WIG Summer Summit
June 24, 2021
“Post-Secondary Education and Equitable Workforce Readiness” followed by “Trends and Opportunities for State-Level Resilience”

Session 1 “Post-Secondary Education and Equitable Workforce Readiness” Featuring:
Virginia State Delegate Kathy Tran (moderator)
Daniel Kuehn, Senior Research Associate, Benefits Policy Center, The Urban Institute
Bhavani Arabandi, Senior Research Associate, Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population, The Urban Institute
Julie Squire, Vice President of Policy and General Counsel, National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA)

Session 2 “Trends and Opportunities for State-Level Resilience” Featuring:
South Carolina State Representative Heather Crawford, Southern Regional Director, WIG Board of Directors (moderator)
Laura Lightbody, Project Director, Flood-Prepared Communities, The Pew Charitable Trusts

Senator Nancy Todd: Welcome, and thank you for joining Women In Government’s Summer Summit Series. I’m WIG Interim Executive Director and former Colorado State Senator Nancy Todd.

Women In Government is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization guided by an all-legislator Board of Directors who along with our State Directors, guide our policy work.

Before we get started, I’d like to thank our Sponsors for their support of the Summer Summit and also recognize our Business Council and Associate Members. We appreciate all of you!

Please welcome our moderator for today’s segment, Virginia Delegate Kathy Tran. Delegate Tran, the floor is now yours!

Delegate Kathy Tran: Thank you so much Senator Todd, and thank you to everyone with us today. Just a couple of housekeeping notes. Please introduce yourselves in the Chat Box on the Zoom Toolbar. If you have questions or comments, write them in the Chat Box any time, selecting “To: Everyone.” For optimized viewing, please select “Speaker View” from the Zoom View Options. We’d love to see you on social media using the event hashtag: #WIGSummerSummit.

I am really excited to hear this discussion on “Post-Secondary Education to Inclusive and Equitable Workforce Readiness.” It’s in partnership with the State Exchange on Employment and Disability or SEED through the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy.

We’re joined by an expert panel today, and please see the Chat Box for their full bios. Welcome first Daniel Kuehn, Senior Research Associate with the Benefits Policy Center at The Urban Institute and Bhavani Arabandi, Senior Research Associate with the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at The Urban Institute. And finally, Julie Squire, Vice President of Policy and General Counsel, National Association of State Workforce Agencies

Dan, you’ll go first, then pass to Bhavani, and we’ll finish up with you, Julie. Dan, the floor is yours!
Daniel Kuehn: Thanks. I’m really happy to be here and to present some of the work that we’ve done on inclusive apprenticeship.

I’m going to be talking about a report titled “Building an Apprenticeship Infrastructure for Youth Transitioning off Supplemental Security Income,” and this is one of two inclusive apprenticeship reports we recently produced at the Urban Institute. Bhavani will present the second one after me.

So, the purpose of this report was to serve with one of a dozen proposals produced in partnership with Mathematica Policy Research and the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) for the SSI Youth Solutions Project.

The proposals produced for the project provided policy recommendations to ODEP to help think about how to help youth transitioning off of SSI and all youth with disabilities for strong connections to the employment and the labor market.

Because this was a proposal that I’m presenting, this isn’t an actual program apprenticeship program that exists, but I think some of the research that I review and the proposals that I’ve made to ODEP are still useful for state policymakers for thinking about where to go with inclusive apprenticeship.

My proposal was to establish a grant program to support youth apprenticeship and intermediary organizations that are responsible for developing youth apprenticeship programs that are inclusive of SSI youth and all youth with disabilities. The idea for a grant program for intermediaries was really driven by two important constraints in the apprenticeship system that we see.

First, apprenticeship is a relatively complicated training model, and I’ll talk more about that in a little bit. It requires coordinating multiple partners, including employers and related technical instruction providers for all apprenticeship programs. And then for youth apprentices with disabilities, we’re likely also talking about involving the school system, parents, youth serving organizations, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and other public agencies, so an intermediary role can really help to coordinate these various partners.

Second, the second motivation was that, since we know very little about what successful inclusive apprenticeship programs look like, a grant program is really ideal for developing different models and understanding what kind of strategies, incentives, and tools work best.

So, my goal is to provide you a brief introduction to what we know about apprenticeship for people with disabilities and then to describe the intermediary project that I recommended.

I want to start by making sure everybody understands what apprenticeship is and the core components of a registered apprenticeship program.

First, employers are integral to any apprenticeship program. There has to be an employer involved in apprenticeship. Often these employers serve as the sponsor of the program, so they organize and are
responsible for the operations of the program. Sometimes another organization serves as the sponsor, but an employer always has to be involved because they provide the on the job training.

The second component of a registered apprenticeship program is structured, on the job training provided by a mentor that’s working on the job and supervising the apprentice on the job. On the job training has to last at least 2,000 hours. Sometimes it lasts even more - four or five years for apprenticeships in the building trades - so this is where the apprentices learn a lot of their skills.

