

Workforce³One

Transcript of Webinar

Workforce Innovation Fund Listening Session

Friday, June 17, 2011

*Transcript by
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.*

GARY GONZALEZ: Today our speakers are Assistant Secretary Jane Oates for the Employment and Training Administration; Brenda Dann-Messier, assistant secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education; Mark Greenberg, deputy assistant secretary for the Administration for Children and Families.

I'm going to turn things over now to our moderator Grace Kilbane. She's the administrator for the Office of Workforce Investments here at the Employment and Training Administration.

Grace, take it away.

GRACE KILBANE: Good. Thanks, Gary. And I want to give a big welcome to all of you who are joining us for the webinar today and thank you for your time because we think that this is really an important event and we really want to get your input. Before we move to our presenters, I wanted to have an opportunity to just kind of touch upon how the agenda is going to work today.

As Gary just mentioned, and he introduced our speakers, we're going to first hear from the assistant secretary for the Employment and Training Administration here at the Department of Labor, Jane Oates. And after that we will hear from two of our key federal partners: Brenda Dann-Messier, assistant secretary at Department of Education Office of Adult Education; and Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Greenberg from the Administration of Children and Families in HHS.

And we want to also obviously thank our federal partners for taking time and making time available to participate on this webinar today.

After we have heard from our leadership on the vision that the federal government has for innovation, we then want to really get to getting your thoughts. And we will spend the majority of this webinar, which is scheduled for 75 minutes. And majority of our time this morning gathering input from you.

And as Gary said, some of it will be polled. Some of it will be asking you to enter in your ideas and suggestions in the open chat room. Certainly, all of you out there can then further comment on anyone else's ideas for innovations that they put forward. And so during those times there will be an opportunity. We won't be talking during those times. It will give you an opportunity to kind of think about what input or what ideas you want to put on the table.

So that's how we're going to spend most of our time. And then at the end we will talk a little bit about what our timeline is for moving forward with getting a grant solicitation out for the workforce innovation fund and how we see that working. So we'll talk about that.

Let me just underline that we're having this session today. We also have a webinar scheduled for Monday and that we also will give you at the end of this session a web – not website but an e-mail address so that you can any time submit additional ideas or thoughts or input. So if there's stuff that you don't get to today, don't feel like it's not going to – won't give you an opportunity to get it in because you will.

As always we will have these recorded and we will have a transcription. And all of the input that we're receiving from the system and from these sessions will help inform how we are going to actually write the grant solicitation for the competition for this fund, which as you know, is almost \$125 million in funds to support innovation in the workforce system.

So with that as just sort of a little outline of our agenda, I would like to immediately now move to introduce our first presenter in terms of our vision for this fund, and that is Assistant Secretary Jane Oates.

JANE OATES: Welcome to this national listening session on the workforce innovation fund. We're delighted that you could join us today for this important event. Today's session is focused on gathering critical feedback from all of you that will help inform the design of the workforce innovation fund grants.

This fiscal year's appropriation provided approximately \$125 million for the workforce innovation fund. This funding is intended to support projects that either replicate evidence-based practices that have proven effective or to test new approaches to workforce development.

The fund is designed to address three major challenges facing the country: first, a vastly changed national labor market in which millions of workers have been dislocated from traditional industries and need new skills to compete in the labor market; next, fierce global competition for an educated workforce with industry-recognized credentials and post-secondary education and skills; and finally, the need to do more with less. In the face of budget constraints, the public sector needs to invent new ways to leverage resources and design services that are cost-effective, demand driven and high impact.

While we are still shaping the scope and specifics of the grant solicitation, we do have a vision for the fund based on the administration's budget proposals. As overarching principles, ETA would use these funds to invest in strategies that lead to better employment outcomes for individuals, that meet the skill needs of employers, that accelerate learning and credential attainment and that increase efficiencies in the delivery of services.

Also, one of our guiding principles for the fund is figuring out what works in workforce development. We will emphasize building knowledge about effective practices through evaluation.

