great about making those connections so that our instructors focus on instructing. They focus on handing them off to the employment transition coordinators and employment transition coordinators do that. When it comes down to the job interview, the employment transition coordinators may reach back out to the instructor to give them a few more pointers, getting ready

for the job interview and we've already ran them through mock interviews before we actually put them in front of the interview. So we get support from a lot of different areas. We work with nonprofits and religious communities to help provide housing for some places and there's some other nonprofit housing corporations for the people who don't have a place to go when they get out. So yeah, we connect with a lot of people and we provide a wraparound of support trying to give them as many tools as they can to succeed.

- And I don't really have much to add. We also have transition counselors, so I mean, they do pretty much similar things as both other states. So not really anything else to add.

- Thanks, all. Yeah, you all are doing some great work and some of the work that you've done to embed transition coordinators, transition counselors to help support that, plus your partners that are out in the community that can supplement some of this support you all are working with and providing services that are in these really tricky areas such as housing and transportation and making sure folks have access to food and clothing. So kudos to all of you for the work that you do. And so I know you all have been working on your BJA grants and maybe in different stages of implementation, but of course you all have mentioned that this work is not necessarily brand-new to you all, that you all have experienced working in employment and re-entry. So what are some of the results that you have seen with your programs, whether it be your BJA-funded program or pilots of similar programs? And maybe highlighting any successes that you've seen with folks that have graduated from your programs.

- So here in Oregon, we've ran the program at four different facilities so far. Every single person who's gone through has not just graduated, but graduated very highly with their scores. Our females pretty much threw down the gauntlet and basically told all of our male facilities that they were gonna get the top scores and they pretty much did. So that's been the competition now between who's gonna end up with all the top scores. We've only had so far, four or five of our students leave us and only three of them have reached out. Three or four of them have reached out and those that have have gotten jobs. And so they've finished out their hands-on training. Baker Technical took them through their training that they needed to do to get the hands-on piece of it and then they were hired. So the fifth one, I'm not sure if they once they went through it, that they were as interested maybe as they thought they were or they're just still trying to get their feet under them at this point. So we haven't heard anything from the fifth one yet at this point, so.

- And so you're right. Our BJA grant activities are fairly new. We are implementing a pilot cycle right now for nine individuals and let me come back to that in a minute. But in terms of the community-based program, within trade occupations, specifically jointly administered

registered apprenticeship programs within those 12 trade unions that I mentioned earlier, we have about 385 people who have entered successfully. I'm very proud of the fact that after one year, we have well over 90% retention and over 15 years, we have over 80% retention. So what we're doing and once we get people stabilized into careers through registered apprenticeship, they stick, which is great to see. And in terms of the demographics, roughly half of those folks are formally incarcerated, slightly less, and we have less than 3% recidivism. So we're very, very proud of those numbers. And it goes to show that when somebody can feed their family in a way that's productive to society, but at a family sustaining wage, there is less likelihood of re-offense. Just under 80% of our folks are people of color. About 10% of our graduates who have been placed into apprenticeship are female and as mentioned, about 45% are formerly incarcerated and over 50% justice-involved. So there's lots of good successes on the community-based side. What's interesting to me in terms of the correctional work is each facility is different. So what we are modeling right now at minimum gives us a sense of process changes, not maybe policy changes, but at least practice changes we have to implement. And each space is a little bit different. So already we're using the space that is available to us already. We're talking about expansion of the facilities available to us at minimum, even while we're considering other places, like when we move to medium and women's, it's very different. Medium has a great deal of industry areas where we can do large scale projects. Women's only has one vocational area that we'll have to share with a couple of other programs. So each time we are adapting our own practices to meet the specifics of the conditions that we're finding ourselves in. We just try to carry the same core principles in terms of what we're instructing and how throughout the entire program process. So we're very much learning in terms of the Department of Corrections setting. On the community-based side, we've had great results. And our goal here is really not to do direct placement from incarceration to apprenticeship. Our goal is really to successfully transition somebody to the community-based pre-apprenticeship program so that we can stabilize life conditions before doing the placement and also deepen the training. Perhaps they need to participate in our home building program to gain income supports and advance their skills trainings. It's a case by case basis once folks are released.