Apprentices also learn skills in what's called related technical instruction. Apprenticeship programs have to have at least 144 hours of related technical instruction per year. Sometimes this is provided in a traditional school setting by a community college, but it can also be provided by other providers or private technical trainers. Even the employer themselves can provide the related technical instruction.

There has to be rewards for skill gains, so apprentices have to see wage increases when they reach certain milestones of skill gains. That can be measured in various ways. Finally, apprenticeship completers have to earn a nationally recognized occupational credential of some sort.

Although we don't know a lot about inclusive apprenticeship currently, we know about the impact that apprenticeship training has on participants' lives and their employment.

We know from research from Mathematica Policy Research and the Upjohn Institute that apprenticeship significantly improves participants' earning and employment. And we're also spending a lot more time in recent years looking at the impact on employers. The Commerce Department has a great study out that shows it provides value and return on investment to employers as well.

Despite this, we also know that people with disabilities are substantially underrepresented in registered apprenticeship, and youth are as well. This surprises a lot of people because we think about the European apprenticeship model as a youth model, and in the United States, that's not necessarily the case.

School age youth are not as well represented. So, because these populations aren't represented, as I mentioned, a grant program for intermediaries can help us learn really what would work for them.

So, in this slide and the next one, I'm going to present some data on what we do know about apprentices with disabilities. My report compiles data from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System, which is the federal administrative data on registered apprentices. It doesn't cover all states, but it covers approximately three quarters of the national workforce, so it gives us a good sense of what's going on with apprenticeship.

I’ve presented data here starting in 2017, and the reason for that is before 2017, the federal government did not collect information on the disability status of apprentices, so this is the first year where we really observe it.
There are two things that I really want you to notice in this table. The first is that the large majority of apprentices in the United States are not school age youth. In 2019, out of 154,000 apprentices that started their programs, only a little over 4,000 were age 18 or younger. So, it’s not the same as the European apprenticeship models that are dual apprenticeship models starting at high school ages.

And the second thing I want you to notice is that very few apprentices self-identify as having a disability, although this number has grown over time. So, in 2019, we had just over 1,100 apprentices across the country identifying as having a disability. This is because of low participation rates, and it's also because of low reporting rates by employers, which I think Bhavani will talk a little more about during her presentation.

So, although we haven’t been collecting data on the performance of apprentices with disabilities for very long, we can say something about their experiences based on the early data that we do have.

In this table, I have presented the program completion rates for apprentices with disabilities. Apprentices with disabilities are in the first column, and apprentices with no identified disabilities are in the second column.

What we find is that consistently whether we look at shorter programs (2,000 hour programs) or longer programs (4,000 hour programs), apprentices with an identified disability actually have substantially higher completion rates than apprentices without disabilities. So, this does seem to be a training model that can work for apprentices with disabilities.

We can’t look at longer apprenticeship programs, again, because we’ve only been collecting data since 2017. We can’t observe the outcomes for those apprentices yet.

Now these strong completion rates and strong employment outcomes for apprentices with disabilities are particularly important because SSI benefits are quickly offset by labor market earnings. So, forging these strong connections in the labor market are important to make sure that there’s earnings to replace those offset benefits.

The GAO looked at what parents know about SSI youth and their benefits, and they often lack information or guidance for navigating the various benefit offsets, incentives, and supports that are available to SSI youth. This again is where an apprenticeship intermediary can come in who understands those incentives, waivers, and benefit details and can help the apprentice and the parent.

The intermediary addresses the concerns of information on SSI benefits, and they can also help cement the strong paid employment relationships that will really carry the apprentices through after they transition off benefits.

Now I'm going to move back to the proposal that I produced for ODEP and talk a little more about some of the potential roles for the SSI youth intermediary. The proposal was for a federal grant program, but I
think state apprenticeship agencies can also serve these coordinating roles that I envisioned for the intermediary for ODEP.

The first is to coordinate apprenticeship partners. That's the traditional registered apprenticeship partners – the employer, the related technical instruction provider, additional partners that are involved because youth are involved, and then partners that are involved to serve youth with disabilities.

This could also involve managing or funding supportive services for youth with disabilities, and perhaps most importantly, providing technical assistance and training to employers.

Bhavani will talk a little bit more about this, but one of the things we've learned talking to employers is that they need a lot of information and assistance on accommodation for apprentices. They often don't know how to provide accommodation for apprentices with disabilities.

They also need to understand proper reporting of disability status to the Office of Apprenticeship. Since these reporting requirements are new, even sponsors that have been running apprenticeship programs for many years still need to be acquainted with the reporting requirements.

The intermediary can help with compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity requirements, and they can provide training to the mentors - the mentors that are actually providing the on-the-job training to the apprentices - on how to mentor apprentices with disabilities and teach them about disability rights and accommodations.

And another role that SSI youth intermediaries specifically can play is facilitating these work incentives and rule waivers that parents have to navigate for youth on SSI. A couple are directly relevant to apprenticeship. The Student Earned Income Exclusion can help apprentices keep benefits if they’re students, and many apprentices are enrolled students.