It is also critical that we translate lessons learned into improved employment outcomes and increased cost efficiency throughout the regular WIA formula programs. The administration is also interested in how we can use waivers to facilitate cooperation across programs and funding streams.

To help develop the scope of the fund, we will be asking you today to tell us about innovative strategies that you believe will help us achieve these goals for the workforce system. We are currently considering two primary areas of focus. The first area is systemic and structural innovations. The administration is interested in supporting changes in state and local structures and policies that enable a closer alignment across workforce development, education, human services and economic development systems.

The focus on structural reform is in response to growing evidence of the need for greater linkages among these systems to ensure that employment and training services are demand driven and cost-efficient. The fund could support structural reforms that make it easier for state and local agencies to share data, combine resources and develop integrated programs by testing the effects of specific policy changes and structural reforms, the administration seeks to both support current efforts at innovation and gather evidence to support future investments.

The second area of focus that we are exploring is innovations in service delivery. Over the course of the last decade, and particularly in response to the great recession, there has been innovation in the area of service delivery to support better training and employment outcomes at lower costs. States and local areas have been figuring out how to do more with less. Specifically, state and local areas have been leveraging new technology to improve services to both job seekers and employers.

This includes utilizing social media, real-time labor market information, computer-based assessments, web-based career navigation tools and performance analytics; implementing career pathway approaches that enable low skilled youth and adults to succeed in post-secondary education and earn industry recognized credentials; developing local and regional partnerships with employers, community colleges, community-based organizations, universities and others to leverage resources and coordinate workforce development activities.

This fund would encourage states and regional partnerships to work across program silos for more seamless service delivery. It represents a small but crucial investment in innovation, in evidence-based products. And cost-saving workforce strategies.

Overall the fund would significantly benefit WIA's formula-funded activities well into the future by getting results that can be replicated broadly across the workforce system. I'm pleased that some of our federal partners are able to join us today as well. Working more effectively across education, human services and workforce development programs is one of the key goals of the fund. Thanks for your participation today.

And please know that you play an important role in reshaping our workforce system and helping us to shape this important initiative. I look forward to hearing your ideas on how best to shape the workforce innovation fund. And now I'll pass it off to our partners.

MS. KILBANE: Great. Thank you, Jane, for spending some time with us this morning to give us a vision from ETA. I would also just like to ask now whether Assistant Secretary Brenda

Dann-Messier is available on the phone or I know that there was an issue with evacuating the building over there this morning.

Amy, is Brenda there yet or shall we –

BRENDA DANN-MESSIER: I am. I'm here.

MS. KILBANE: OK. Wonderful. Well, let me introduce then Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Brenda?

MS. DANN-MESSIER: Thank you very much, Grace. It's really a pleasure for me to be here. Good morning, everybody. I want to thank everyone for joining this important discussion. And I most especially want to thank our partners at the Department of Labor for organizing this webinar.

I couldn't agree more with Jane. And you'll hear later from our colleague Mark, that better collaboration between and across the various systems is absolutely critical and all the more so in a time of scarce resources. I'm thrilled at the partnerships that we have at the federal level. DOL, HHS and Ed work closely together every day and we are all committed to improving the outcomes for those we serve.

And we're working every day to break down the barriers, whether they're legislative, regulatory, or cultural between our agencies. We know that similar work is being done across states, regions and localities across this country. And we are very hopeful that the workforce investment fund – excuse me – the workforce innovation fund will encourage even more alignment and collaboration that increases outcomes.

As Jane mentioned, career pathways and integrated education and training are ways many are accelerating and improving outcomes for clients. Successful IET programs have a number of components, such as intensive contextualized instruction, educational and career counseling, strong community partnerships to ensure optimal support services to promote program retention, completion and labor markets payoffs.

I also think there's a great opportunity with the workforce innovation fund to improve outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities in the workforce system. We might imagine supporting, achieving and retaining high quality employment outcomes for populations with particularly high rates of unemployment, such as individuals with psychiatric disabilities, migrant seasonal farm workers with disabilities, TANF recipients with disabilities and American Indians with disabilities.