- So like the others, our grant programs are relatively new, so I don't even think that we've had any. Well, I take that back. We've graduated four CDL students yet, but I do not know that they have left to go to the job force yet. So with the exception of them, most of our students, we haven't had a completer yet to graduate to know what the recidivism is. But like I said, we've been around since 1971 as the skill centers in the state of Oklahoma and for over 50 years, we're somewhere between the 3 and 6% recidivism rate. So as a whole, when you talk about some years we're graduating somewhere around 1,500 students a year. When you're talking about 3 to 6% recidivism rate in

a year, you're doing pretty good there. So like I said, we're using the grant money to expand to a new deal to hopefully provide some more services and maybe hope with some of that, those boundaries we have as far as driver's license and stuff like that. So we're using the grant money just to kind of, to expand on that and maybe take down some of those barriers. Yeah.

- Awesome. Well, it's so great to hear, even in early stages of implementation, you all are already seeing success and folks are moving through programs and if your work outside of the BJA grants is any testament to the success that the folks will have under the BJA grants, I think we're in for a great set of successes that you'll see in the coming years with your grant. So definitely sounds like some great work. And as we wrap up our panel discussion, I want to give all of you an opportunity to share any advice you may have for your peers. Maybe they're another Department of Corrections, they're another state agency that works with Departments of Corrections, an education provider, a reentry service provider, anyone who's really interested in connecting folks who have justice impact, been impacted by the justice system to these jobs in the infrastructure. What advice do you have for folks that are trying to implement programs similar to the ones that you all have launched and are working with under your BJA grants?

- I think mine are simple. Be flexible, don't give up, and just keep pushing 'cause that's really the only way sometimes you get programs going is you just, you keep trying and keep asking. And being flexible is the biggest part though. You have to be flexible. Things happen every day in a facility that can shut you down for the day, those types of things. So those are my easy ones.

- Yeah, I'll take that advice. So no, we've had to be flexible as well. I think that is sound advice. I'll also say just involve all stakeholders. So for instance, before we even launched our programming, we set up an advisory committee with all the key stakeholders so we could talk about, create shared ownership over the programming, and work with people on every level that we'll need for program success. We involved the folks who are working within our correctional officers union. We involve the folks who are wardens, deputy wardens, the various folks on different shifts. We involve the top brass of the Department of Corrections, but we also involved the Department of Labor and Training to make sure that we had career counselors from the American Job Center system who could go in pre-release and start doing the assessments and get people qualified for WIOA, things of that nature. So just aside from flexibility, involve all critical stakeholders you need for success early and often and create shared ownership over the model.

- And I guess I would just say do something. After 15 years of working in a correctional environment in a different state, you learn that we

don't prepare these guys for anything. So after telling a guy, "Hey, here's all your stuff and here's your \$50. Good luck. Don't come back and see us." It's not gonna get any better. 30 days later, they're coming back and seeing me. I'm seeing the same guys walk right back through the fence. You gotta do something. We've got to do something to, you know, I used to tell the guys, "Hey, look, don't come back and see me because I've got plenty of clientele with the new ones coming in. I don't need you guys coming back." So give them some sort of tools. There's plenty of statistics out there that say highway journeyman guys can stay out of prison. Give them all the tools they need, the wraparound services. We teach them pass four or five, six welding tests to just to get one welding job. Do something to get them a high wage job in hopes of keeping them out of prison. I mean, if you're sitting idle expecting different results, it's not gonna happen. You're gonna have to put some work in and you gotta do something to involve them to get them out of prison, to keep them out of prison.