Both the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) and Individual Development Accounts could help fund related technical instruction if it’s provided in schools. That can be something that the intermediary can also help to coordinate with the apprenticeship sponsor.

And then the intermediary can also assist apprentices with continuing disability reviews. Now we know from the evaluation of Youth Transition Demonstration project that these incentives and rule waivers don’t really have a real strong effect on the employment and earnings of youth on SSI.

So, it’s not a substitute for recruitment efforts to get these youth involved in the apprenticeship program, but they can help to make sure that the youth apprentices are rewarded for the work that they do and that they don’t lose benefits that they don’t have to lose.

That’s all I have on my report, so I’m going to pass it to my colleague Bhavani to talk about our Inclusive Apprenticeship Report for ODEP.
Bhavani Arabandi: Thank you, Dan, and thank you to Women In Government. I’m very excited to be here and talking about inclusive apprenticeship.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Urban's work, we are a nonprofit research organization located in DC. We evaluate evidence on social and economic policy issues. Our research spans many areas: housing, health, education, and justice. For our own team, our current project and our portfolio is our work evaluating the newly launched partnership in inclusive apprenticeship initiative or PIA at the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor.

We will be evaluating PIA as it’s happening, creating opportunities for responsive feedback, highlighting best practices and offering insights that can fine tune technical assistance and evaluative approaches. As part of this work, we conducted a knowledge development report on the state of inclusive apprenticeships.

Our team sees inclusive apprenticeship as a key to equitable recovery. The evidence shows that apprenticeship can open up opportunities to many and be an important catalyst for these recovery efforts.

So, the purpose of our knowledge development report was to synthesize information that can be useful for Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship implementation. The findings for the report were drawn from a literature review and background interviews from eight experts. These come from employers, intermediary organizations, state unemployment, state government employees, and a disability advocate, an analysis of RAPIDS data that Dan was just mentioning on apprentices with disabilities.

The work was guided by key research questions such as what are the essential components of an inclusive apprenticeship, what are the benefits and costs, what federal and state supports exist, what data are available, and what are the major lessons learned about inclusive apprenticeship.

For today's presentation, I'll be focusing on federal and state supports and lessons on expanding apprenticeship, but you can read our larger paper as well. There are several existing federal and state supports. For instance, the Equal Employment Opportunity or EEO guidelines for registered apprenticeship were updated in 2016 and added disability as one of the protected bases, so, sponsors are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of disabilities.

Sponsors must invite people to self-identify and must provide reasonable accommodations upon request. A lot of employers are stressed out about what these reasonable accommodations are. Some examples are making sure facilities are physically accessible, providing flexible work schedules, buying new or modifying existing tools and equipment, and providing personal support as needed. But not all of them need to be very expensive. There can be a range of accommodations that can be used.

Registered apprenticeship sponsors with five or more apprentices are required to develop affirmative action programs, and most sponsors currently do not report disability status. Although reporting compliance should increase, this is data that is really, really key.
DOL has set an aspirational goal of 7% apprentices with disabilities. Our interview respondents reported that the aspirational nature of this goal is an obstacle to actually reporting.

Despite this impediment to reporting, in our interviews, we were told by one of our employers that some of the apprentices will coming on board making $12 an hour but by the time they graduate they’re making $70,000 as software engineers.

A staff member at a state agency reminded us that employers need to understand that a reasonable accommodation doesn’t have to be an $18,000 a year interpreter.

Existing data show that apprentices with disabilities have higher starting wages and are registered in shorter programs. They’re much more likely to be employed in computer and math-related occupations, and this could likely explain the higher salaries in the company. As Dan mentioned before, they have higher rates of completion and lower cancellation rates compared to apprentices without them.

Switching gears, let’s look at some of the state activities to promote and expand inclusive apprenticeship. Some states integrate stakeholders from the disability community into the apprenticeship development process directly. For instance, in California, AB 1019 created a Subcommittee on Apprenticeships that includes people with disabilities and adds the Director of Rehabilitation and Executive Director of State Council on Developmental Disabilities to California Interagency Advisory Committee on Apprenticeships. So, they have a direct line into creating those kinds of changes or strategic policies needed to support people with disabilities.

The Wisconsin Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards partners with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for its apprenticeship grant applications. When they’re included in the grant application process from the very beginning, they can set an agenda to be more inclusive.

Some states help individuals with disabilities become aware of and prepare and skill up for entry into apprenticeship. The Texas Workforce Commission, for example - I looked at a new program in 2019 for high school students with disabilities. The program’s goal was to build awareness about career pathways and apprenticeships through individualized and experiential learning.

Pennsylvania’s Office of Vocational Rehabilitation developed a pre-apprenticeship program in warehousing. The Office reports that soft skills and warehousing curriculum use a variety of accommodations as well as coordination with local public transportation ensure that pre-apprentices’ shifts aligned with public transportation schedules. They’re really going out of their way to create those kinds of supports for pre-apprentices with disabilities.