We know that together we are stronger. We're excited about the opportunity the workforce innovation fund presents to those served by our system. We're very, very eager to hear from you. What do you think innovation that improves outcomes in the workforce system should look like?

With that I'll turn it over to my colleague Mark and then look forward to what I'm sure will be a dynamic and forward-thinking conversation. Thank you again to our colleagues at the Department of Labor for hosting all of us.

And thank you all across the country for being on the webinar today. We really count on you for all of your ideas and solutions. Thank you.

MS. KILBANE: Great. Excellent, Brenda. Thank you so much. It was great. Mark, are you available to –

MARK GREENBERG: Yes, I am. Yes, I am.

MS. KILBANE: – jump in now? Thank you.

MR. GREENBERG: OK. So I'd like to begin by thanking Grace and then thanking Jane and her colleagues at the Department of Labor for organizing these webinars and for inviting me to say a few words about the important opportunities presented by the workforce innovation fund. And as always, it's wonderful to hear Brenda's remarks.

As indicated in the introduction, I'm with the Administration for Children and Families in HHS. We've got responsibility for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program and for a wide range of other programs that principally affect low income individuals and families and communities.

At ACF we're committed to improving the effectiveness of TANF as a program to help low-income parents succeed in the workforce. We believe one key aspect of doing that is strengthening its connections with the rest of the workforce system. We think it's important that the workforce system as a whole be responsive to the needs of low-wage workers and low-income families and that TANF be more effectively engaged with the rest of the workforce system.

So in this administration we are very actively working with DOL and the Department of Education both on a number of very specific issues related to TANF WIA coordination and integration efforts and on a set of broader issues relating to career pathways, adult and post-secondary education, youth employment, subsidized jobs and workforce development policy generally.

We're actively coordinating our research agendas. We're reaching out to states and localities on an ongoing basis in efforts to better understand the places where technical assistance and highlighting evidence-based and promising approaches can make a difference and also where are the places where federal regulations and requirements make coordination and integration more difficult and where increased flexibility could help to get better results and improved program outcomes.

At a time when federal, state and local governments are all under substantial fiscal constraints, it's particularly important for us to be identifying duplicative or needlessly inconsistent

requirements that result in inefficiency or less effective service delivery. And we want to be supportive of state and local efforts to simplify access, to reduce administrative burdens for applicants and participants; and to create systems in which individuals in need receive appropriate services, regardless of the door they enter into.

So we think the workforce innovation fund provides a very significant opportunity for states and localities to be proposing innovative initiatives both for a systematic and structural reforms and for innovations in service delivery to improve outcomes for workers, as Jane talked about.

As you consider the initiatives you wish to put forward, we hope that you'll explore the potential for active partnerships with human service agencies for a number of reasons. They're working with families who can substantially benefit from the services. While they probably don't have new money, their existing resources can often contribute to more comprehensive approaches to services.

They often bring significant experience and strategies for working with individuals with little or no work experience, with health and mental health issues, with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, individuals with childcare, transportation, other supportive services needs and a wide range of other barriers that may make employment entry and retention and progression more challenging but still very, very possible.

The workforce innovation fund provides an important opportunity to be partnering and developing systems and strategies that can result in effective approaches to working with vulnerable populations. And we hope that you'll consider these as you explore the range of ideas for innovative approaches and options.

So at HHS we look forward to our continued work with DOL and the department of Education, both through the innovation fund and through other strategies. And we welcome your feedback and advice on what else we can do to help contribute to your efforts to improve outcomes. Thanks very much.

MS. KILBANE: Good. Excellent. Well, again, I want to thank Brenda and Mark for joining us today to really articulate the sort of strong and compelling vision together with Jane of how federal leadership across three major departments are seeing how do we work together and expressing their active commitment to work together to achieve our vision. So that's a very exciting place to be.

Now we want to get into, as I mentioned at the outset, the bulk of our time today, which is to start hearing from you. And to start off the discussion and so you can test out the technology, if you haven't used it yet, we just want to hear from you which of these program areas would you most identify yourselves with.