- Thank you all. This has been such a rich discussion. I've learned so much about the areas that you work in, your program models, and how you've been leveraging this opportunity through BJA to move your program models further. And so we're gonna move to questions from the audience and thank you to those who were dropping questions into that Q and A feature at the bottom of your screen. Please feel free to drop more questions into that Q and A function as we continue our Q and A. And so the first question is actually directed towards me, so I can quickly answer it. Can you repeat the grant that I mentioned? Yes. And so the grantees that are currently with us today talking about the opportunities that they're working with are grantees under the Bureau of Justice Assistance Second Chance Act, specifically the Fiscal Year 2021 Adult Reentry Education, Employment, Treatment and Recovery Program. It's a mouthful, but a great grant program. And there are other similar grants that are under the Second Chance Act that focus on education and employment for folks who are incarcerated and that continue to serve folks post-release. So thanks for that great question. The next question is towards Tracie. Tracie, you mentioned partnering with Human Services. Are you also partnering with the American Job Centers? They mentioned that they have adult and youth 16 to 24 who can assist with education, training, job readiness, supportive services, et cetera.

- At this point, we're not. In Oregon, we basically get the 18 and older. So basically our Oregon Youth Authority gets those that are up to 25 basically. So we have a really small even 18 to 24 year old population because a lot of them end up in OIA earlier and transfer to us when they're 25. So, but no, at this point, no, we do not.

- Thanks, Tracie. The next question is towards Joshua. Joshua, how do you get employers on board and is there any work they're doing to revise, for example, their background check process?

- The employers themselves, they determine whether they're gonna do background checks or anything like that. But what they found is it's hard enough to get a workforce anymore. And our instructors go out and we do what we call industry visits. So we're going out and talking to people, saying, "Hey, are you interested in hiring justice-involved students with training?" And we kind of, we lay out, tell them what our program's about, here's what we do, here's what they're gonna know. They're gonna have an OSHA 30 card, they know how to run a forklift, they can pass this test, this test, this test, this test. And they're like, for the most part, if you were full up of employers, you wouldn't be looking for employees right now. So a lot of them are to the point where, hey, we'll give it a try. And a lot of them, we've got guys tell stories, you know, hey, we sent him one and he didn't work out. Well, you're a little upset about it. Well, how many guys did you hire off the streets that didn't work out and I sent you 10 of them and only one didn't work out? That's a 90% rate of approval that you kept. And he's like, "You know what? You're right. Send me some more." So a lot of the guys, in the construction world, I never advertised. All I did was word of mouth got me the jobs that I needed. Well, it's kind of the same story here. Once you put a few to work here and there and then they start talking, it's pretty, "Hey, give them a try." We had some people from Florida visiting us that put on a little program for it and we did it. And when they went back, the people in Florida were telling them we're having trouble getting employers and they said, "Hey, have you thought about the prison system? Maybe go there and look for employees." So if you give them the right training and you teach them they gotta show up every day, they'll make a good hand. Yeah, you're gonna have your ones that don't succeed, but hey, you're getting guys off the streets that don't have a criminal justice background and they're not working out much better than the ones that do. So it works out in the end, but it's reaching out to those companies, having those conversations, explaining to them, yeah, you might get one that doesn't work, but how many of the others? So just multiple conversations with the business and industry world where we're trying to employ our people.

- Awesome. Thanks, Joshua. Another question in the chat that I think is open to anyone really mentions, and we alluded to it earlier, Andrew did, historically and still today, apprenticeships and other programs, particularly in the construction and trade industries, do not promote or support equitable access to those who have been justice-involved or people of color. The question becomes like, how can the work that you all do ensure that these obstacles and barriers will be removed so that everyone has an opportunity? So I think at the heart of that question is speaking about equity. I wonder if folks have thoughts about that, Tracie, for example, the work that you all have done to get women, particularly in the women's facilities, involved in areas of industry that aren't traditionally women-centered fields. Maybe you could talk about that and other folks, if you have

thoughts, feel free to hop off mute.