In New Jersey, several bills were introduced in the Senate to support inclusive apprenticeship in the state. One bill proposed pre-apprenticeships that are inclusive of people with disabilities by building in counseling, life skills, training, and math and literacy programs.
Some other states include helping people with disabilities navigate the apprenticeship hiring process and incentivizing employers that hire apprentices. For instance, Ohio’s Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities apprentice program will develop apprenticeship programs for people with disabilities in collaboration with multiple state agencies. The apprenticeship program provides support for people in these programs over the course of the application, interviewing, and onboarding processes.

New Jersey provides additional tax credit incentives to businesses that hire apprentices with disabilities.

And finally, some states support apprentices by providing resources and protecting them from discrimination. Michigan’s House Bill 4579, for example, established a peer mentoring program for apprentices with disabilities. Virginia prohibits sponsors of registered apprenticeship programs from discriminating against apprentices or apprentice applicants based on disability.

A pilot program in New Jersey, for example, addresses two significant barriers to people participating in apprenticeships by subsidizing affordable and reliable transportation and childcare services. So, these are various examples of how states have worked with apprenticeship programs at different stages to create support for people with disabilities.

There are several lessons for expanding inclusive apprenticeships. Registering existing unregistered apprenticeships and work-based learning programs could be an important effort and would build and design and increase replicability. It will also open opportunities to collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and other government programs.

Increasing the knowledge of and familiarity with registered apprenticeship among VR staff would be an important effort.

There's also an opportunity to engage with businesses more effectively through strategies like public testimonials and a focus on them and other apprenticeship projects. We found that having employer champions talk about their apprenticeship experiences along the way go a long way to persuade other employers.

And finally cultivating strong partnerships, as Dan was mentioning in his presentation, support of inclusive apprenticeship is important, and could include jointly developing outreach materials for employers and informing disabilities-serving organizations about work based learning apprenticeship and employing partnerships is absolutely key, as we found in in a lot of our research.

The last slide here is a list of resources on an inclusive apprenticeships. It will be made available for you at the end of this presentation, so please use them. We'd love to work with you and answer any questions.

And I’ll pass it on to Julie Squire.
Julie Squire: Thank you, and hello everyone. Thank you so much for inviting me here today. It is great to be with all of you, and I’m really enjoying the discussion.

So, on the next slide I have just a little bit of information about NASWA. I’m with the National Association of State Workforce Agencies. We are a nonprofit and nonpartisan association for the state agencies that work with the federal employment programs - so, for example, the Maryland Department of Labor and the Texas Workforce Commission.

And we’re very proud that all 50 states plus D.C., the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam are members of NASWA. We work collaboratively on a very regular basis with other associations, including Women In Government and also NCSL and National Governors Association.

This just shows our strategic goals, and really, at the end of the day, our focus is on the federal employment programs such as workforce training, employment, career services, business services, unemployment insurance - so we’ve been very busy in the last year-, veterans’ reemployment and labor market information programs. We focus on the education at the federal level but also a lot on sharing promising practices.

One thing that is really unique about us is that as an association, we are member-driven. Our Board of Directors is elected from our state workforce agency leadership. Currently, our Chair is Fitzgerald Washington, the Secretary of the Alabama Department of Labor, and our Vice Chair is Robert Asaro-Angelo, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Robin Cooley, Director of the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, is our current Secretary.

We have a number of groups that are made up of employees from the workforce agencies to comprise committees that really inform our work. Every year we have legislative priorities, and we will also be providing you links to the legislative priorities.

So, an example of some of our committees that will inform this is our Equal Opportunity Committee that is focused on making sure that the work of the workforce agencies is free of discrimination and complies with all of the regulations on equal opportunity.

We also have an Employment and Training Committee, and we have an affinity group that works in the area of apprenticeship. We also have a Workforce Information Technology Support Center that focuses on technology to support all of the programs, and that includes vocational rehabilitation.

I just wanted to highlight some of the aspects of our legislative priorities that are relevant to this discussion, and really there is just broad support for apprenticeships from both parties, from all the states. There’s a big interest in apprenticeship, and I also included down here a link to relaunching America’s Workforce Act, which also has a lot of support broadly, and that is in NASWA’s legislative priorities.
We've also seen as attention has turned away from unemployment insurance and toward finding workers and on the workforce side, there is broad support and trending interest in policy to assist individuals with disabilities and not just individuals with disabilities, but other barriers or factors that might leave them on the sidelines.

Apprenticeship is definitely one of those areas where we want to see more involvement, including youth, especially youth transitioning out of foster care, veterans, and a lot of interest in assistance to help formerly incarcerated individuals to find employment.

The groups I talked about, our committees, also inform our interaction with Congress, and we have had some very recent interaction really on the workforce side trying to encourage Congress, and we would encourage you to reach out to your federal delegation as well.