I see some of you have already started. Obviously, if it's none of these, you can check "other" and let us know what is. And of course you were going to let us know who you were when you entered your name earlier, as Gary suggested.

MR. GONZALEZ: And this is a reminder. If you're wanting to participate in this discussion starter or poll, just mouse over and left-click the circle or radio option at the left of the selection beneath the question of, "Which of the following best describes your program area?" Is it state workforce agency or WIB, other state agency, community college, local workforce investment board or One-Stop Career Center, local TANF or education agency, community based org; or other? (Pause.)

It looks like a smattering all across the board with the leader being "other." Second is "state workforce agency or WIB," then followed by "local WIB or One-Stop Career Center." OK.

MS. KILBANE: All right. So let's move on and start getting into some of the substance.

As our leaders talked about in the beginning, that this really is a consultation and we want to get your input for the specific reason of how to design our investments in innovation in the workforce system. And so one of the things that we're looking at is if we're investing in innovation, it is to what purpose? What should we get out of investing in innovation to make the system better?

And we have again a polling question here to start out our discussion on that. What are your priorities in terms of what our goals should be? And you can scroll over I believe every one that you concur with, right, or do they have to just pick on?

MR. GONZALEZ: It's currently set up to just pick one, but I can set it up.

MS. KILBANE: You can pick the one that you believe should be the most important would be good. And if there's something else you wanted to add other than the ones that we've identified, the four we've identified, please let us know what that idea is, too. (Pause.)

All right. So obviously the workforce system and getting better employment outcomes for individuals is the top vote getter but of course also making sure that employers are getting the skilled workers that they need. And so that is – those top two are certainly so consistent with the overall objectives of our system, which is to serve both of our customers, the employers who need the talent and of course workers who need skills to be connected to good jobs.

We also are getting in a number of additional ideas. Is that open now? Can everybody see that, or – so you should be able to see some of the ideas that some of your colleagues are suggesting in terms of how we would measure this or what our goals would be for actually investing this additional money. Things like reducing barriers for long-term unemployed, an idea of a regional hub is sort of interesting. And that almost goes to sort of having the ability to award grants to regional areas and partnerships and consortia of states or locals or all kinds of combinations.

I think it's good that some of you are commenting on each other's ideas. It's always nice when somebody puts an idea out there to know if there's other people that agree with it. Of course – yep. There's the concept of focusing on job creation, which of course is needed in this economy; not generally speaking the mission of workforce programs to create jobs per se but to make sure

that we're training people for the jobs that will be created or doing good matches of those that are unemployed to the jobs that are being created.

OK. A lot of good suggestions that are coming in over the chat feature. So we understand that there's lots of typing going on out there is what our folks are telling us. (Pause.)

Actually, when I was looking at the job creation one, I didn't realize is sort of focused on self-employment and entrepreneurship, which is important new programs that potentially the workforce system could be helping those individuals who are interested and able to be the entrepreneurs and create some of those opportunities going into the future and what do we need to support that.

We fairly recently issued some guidance back in last fall to the whole system on how to support entrepreneurship better. And so I think that when we look at new ideas, we'll be saying, OK, so you can do that now. What would be innovative about taking that next step or moving forward? (Pause.)

OK. Good. I know that some of you are still inputting. And as I said earlier, don't feel that you have to get all of your ideas in during this one-hour time period because you will have an opportunity to send others.

Let me move on. I think as you heard from our assistant secretary, Jane Oates, that we're kind of looking at this investment would be in two big areas for the workforce system in terms of innovation. One would be fostering innovation and adaption of new ideas and strategies around services and around structural innovation, and another would be of course around replicating those strategies.

So for this slide right now, we want to focus on what are the priority focus areas around either systemic or structural innovation. There's something about the way that we are structured or the way our systems are working or not working that is sort of a fundamental or would be a fundamental innovation for the system. And some of the ideas that we looked at I think are on the next slide actually. No. That's service areas.

So this is the structural areas. So what we want you to do is, again, click on the areas that you think should be the focus and to give us any ideas that you have around what reforms could make it easier; for example, as Bee (sp) says, for state and local agencies to share data, to combine resources, to develop integrated programs. Or do we need to be really investing in how do we pull together our systems across all the various programs like with education and HHS and economic development, as well as workforce, et cetera.