- So I mean, so in fact, we're being asked to train a lot of these folks because they're in need. But also, some of the laws in Oregon, you have to have certain percentages. Our heavy equipment for our females is gonna meet the female need for that because I mean, as you drive around Oregon, you don't really see that many heavy equipment operators when you see that happening. So I think that's one reason why our Department of Transportation stepped up and decided they're gonna help pay for that training to continue after the grant runs out. As far as our apprenticeships, again, in Oregon, we have not had any problems with our students, even in our juvenile students getting hired in apprenticeships. We have some really good partnerships here. Our BOLI, which is our Bureau of Labor and Industries, meets with us pretty regularly. And so, and if you look at most of their, a lot of their managers at BOLI are people of color. So we just don't have that issue that I have seen here in Oregon as far as especially our students getting hired when they leave. So they're actually asking us and partnering with us to send them more, so.

- Yeah, and I know I spoke to this a little bit, at least on the unionized construction sector, but just to add on that a little bit, there are also programs that specifically take an equity lens, which we can leverage, right? So for instance, if we're talking infrastructure investment, the Federal Highway Administration has an on-the-job training and supportive service program that is specifically designed to accept diverse trainees and incentivize contractors for accepting those diversified trainees, right? So figuring out what programs exist, leveraging those to your programmatic advantage all make sense. But just to Joshua's earlier point, it's the quality of the graduate who really will break down barriers, right? So if I can prove to an employer that a graduate of Building Futures succeeds at a much higher rate than somebody off the street, they don't need to care about my social mission or care about the particular ethnicity that somebody's coming from, right? They care about their bottom line profit margin, which is what a contractor is supposed to do. And if you're helping them meet that through a high quality applicant who performs their job well, you're gonna make friends and you're gonna break past those barriers because that's exactly how we did it in the early days of Building Futures is we had to prove it time over time again, right? We retain at a higher rate. You can look at an apprentice off the street versus somebody who came from our pre-apprenticeship and they will succeed and stick at a higher rate. So focusing on the quality of the programming really wins the day to break down those types of barriers. But there are also different ways in which you can sweeten, enlighten self-interest perhaps is a better way to put it, right? So if there's a place where there's an equity lens specifically on how we diversify highway construction placements, leverage that, demystify it for a contractor, take advantage of it so you can place more of your folks.

- Thanks for those perspectives. It sounds like a combination of, like you were saying, Andrew, myth-busting about folks that have justice involvement overall, but then when we're really trying to focus on specific dimensions of diversity like gender with Tracie's program highlighting women or thinking about ways to bolster involvement from people of color, folks who are English language learners, that we should be intentional about focusing our programs on that and leveraging programs that already exist that do that work too. So appreciate that. We have another question in the chat. Do any of you all help justice-impacted people with mental health before they transition into the community?

- Yes. So we have a licensed clinical social worker who provides a therapeutic curriculum during our BJA grant activities. We also have case managers on the outside and we also have partnership with mental health agencies in order to triage areas that are beyond the scope of our staff. But yes, we address it and we need to, again, to the earlier points, we have to deal with the whole of a person in the context in which they're working in order to help them succeed.

- For us, most of that falls under the Department of Corrections. They take care of all that while they're incarcerated 'cause we are a little bit different. We're doing this while they're still incarcerated. So rather than hire a mental health evaluator, the DOC takes care of all that and obviously they assess them for it and they identify their needs and then they treat them for their needs. But for those of us that do graduate and everything, we've got multiple people that have reached out to us that are very interested in helping us with that in geographic areas like the Northeast where we're going with Venita. We do have a partner company up there that's ready to help us with that upon post-release, should it come to that. So we do have partners that reach out to us saying, "Hey, we can provide these services." But for the most part, while our students are still incarcerated, the Department of Corrections handles that.

- Awesome.

- I was gonna say we are DOC, so we already do all of that.

- Thanks for that. So we had a couple of questions that asked folks about the interview preparation that some of you mentioned. So how do you all help your participants talk about addressing or addressing their background in an interview during that mock interview or in any other opportunities to prepare for an interview that's happening both pre-release or post-release? Any strategies that you all uplift?