Of course, there's big news coming out right now on our phones that President Biden has reached an agreement - there's not a lot of details at this time - but an agreement on the infrastructure planning, so there should be a bill developed soon, but there's a lot of activity right now on this, so it's very timely that we're having this discussion now.

NASWA did send a letter to Congress on workforce initiatives and funding, really encouraging a lot of those topics mentioned in our legislative priorities, and we've also been meeting with the Senate Committees on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, and House Health Committee and House Education and Labor Committee to emphasize the needs, especially for additional funding for apprenticeship work. I've also included a link, and you will get it when you receive the presentation after this program. NASWA members agreed on high level principles for expanding and enhancing apprenticeship programs, and I think that you'll find those to be interesting.

So, I just mentioned the President's infrastructure deal with the bipartisan group of senators that was just announced today. We don't know a lot of detail. We do know that they have a very high top line number.

And there's been other activity that happened since I sent my slides over on Monday, and I just wanted to share a big announcement and I will put that in the chat. The U.S. Department of Labor just yesterday announced about $99 million in new grants to 15 states specifically for apprenticeship, with an emphasis on equity and inclusion.

This is going to be exciting for several reasons. First of all, the funds that are provided to the states are going to be emphasizing inclusion, and I think that other states are really going to be able to learn from these grants and the work that is done.

We're really looking forward to seeing how these 15 states expand the programming, and I’m just going to read off the states because I know some of you are on the phone. The states that received these grants yesterday are Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Texas.
It’s really going to be a great base to expand, especially in the area of inclusive apprenticeships. And along with the announcement of those $99 million in grants, there were some other grants announced, and these are with vendors to establish registered apprenticeship technical assistance centers of excellence. One of those centers has an aim of working across both public and private sectors to focus on expanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities, so this is exactly what we're talking about today. I think it's very exciting, so it'll be really interesting to see what happens and get more details on these new initiatives.

On the screen you'll see a bill that we know has passed the House in Congress, and right now it’s with the Senate. But the National Apprenticeship Act would increase funding for registered apprenticeships. This is not specifically for individuals with disabilities; however, the bill that passed the House does specifically mention and have requirements in there for continuing to promote diversity in apprenticeship, including individuals with disabilities. And it does provide some intermediary grants which, as we heard earlier, can really help connect individuals with disabilities to apprenticeship opportunities, so a lot going on right now in this area.

I wanted to touch on the budget process, so this would be the normal budget process. The President's budget came out a couple of weeks ago and shows that the administration has definitely continued interest in improving and expanding apprenticeships, including $100 million. The House Appropriations Committee is starting their markups soon, so again, if you have input to provide to your federal delegation, I think that now is a very timely a timely opportunity to do that.

Some of these might be duplicates of some of the resources that were provided earlier, but I have included links to some priority resources I find helpful. These are really some helpful links that given more information about building a strong inclusive apprenticeship program.

And here also I have some more information where you can link down and find some other examples. These will give you some ideas of great work going on now across the country with apprenticeship funds specifically targeted toward individuals with disabilities. The last example I’m sharing is promoting youth apprenticeship.

Our State of the Workforce report is a valuable resource. This is a report that we put together earlier this year. It has a profile page for every state, and it lists in the report every program area that the state workforce agency works in - for example, apprenticeship, unemployment insurance - and it also highlights innovative approaches that were taken during the pandemic. It also includes unemployment insurance statistics for your state, and you'll find some of them to be rather amazing that all that work was done this past year. So please, if you could take a look at our report, I think you'll find some valuable information in there about your state.

And that is the end of my presentation. Happy to take questions, and I’ll turn it back over to Delegate Tran.
Delegate Kathy Tran: Thank you so much, Dan, Bhavani, and Julie. This is incredible information! I know I was surreptitiously taking pictures of your slides. I’m pretty old school, and I want to make sure that I have it after today’s presentation and to give me ideas heading into our next legislative session in Virginia.

We have some time for a couple of questions, so please write questions or comments in the Chat Box. Before we get to them, I just want to say how incredibly important I think this conversation is.

I served as a civil servant for 12 years at the U.S. Department of Labor in the Employment and Training Administration and before we left, we were still working on the regs - the EEO regs - for registered apprenticeship, so I’m so glad to see kind of the impact that those regs are having in the system, right now. Also, I now have the honor of sitting on our State Workforce Board in Virginia and on our Access and Equity Subcommittee, and I think one of the things that we are all grappling with at the state level is how do we make sure that as we recover from this pandemic, we do so in a way that leaves no worker behind?

That includes making sure that we are lifting up and identifying all the opportunities possible for some of our most vulnerable workers, including people with disabilities, and so with apprenticeship being a tried and proven method of getting people trained and on a really solid and good career pathway and linking that with people with disabilities and making sure they have that pipeline to getting into apprenticeship programs is so important.

So, I think this is a good overall question. Where can I find state policy examples and best practices that focus on gender and racial equity in apprenticeships as well? So, do any of our speakers today have ideas on that?