So we'll give you some time to tell us what you think should be either the priority or the focus or any ideas that you have to support changes in state structures or systems or local structures and systems within the workforce system. (Pause.)

All right. OK. So as some of you I know are still giving us some input here, I just wanted to note that we have received a couple of questions have come in that are unrelated to the

workforce innovation fund. And so we're not going to address those. I mean, just really we don't have time to today to go sort of outside of trying to get your input on this important topic. But if you have a question about anything that we're saying about the workforce innovation fund, certainly we'll try to address that.

Let me move on to the next priority focus area, which is around service delivery innovation. So looking at what kind of on the last slide, structure or systemic change where innovation is needed. This really gets to what kind of innovations do we need around providing service delivery in our workforce system.

Again, we're looking for you to tell us which ones you think should be included as activities that we would fund in the workforce innovation fund grant competition. And as you can see there, we're looking at things like, how much do we need to leverage new technology for improving services?

Certainly many of you have been involved and engaged in career pathways approaches, particularly for those vulnerable populations or low-skilled youth who are dropouts or adults, and how to get them from their current situation on to a pathway where they can get credentials that will lead to a good job.

We've talked about partnerships before. And certainly with our federal colleagues, how do we support you at the local level to be able to successfully make the kinds of partnerships you need in order to innovate the services you can provide to your customers and make them better and more effective and quicker and cheaper and all of those things that we look for in innovation? (Pause.)

OK. I know that many of you are still adding your thoughts and ideas on what priority focus areas around service delivery innovation we should be looking at. We're also going to move on to – this is related, I think, because I think that we're starting to get some of your ideas in service delivery as well as the prior question on structure and system innovation.

But we know that there are a lot of big ideas out there where there's a lot of ideas about how this system can innovate and really improve and change the way that we serve our customers in a way that really helps our workforce in terms of being competitive in this global economy. So we wanted to just sort of ask a wide open question because our thoughts in moving forward with the workforce innovation fund is that we want to test a variety of strategies that will help innovate the system.

And then we want to, of course, determine how to measure them. Are those strategies effective? And also to gather evidence on their effectiveness. And then, of course, we would be building a body of evidence-based practices and workforce developments that all of you could have access to and use as you are improving continuously your own services.

So we want to really hear from you. What big ideas do you have for how the workforce system should innovate? I mean, and don't – just wide open. What are the things from your

perspective, wherever you sit in the system, that you think are the big ideas to innovate our work? (Pause, music.)

Well, I hope you liked our piano playing. This is Grace again. We're saying it sounded like silent movie track there.

OK. A couple of the comments that we are seeing on this is that it should be done through competitive grants. And I guess maybe we didn't make that clear at the outset. But this fund will definitely be done through competitive grants. So we will be – part of what we're asking your input for is so that we can create the grant solicitation.

So we're seeking all of your input. And once we've synthesized it and analyzed it and we give our leaders some options based on that, those decisions will form the grant solicitation, which as you know, puts out the criteria of what we will fund. And so that's why we're asking you for your input. So I just wanted to kind of clarify that.

Also I think – I know that this is at kind of the big idea level, and so – which is good and I want to reiterate that as we move forward, if you have other ideas, that we will be giving you the website at the end of the session where you can continue to send those in. So I appreciate all the good ideas and good sort of brainstorming that's going on out there on these questions.

Why don't we – as you're continuing to do that, I'd like to move on to the next question, which is all the big ideas that are out there, I know that frequently we say, OK. Well, that's a really good idea. So why haven't you been able to go forward and implement it?

And frequently we hear problems that folks have with doing that. Either there's legal problems with various laws or you need legislation or there's regulatory barriers. Sometimes I know that folks are looking for a different kind of unified planning or unified guidance across our federal programs in order to help you get the support you need at the state or local levels.

Certainly waivers, which is something that the Department of Labor under the Workforce Investment Act – we have many waivers that are granted in every single state. So what else is needed or waivers across, again, our programs and services?