- So like I said, we run them through a mock interview process. So even though our career readiness instructor may teach them on the interview process, all the dos and the don'ts and what we are supposed

to do and you aren't supposed to do, we don't know if they're gonna remember it until you put them on the spot. So that's why we try and bring people from, either from our instructors from another facility to that facility to do mock interviews or sometimes we bring somebody from out of area, but even though it's modeled around a job interview, it's more the part to help them answer the questions. So when the interview's done and they're like, "So did I get the job?" Or whatever, like we're here. We're not actually hiring you today. We're here to help you with your interview process. So the main thing we tell them is, look, you gotta own it. So yeah, I was incarcerated and I did this and we point them in the direction of like, so if it was a drug-related offense, well, always it's gonna be somewhere along the lines of the person I was then is not the person I am now. While I was incarcerated, I've taken multiple mental health, drug addiction courses and stuff like that to remedy what my problem initially was that landed me here. But they have to own them. The guys that want to beat around the bush and they don't want to say, I was like, at the end of it, I say, "Look, the state of Oklahoma doesn't want to know that we've convicted innocent people and that we're wasting taxpayers' dollars by having somebody incarcerated that's innocent. If you did it, you need to own it and you need to clean it up as soon as you can. So yeah, I was incarcerated for this, but since then I've done this, this, this, and this to remedy the solution." And kind of give them the tools they need to own the question, answer the question, and tell them how they've changed and moving forward, what it's gonna be like moving for that.

- Similarly, we either do mock interview or interview prep. We do it specific to the various trade that somebody's entering because all of them have slightly different processes. So the electricians process might be slightly different than the brick layers process, et cetera. But we do that interview prep and very similarly, you don't dodge questions. You own, you redirect appropriately. It's not something that you hide from. And the sad fact is, regardless of somebody pulling a formal BCI or not, they're gonna look you up in the justice portal after you're done with your interview and see whatever charges were there, right? So there's no sense in not acknowledging something that's happened. There is good sense in answering the question well so you can show that you've moved past that and that you'd be a valuable employee.

- Thanks. Another question that has come up in the audience is how do you navigate the legal restrictions on employment in certain fields? Do you consider those restrictions when offering programs or considering eligibility?

- Yes. I mean, we find out ahead of time what that looks like. Most constructions trades don't really have, they're not saying they're not gonna hire anybody with specific backgrounds. So it's one of the most open jobs that you can get folks is in constructions for folks who've

been in corrections. But yeah, if there's like we're gonna do a public transportation program and so yeah, we're looking at what is it that's gonna keep them from getting hired? What basic crime will they not hire? And then we're just gonna let folks know in the application, if you have committed these crimes, you're not gonna be able to do this job, so there's no reason for you to apply. So we're gonna weed them out ahead of time knowing that they can't do that. But like I said, with construction trades, it is the most open. I mean, they're actually calling us most of the time. So they already know these folks are incarcerated when they interview them 'cause they interview them while they're with us, so.

- Are there folks have encountered regulatory barriers in your specific states related to some of these industries?

- So within the licensed occupations that we work with, no, there's no barrier for folks to get in or gain licensure through the state. There are other licenses where that has been a barrier and we've been involved in various efforts to rescind those particular laws in order to provide equal opportunity because it's the right thing to do, right? So if you can't get your barbering license because you have a conviction, that just doesn't make sense. That's something we need to change at the state house. So within the construction trades, as Tracie was mentioning, really low entry barriers there. The only discrimination we see against prior records is really project-based, right? So for instance, if you're working on a bridge, they are gonna require a clean BCI because of terrorism concerns. If you're working on a Navy base, they have a stringent background passing issue and those are project-specific, though. Just means you can't be dispatched to that project. Doesn't keep you out of employment. So we're fortunate within the construction industry, but some of my other work in other industries, we do run into those issues and when we can change it, we change it, and when we can do a workaround, we do, but those are just tough issues that we take depending on what the occupation happens to be.