Julie Ellen Squire: I would suggest that she look at some of the resources that I linked. They cover broader areas than just individuals with disabilities, so some of those links might be of assistance. There's definitely great need in that area as well.

Virginia Delegate Kathy Tran: Thank you. And from Wendy - how do people find out about apprenticeship opportunities? She sees this could be helpful to their dialysis patients.

Only about 25% of working age dialysis patients are employed. Is the best way to check with the state vocational rehab programs or other places? Anybody have thoughts on which states are doing it really well in terms of getting the word out about apprenticeship opportunities?

Daniel Kuehn: So, vocational rehab agencies would probably be particularly well informed about the apprenticeship programs that are inclusive of people with disabilities. And I think that would be a good resource, but apprenticeship jobs have job postings like any other jobs. www.apprenticeship.gov specifically has a search tool for apprenticeship job openings.

But I think for those potential apprentices, the VR agencies are a great place to start.
Bhavani Arabandi: I’m going to make a little plug for Urban Institute. We work on a number of apprenticeship projects. I work on a youth apprenticeship project and would love to talk to you more about inclusive apprenticeship, so please feel free to look it up and contact me.

And we also work on a tech apprenticeship project. We work with employers very closely, with community based organizations and developing youth specialists, occupations, and things like that, so we would love to learn more about your needs and definitely help make those connections with partners in your state.

Virginia Delegate Kathy Tran: Great, thank you. We have just about two minutes left for this segment of today’s webinar. I wanted to ask our panelists for some last thoughts, and I’d like to focus them on the fact that all of us at the state level right now are trying to figure out how to best allocate the ARPA funding - the funding that’s coming from the American Rescue Plan Act.

Are there specific thoughts that you have how we could apply some of that funding to help make registered apprenticeships more inclusive? We’ll start with you, Dan, then Bhavani, and then Julie.

Daniel Kuehn: The states that have been successful in expanding apprenticeship have strong state apprenticeship staff that go out and do the work organizing apprenticeship programs. And I think having staff, especially focused on organizing inclusive apprenticeship programs would be very valuable, but if you don't have anybody going out there and talking to employers, you’re not going to expand apprenticeships efficiently.

Bhavani Arabandi: And I can add to Dan's point. Having strong intermediaries that work at both the state and federal level at the national level are really, really key. For example, at Urban Institute on our apprenticeship programs, we work with state directors, very often in close connection with them. But we also work with employers and large industry associations, and working with intermediaries to form those partnerships would be key. We might have more of those kinds of connections than an individual employer might not.

Virginia Delegate Kathy Tran: Thank you. Julie?

Julie Ellen Squire: I would echo what Dan was saying, and I think you can get a lot of value for a low amount of money by hiring apprenticeship navigators. These are individuals who can really get out there, get the word out, and connect state agencies as well as high schools and different employer groups to really connect and help lead people toward where they need to go for great apprenticeships.

Delegate Kathy Tran: Bhavani, Dan, and Julie—thank you so much for your expertise today. Please be sure to check out the WIG website for resources on inclusive apprenticeships and other information on Disability Employment Policy. Now I’m turning things over to the next moderator, South Carolina Representative Heather Crawford. Representative Crawford, the floor is now yours!
State Representative Heather Crawford: Thank you so much Delegate Tran! I am delighted to lead this next conversation on “Trends and Opportunities for State-Level Resilience” with Laura Lightbody, Project Director for Flood-Prepared Communities at the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Let me just say that this topic is very near and dear to my heart, as in recent years, following major rainstorms, the district that I represent in the South Carolina House of Representatives has been tremendously impacted. This has been a priority of mine and our governor and many from our county and around South Carolina to address this flood issue. We only have about 15 minutes for this session, so let’s get started. Please write any questions into the Chat Box. Welcome, Laura, and the floor is now yours!

Laura Lightbody: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Representative Crawford, for that nice introduction and to hear that this is an issue near and dear to your heart coming from South Carolina. Thanks to Women In Government for hosting this on a really important topic. I will try to get it all in but obviously 15 minutes is not enough for this discussion. We could probably talk about it for hours and hours.

Let me just briefly introduced the Pew Charitable Trusts. For those of you who are not familiar with our organization, we’re a research and public policy entity that operates independently. We are nonpartisan. We are a nonprofit dedicated to solely serving the public interest. We work on a broad array of issues, both domestically and internationally. We like to say everything from penguins to pensions because it really is that broad.

In particular I work and oversee our disaster resilience initiative that’s aimed at reducing the impact of flood-related disasters on the U.S. taxpayer and environment through policy that prioritizes flood-ready infrastructure, mitigates the impacts of disasters, modernizes flood insurance, and promotes nature-based solutions.

Why do we focus on flooding? It is our nation’s number one most common and most costly natural disaster that impacts all 50 states. Everyone on this phone is probably unfortunately very aware of that. Flooding events and coastal events have cost over $900 billion in overall losses since 2000, and those numbers continue to tick up.