How about administrative requirements? I know that we've started to get – some of you have given us ideas already on administrative things. How could you do things administratively better so that reporting performance measures documentation, which I saw a few things on, could be done in a more innovated, more effective, more cost-effective way?

We would really like to, to the extent that you know of any barriers, that you give us specifics because sometimes people say, oh, we have legal barriers. Well, we don't know what those are. Or we really would need a waiver to do what we want to do. Well, what waiver would you need?

I mean, so to the extent that you have an idea of what that is and can dig a little deeper on that and be more specific, that would really help us have a better insight on exactly what you're talking about.

Give some time to think about that. (Pause.)

OK. Good. Well, I know some of you are still getting your comments in, but let's move on to the next discussion starter that we have.

This really goes to replication. And it's like the purpose of the fund. How much should we be investing in new ideas? How much should we be investing in system or structural innovation? How much should we be investing in maybe a practice that already has been proven to be innovative and more effective either in its outcomes, its speed, its cost reduction?

And that what really needs to be done is replicate it to see can you take this from this environment and do the same thing with a different population or do the same thing in a different geography or something like that?

So we're looking at – if we're looking at replication of things that work, what are the kinds of areas should we be doing that in? And we've given you some examples here of sector strategies, which many of you have been working on over the years, with strategies to increase credential attainment which has been one of the Department of Labor's high performance priority goals over the last year.

We've talked a little bit about bridge programs to career pathways for particularly young adults who need our services and low skilled adults.

Also, reemployment strategies, which have been so important during this past great recession, if you would, and especially for all of the long-term unemployed workers who are out there right now require help in getting reconnected to jobs. And really, our system has not had to deal with the kind of long-term unemployment issues that are out there now. We have not ever in our history experienced that before.

Also, how about vulnerable populations? How much should we be focusing on that or other areas where you think that we should be particularly looking at how to replicate in with this investment? (Pause.)

OK. Thank you for all of your good thinking there. I'm going to move on to sort of a quick question now that we – just a yes or no answer. One of the things that we're thinking of is that anyone who would receive a grant under this competitive grant would be basically asked to conduct an independent evaluation either using grant dollars or maybe leveraging some other funds from partners, et cetera.

And that we would be really looking at that because if you're going to fund an innovation, you need to evaluate whether or not it worked and did it achieve what you had proposed that it would achieve. We are asking you, if your answer is yes, that you could use the chat to tell us if you

have any challenges and what are they or what technical assistance would you need to address those challenges.

Let me just – before I move to the specific question, I wanted just to remind everyone who the eligible applicants are for this competitive grant process. In the workforce system there is states, state agencies, consortia of states, or partnerships, including regional partnerships with local Workforce Investment Boards and then partnerships with others. But it is the workforce system. We would see partnerships with education, partnerships with our TANF, economic development, community-based organizations and others in addition to the workforce system.

So that is who can apply. And then whoever applied, we would say – we are thinking of proposing that they would be required to do an evaluation. So the question is, do you anticipate any challenges with the requirement that individual grantees would need to conduct an independent evaluation on the workforce innovation that you're funded for?

So if you can quickly give us a yes or no. And if you think it's a yes and you have a specific reason why, you can just sort of add that to the chat box. (Pause.)

OK. Thank you. Want to move on. Of course when you look at wanting to invest in innovation, we want to be able to measure what progress is that is achieved through those investments, which is of course what the evaluation would look at. So this slide really gets to getting your thoughts on what are the best performance measurements we should use to evaluate progress during project implementation and afterwards for these investments in innovation.

And so as it shows here, some ideas – return on investment, having higher employment outcomes for our customers, having better or faster or more attaining a credential – something on cost-effectiveness; there's always an interest in that, especially given the grim federal budget picture that is confronting us all in this environment. How about aligning between systems? And how would we do that? Or any other idea that you may have, please put it in the chat.

So looks like we've got, again, the higher employment outcomes is getting the polling, is leading on the polling, which makes sense. That's what our business is, is helping people get jobs. So – the end of the day. (Pause, music.)