- And then all I would add is just do your homework. For the most part, we're training trades that there are very little boundaries. Some crimes, yes, you're not gonna be able to send some people into a school to work for obvious reasons, but for the most part, we've done our homework. We've picked the trades that we can employ people in and we target those areas and when we can expand, we expand on those trades. But for the most part, you know if you're not gonna be able to employ them, but for the most part, almost anybody will hire almost anybody at any point in time. So just as long as we're successful, we keep teaching the trades. If we identify a trade that's not successful, then we're probably probably gonna move on and back up and do something else.

- Great. Thanks. Great questions coming in through this question and

answer feature. So I'll ask another two to all of you. Are there measures beyond program completions, job placement, and starting wage that you all are looking at? For example, along with retention, do you all track advancement in fields like in terms of changes in wages, promotions, continuing education? And that question's for anyone.

- So as far as Department of Corrections, we can't do a lot of that stuff because once they leave us, we don't have the right to follow them in any way whatsoever. So it's usually our partners that kind of do that for us. But as far as this program right now, it's still new. So we're still, it is are they getting a job and did they graduate from the program? 'Cause that's where we're at at this point.

- Yes. We do longitudinal data tracking as much as we possibly can. We maintain a pretty robust alumni network to help facilitate that. We track our placements throughout their apprenticeship. Our main goal is not to get them into apprenticeship. Our main goal is to have them become a journey worker at the other side of apprenticeship, which is 6,000 to 10,000 hours of on-the-job training later. So we track that. We track their wage progression. We track if they move into different industries. We track when folks, I'm proud to say that we've had a number of our graduates become union officials, become superintendents, become the foreman on their projects, are running work now, are hiring our newer graduates, which is always very rewarding, right? When somebody walks on with the Building Futures T-shirt and then your boss comes up to you and says, "Oh, yeah, I'm a graduate of that program too," it goes a long way. So we really try to build in, and it's actually on our T-shirt, "Solidarity by Design," right? We try to create a robust network so people want to stay in touch and that way we can track all of this material as we move forward, which is why I could tell you that there is 169 of those 385 who have already received journey worker certification. And when you do that, just like me, I'm a union carpenter by trade. My apprenticeship is in California. When I moved to Rhode Island, I just went to work, right? And that's the beauty of having that certification is it's an occupational credential that's nationally recognized and it's a ticket to work wherever you happen to live. So yes, we do track that and we try to do it in a formalized way and an informalized way through alumni gatherings and also survey data and things of that nature.

- And to some level, we track it along the same ways, but like I said, we have a record system, we put them in there, and then even once they complete our program, then once they get a job, we input that into the computer system. And for the most part, our students, we've done such great work and we had one student that graduated from us. He donated a \$9,000 building back to the facility there where he learned his trade and then he's turning around wanting to donate another one to a community that we're at also in that trade. So for the most part, when they get a raise or they get a promotion or stuff and they're happy to

call their instructor back and say, "Look, I got more money. I got a promotion. I got this." So they're usually more than welcome to share their success stories with us. So by all means, we'll go back and put it in, but for the most part, if they don't come back to us, then we just say, hey, our guys are doing good, but they like to share their success stories with us also, so.

- Awesome. Our next question is for Tracie. Person asking the question is asking for a little bit of guidance about the specific divisions or people within a state corrections agency that would be most receptive or that would oversee this type of program. They're looking for guidance because they live in a state where they're interested in doing some work like this, but aren't really sure who to reach out to and who would be most receptive to these types of suggestion and partnership.

- Yeah, so every state has a state education director. They may not be called the state education director. They all may have a little bit of a different title, but they do have that position. That is where I would start. And so if you get on the Corrections Education Association website, I think they've got them. They're starting to put them out and listing them by state, but I'm not sure if that's still up or not. But you could actually contact whatever region that you're in because it's done by region. Contact the regional director and they could probably connect you with the state director for where you're at. So those are two different ways you can probably go about it.