2018 National Climate Assessment projects a future with more frequent downpours, intensifying hurricanes and rising sea levels. Unfortunately, these impacts overwhelm all levels of government. Growing financial risk exposure puts pressure on states and communities to really get in the game in terms of budgeting for disasters, but also driving them to factor resilience into projects and planning to ultimately reduce the impacts and costs for localities.

Localities are straining to meet federal matches and stretched thin. And states have competing priorities, siloed programs, and likewise strained budgets. However, we cannot afford to wait and continue to wait for disasters to happen before we take action.
That is what we're here to talk to you about today. Research shows that it pays off. For every dollar invested in disaster mitigation, it saves society on average $6. And that is why at Pew we're working with states to put in place plans that address flood risk in a comprehensive, statewide, durable manner.

States are the lynchpin between federal and state and local resources. There's increasing pressure on states, as I mentioned, to share this financial burden of disasters. Floods exceed the capacity of local jurisdictions. They do not care about jurisdictional lines. They do not care if you are red or blue. States are adaptable, and they can work horizontally across agencies with the private sector and non-governmental entities.

We've seen a lot of promise. States are acting. Representative Ryu can probably speak to this herself because what we've seen in Washington recently earlier this year, they passed the Climate Commitment Act, which was a large climate mitigation bill that included provisions for the state to develop and implement a statewide resiliency plan to address climate hazards.

It's not just Washington. We're seeing this across the country in Texas, North Carolina, West Virginia, Maine, and South Carolina. But despite some of this sort of momentum and promise, it's really hard, and there is no straightforward fix.

Just to show you, this is a “Houston Chronicle” graphic they put together to show how complicated the flow of money is from the federal government and the US taxpayer all the way down to communities that are trying to do mitigation and disaster recovery, all the way to the individuals.

We're trying to help untangle this and really make this a little bit easier for states, and so, we're doing that in three very concrete ways – policy, planning, and partnerships.

You'll see what we call the State Resilience Planning Group. This is an established and growing network of Chief Resiliency Officers, agency directors, and other state executive branch officials that are tasked with developing and implementing these statewide resiliency strategies - the folks who are on the other end of that Washington legislation I just mentioned.

It is comprised of about 15 states from coastal and inland states around the country that are really coming together to share best practices and learn from workshops and roundtable discussions. We bring in experts, and we do a lot of peer to peer conversations.

What we've learned from this group is that it is really complicated. There's a lot we don't know, and there's a lot to figure out. Pew doesn't have all the answers, and so, we recently launched the State Resilience Partnership, along with another entity, the American Flood Coalition, a fellow NGO of ours focused also on national solutions to flooding.

This partnership is joined by 16 other NGOs and academic partners to really create a centralized resource hub for resilience knowledge that's specially curated by these groups to help state officials to develop statewide plans in hopes that we can move plans from paper into practice. The website is called
WIG Summer Summit  
June 24, 2021  
“Post-Secondary Education and Equitable Workforce Readiness” followed by “Trends and Opportunities for State-Level Resilience”  

[stateresilience.org](http://stateresilience.org). You can see all the groups that participate, and we’ll soon be unveiling more resources on that website.

The next slide is policy. We work directly with state legislative and executive branches to develop legislation, executive orders, rulemaking, and different types of funding sources - really providing technical assistance and legislative assistance as needed to really identify and put in place durable, lasting resilience policy and regulations.

On the next slide you'll see a couple of things that we're really proud of that we've been part of. South Carolina is a great example of a state that committed both to resiliency planning and is working on some other mitigation efforts. We've seen Texas and Virginia over the past couple of years put millions of dollars on the table specifically just for flood mitigation.

And the list really goes on, and our hope is that we can really foster and develop and support these states as legislation gets put in place but also as these planning mechanisms get in place that are really forward thinking.

Lastly, I want to tease out some of the upcoming research that we're working on with our partners at the Urban Institute. I know we just heard from someone at the Urban Institute, and I’m so happy to see them on here.

The point of this research is really to identify and analyze effective practices for statewide resilience planning and put out evidence-based recommendations. When we started in this space, we realized very quickly that there was not a place for state government and agency staff to go to that had been researched, that could really help them as a starting point for where their state should go.

So, that's in development. That's underway right now, and we're really looking forward to the final product of that and sharing that with many of you later on in the year.

I will pause there. I said a lot, but I wanted to make sure I was able to get it all in. I’m happy if there’s time to answer any questions, Representative Crawford.

**State Representative Heather Crawford:** Thank you, Laura, and thank you so much for your work on this. It has been very interesting to me over the course of several years’ research and, of course, the legislation that we passed in South Carolina.

Not only is it not just my area in South Carolina that's dealing with these issues from weather events but also states all over our country and countries all over the world, so it's been very interesting to see the resilience plans and what folks have done to kind of make water our friend, so to speak, and get out of the way, sometimes.
So, we have worked in South Carolina, as you mentioned, with our state resilience plan. We have just committed $50 million to the Office of Resilience, and we are working on moving folks out of the way doing just that with some voluntary relocation and buyouts.