All right. Thanks again for your input. And again, we are enjoying the fact that you're commenting on each other's and letting us know whether you agree with others. We wanted Larry to know we agreed with him that we thought the music was annoying too on this particular segment. (Chuckles.)

OK. So the next slide that we would like to get some input from you is that we believe of course that it's critical to translate any lessons learned from the investments that we would make in grants through this fund to translate them to the broader workforce system.

To this end we would like to learn from you about how best ideas are currently shared with the system. What are your preferred methods to network and learn from one another? What are the things that we do in ETA that you find best for hearing about new ideas or ways of doing it? We

do webinars or sometimes we have an opportunity to have regional conferences or we do issue – our research is always issued in issue papers and things like that.

So any of the – any comments on how ETA can better deliver this to the system, as well as how do you – what’s the best way for you to network, learn from yourselves, learn from one another, as well as our role? (Pause, music.)

OK. Thanks, or thanks again. We’re heading into the last few minutes here of our webinar to get your input on this important topic. And I know that we have given you an opportunity to share some comments around specific areas that we wanted to hear about, but we wanted to offer at least one opportunity to just sort of be wide open.

Are there any other additional comments that you would like to share with us or share with each other regarding innovations in the workforce and how we’re proceeding or how we should proceed on that today? So we’re going to give you a few minutes to do that. (Pause, music.)

OK. Yeah. OK. I’m back.

And just to remind you that we will keep the webinar open for any input you want to provide as long as people are providing input. So as long as comments are coming in, it will stay open. Once we do not have any other comments coming in, that’s when it will be closed.

But wanted to give you just the last couple minutes here that we – what our proposed timeline is in terms of moving forward with developing this grant solicitation for the workforce innovation fund. Over the next few weeks we will be doing broad consultation. We have another webinar scheduled broadly with the workforce system.

We know that our partners at HHS and education and others are also making sure that their systems know that they can join these webinars. And once we finish the consultations, which we’re doing with inter-governmental groups like the National Governors’ Association and others – we’re doing with Congress – we are also meeting with researchers and foundations. And so we’re going to have a broad consultation.

Once we get all this input, we’re going to design the options for this fund. Once leadership makes decisions on that, we will be writing the grant solicitation. And we would see that the grant solicitation will be written from the summer into the fall based on all of that input and decisions and options and that we are hoping it will be published early in the fall.

We would then see that once that’s published, then you would have 60 days or so to submit your applications, which is usually what happens on these competitions. And we would anticipate that we would be awarding the funds to the winning applications probably late fall or into winter.

As I mentioned before, we have set up a website – not website but web address – e-mail address – excuse me – that even after we’re done here, as I said, Gary is going to keep the chat room open as long as you are providing us input.

But on Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday of next week if somebody's got an idea that they want to send us, the e-mail is workforce.innovation@dol.gov. And so we will be inviting you to do that.

So with that I want to one more time thank you – what? Did I do something wrong? OK. All right.

So with that I want to one more time thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to join us today. I know that there's a lot of demand on our workforce system still out there with people needing your help to help them get connected up with good skills, good training and good jobs. And I want to thank you all for the work that you do on behalf of the workforce system to help our workers and help our employers. So I want to thank you for that.

I want to thank you for joining us today to provide us your ideas, to provide us your input. We will be using this to shape how the grant solicitation is written so that those are the kinds of things that we will be funding.

So we really appreciate being able to get input from every level of our system because we know that if you're sitting out at a local One-Stop or if you're in a state capital or if you're here in Washington or other places, that how we touch and interact with the system is very different based on where we're at, what job we're in and what level we're at and what program we're working on. And so we really appreciate the opportunity to get your input from a broad group of people across the country.

So with that we'll look forward to hearing from you as we move forward. And we're very excited about the prospects of innovation for the workforce system. And there's lots of interest in how we all do this together going forward.

So thanks again. Hope you all have a good weekend. And we'll be doing this webinar again next – on Monday. So if you know anybody that missed it that would like to participate, please encourage them to join us. Thank you.

(END)