- And I would chime in also that almost every state has a technology centers that train trades. Reach out to them. We're a partnership with the Department of Corrections. We're on the technical training side out in the real world. We just happen to partner with DOC to bring that technical training into the facility. We're not DOC workers. We're Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education Directors. We just happen to work inside the fence. So we have a memorandum of understanding, and like I said, we've been around for 50 years. They like the work we do. So the partnership we've created just keeps on building and building and building. So it may be going out and reaching out to one of your technology centers and see if they'd be interested in partnering with the Department of Corrections to provide some training inside a facility.

- Awesome. And I think we have time for one more question. I think this one was for Andrew. You mentioned that your pre-apprenticeship, the pre-release programming is in a minimum facility. Are you working with your State Department of Correction or under the Federal Bureau of Prisons? And if not, are you thinking of collaborating in the future with BOP to do a pre-apprenticeship style program?

- Yeah, in Rhode Island it's a unified system. So we are working with one department of corrections and we're looking to expand to all of

the facilities that they operate. So we don't have a federal system here. I am encouraged by a lot of good work that I know happens in other federal systems where many times, the Department of Corrections itself is the sponsor of an apprenticeship program so that somebody, much like Joshua was talking about, somebody can get that training and actually get themselves up the licensure while still incarcerated, which is really, really encouraging. So we're not working specifically with federal prisons. We are working with our Rhode Island Department of Corrections for all facilities that they have. It is just that we started at minimum and we haven't yet expanded 'cause we're early in our grant cycle.

- Awesome. Thanks. Well, there's a couple more questions, but I think we're going to start closing for our Q and A. And I really encourage folks, if we didn't get to your question from the chat, I believe all of our panelists would be open to fielding any questions over email. So feel free to reach out to them and we'll make sure to share some their contact information so that you can get ahold of them. I'm going to put back up our presentation just to close us out and share a couple more resources. Awesome. And so we just actually finished talking about Rhode Island. So if you're interested in looking at a resource from BFRI, the Find Your Path, Your Rhode Island Construction Career Guide is an example of some of the guidance that is provided to the participants that are part of Andrew's program. We've included a link up there. Andrew, I don't know if you want to just take a brief minute to explain what this document is to folks. It gives an example of some of the support services that programs like Andrew's, Tracie's, and Joshua's provides to others.

- Yeah, no, just very briefly, this is sort of an introductory guide to all of the unionized building trades that we work with and the various segments of the industry in which they operate. We are putting this in the hands of every career counselor at a high school setting as well as within every correctional facility that we possibly can. And it's just sort of to demystify what the industry is, provide people guidance on how they can prepare for it, and connect them with resources around it. Please feel free to download it. We enjoy it a lot. We just did a revised edition to more strongly focus on the highway construction partnerships that we have in place. So it's a good resource. Hope folks enjoy it.

- Thanks, Andrew. And so as we wrap up, I want to remind you all that this webinar was a part of a larger set of programming coming out of the National Reentry Resource Center related to Second Chance Month. So be sure to continue to track news and updates on Second Chance Month on social media using the hashtag #ReentryMatters, #SecondChanceMonth, and #SecondChanceMonth23. So as we close, I want to thank you all for the rich discussion. Thank you again to our hosts at the NRRC, to our speaker, Jessa Wilcox, who gave us information about OJP, to our panelists, Tracie Hightower, Andrew Cortes, and

Joshua Steele, and thank you to you, the audience, for joining us and for your engagement throughout, your really great questions from our question and answers. Again, continue to participate in all of the Second Chance Month activities that you can and continue to stay connected to the National Reentry Resource Center for updates. You can join the distribution list and visit the website for more resources and information about how we can continue to help prepare folks who are incarcerated for reentry and also for employment in high demand, high wage jobs. Thank you so much. Enjoy the rest of your day and enjoy the rest of Second Chance Month. Take care.