You're right that it's a very complicated process. Putting those resources together under one hub, so to speak, so that folks have somewhere to go, is very helpful.

Okay, great question from Representative Ryu. Even though insurance policies exclude flood damage, is there a place for property and casualty insurance companies to help in this effort?

Laura Lightbody: That's a good question. I think others are trying to figure this out as well. Of course, there is flood insurance, so outside of your traditional homeowners insurance, the requirement if you do live in an identified flood area is to have flood insurance.

You know, we always say that's sort of the first line of defense if you do live in a flood risk area, but of course flood insurance does not make you whole, and flood insurance doesn't protect you, right? It is a financial form of mitigation, and so we are constantly, as Representative Crawford just alluded to, thinking of ways to really get ourselves and these property owners out of this position in the first place.

That's where really our decisions come to bear, where you have economic interest really butting heads with development interests. At the end of the day, you know, the water is getting closer to us, and we have a responsibility to not continue to keep putting people in harm's way.

Rep. Heather Crawford, WIG Board Member: Absolutely, and some of those flood areas - our floodplains and zones have changed. I know we are getting ready to adopt new flood maps here in our area which are going to put a whole – it shifts. It has changed that around. I appreciate you so much. Thank you for all of your work on this, thank you for your time and presenting to us today. I look forward to our continued work together.

Laura Lightbody: Thank you. Enjoy the rest of the sessions!

State Representative Heather Crawford: Thank you. Please visit the WIG website for all resources including WIG’s new Malnutrition Toolkit.

You can also check out www.womeningovernment.org to check out next week’s agenda for our Summer Summit. Thank you so much for joining us today, and we look forward to seeing you soon!

~~

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES:
Women In Government website SEED resources page:
INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIP EVENT RESOURCES:
Apprenticeships (The Urban Institute): https://www.urban.org/features/apprenticeships

Workforce Development Page (The Urban Institute): https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/building-americas-workforce


The Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center: http://www.wintac.org/

U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy: Disability Inclusion Guides and Resources: https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/apprenticeship


The Workforce GPS Resources Page for Expanding Apprenticeships for Individuals with Disabilities https://apprenticeshipusa.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/03/16/09/Expanding-Apprenticeship-for-Individuals-with-Disabilities

Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT) Information on Inclusive Apprenticeship Programs: https://www.peatworks.org/?s=inclusive+apprentice

Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship: https://inclusiveapprenticeship.org/


State Example: California Apprenticeship Initiative: https://caihub.foundationccc.org/

State Example: Washington State Pre-Apprenticeship and Supportive Program: https://wsdot.wa.gov/EqualOpportunity/pass.htm
State Example: Maryland State Apprenticeship Expansion Grants:  
https://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/appr/apprgrantexp.shtml

State Example: Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship:  
https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES RESOURCES:  
NASWA Legislative Priorities:  
https://www.naswa.org/advocacy/government-relations/2021-legislative-priorities

Relaunching America’s Workforce Act:  

NASWA Letter to Congress on Workforce Initiatives and Funding:  

NASWA Principles for Expanding and Enhancing Apprenticeship Programs:  

H.R.447 - National Apprenticeship Act of 2021  

SUPPLEMENTAL INCLUSIVE WORK RESOURCES:  
Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities (SEED-State Exchange on Employment and Disability):  

Work Matters Checklist: Policy Options for Enhancing the Employment of People with Disabilities (SEED-State Exchange on Employment and Disability):  

The Future of the Workforce: Approaches to Increasing Access & Inclusion (CSG-The Council of State Governments):  

States Expand Employment and Training Opportunities for People with Disabilities (National Governors Association):  

Learning on the Job for People with Disabilities (NCSL-National Conference of State Legislatures):  
Apprenticeships: A Pipeline for an Inclusive Recovery (NCSL-National Conference of State Legislatures):

State Approaches Foster Retention and Better Outcomes for Workers with Disabilities (NCSL-National Conference of State Legislatures):

Advancing Inclusion and Diversity in the Workforce (USCM-U.S. Conference of Mayors):

INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIP WEBINARS AND PODCASTS:

Utilizing Public Sector Apprenticeships to Improve Employment Outcomes (CSG-The Council of State Governments):

Getting Ready for Work – Youth Transition and Guideposts for Success (CSG-The Council of State Governments):
https://youtu.be/aRESmgjKeB0

Workforce Development for People with Disabilities: Career Readiness & Employability (CSG-The Council of State Governments)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81Lio0iZHU0

Career Planning and Credentialing for People with Disabilities (WIG-Women In Government)
https://w.soundcloud.com/player/?url=https%3A//api.soundcloud.com/tracks/337087023&auto_play=false&hide_related=false&show_comments=true&show_user=true&show_reposts=false&visual=true

An Inclusive Economic Recovery for All Americans (WGA-Western Governors Association)
https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-jdx82-f8adf4

~~~