TRANSCRIPT- AEL BUSINESS MEETING - DECEMBER 3, 2024

MAHALIA BALDINI:
We are going to go ahead and get started. So we're going to do something. Hopefully, you guys will think it's fun and a good exercise for us to kick us off here today. And I'll turn it over to Alma González with the Subrecipient Monitoring team, who's going to be talking about compliance. We've got a lot of new directors. We've got folks that are new to adult ed. There's all sorts of newness out there.

So we want to make sure that everybody is prepared, everybody feels prepared for what the process is coming because those reviews are going to start next program year for most of you. And we also have data validation. And she's going to go over that as well. These are two separate things that our Subrecipient Monitoring team does for our AEL grants that keeps us, Texas as a state, in compliance. So the work that they do is very important.

To those of you online, as you have questions, I think they're going to be sharing a couple of documents with you. We have the PowerPoint from Alma's presentation, because it's going to be a great desk aide for you when you leave here and you walk away from this process today to use that as a desk aide going forward, and what to expect on the day that you get an email that says, hey, we're going to come visit you, and you're going to be under an audit.

You can go back to this and you'll know exactly what to expect. So we're going to share that for our online folks as well as-- and share those documents out for today. So you can keep that in mind as we get started here.

So overview for today-- welcome and roll call. Since we have pretty limited number of folks that signed up to do in-person, we may do a little roll call. So if you're online, put in the chat who you're with, where you're from, who you're representing. And then really quickly, I'm going to go around the room. And I just want each table to shout out who you're with and who you're representing today instead of doing a formal roll call. Does that sound good?

And then we're going to have some discussion and consideration about our AEL contracted measures. You're either going to really enjoy today's activity or you're going to hate it. It's a 50/50 chance. I'm going to be honest.

If you're a person that really wants to tell the state what to do and how to do it, you're going to love it. If you're a person that's like, hey, just tell me what I need to do and I'll implement it, you're probably not going to-- because what we want to really do is get some feedback from you.

We've been talking a little bit about how we may not be telling the story of all the work that we do. One of the big challenges, I think, for me is talking to Texas legislators, our leadership at TWC, and all the other programs in saying, well, what does AEL really do? And we have some contracted measures. You guys are very familiar with them. But I'm not sure it tells the story of all the work that is happening out there.

So we're going to have a little discussion today and what are some things that maybe we could measure that would tell a better story and maybe shine a light on some things that we currently are not looking at and not measuring. So we'll talk about that.

We are going to recognize our program year 23-24 best in class and co-enrollment. So we did not have an AEL Award this year. So the sad news is you don't get a big, fat check. The good news is you do get a plaque.

So we do want to take an opportunity to recognize all those folks. There's a lot of hard work that went into it. And we couldn't do awards this year because we have a new grant cycle starting. And when we have a new grant cycle that starts, we just couldn't-- we couldn't figure out a way to really keep those awards active, not knowing who would who would be with us come July and us having the award presentation here in December.

So they may come back next year. That's for our commission to decide. Our commission has to approve all of that. And we'll be working on that for possibly bringing it back in the future. But I do want to take a moment to recognize the hard work for the last program year. And then we'll close up with Alma González from Subrecipient Monitoring and talking about the process and what you can expect if you do get monitored, and then also for data validation, which is a separate process.

Now, let's go real quick and do roll call. Again, if you're online, throw it in the chat so we know who is there. And then just real quickly around the room, I'm going to start with the back table. And if you guys could just say, hey, we're from, and let us know where you're from. Is that everybody? No. We got Brett.

MAHALIA BALDINI:

You're trying to get out of this, Ricardo. I saw you. Next table here in the center, Birdsville. Woop, woop. Is this all Dallas? TCALL. All Dallas, all day. And this is primarily-- we got some TWC folks. Who else we got? San Antonio representing, TCALL in the back. Yep. Is that it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Yeah.

MAHALIA BALDINI:

Socorro. And this is Alma. You'll meet her this afternoon, a little later. We'll go center table here. Awesome. Victoria College and North Texas AEL and TCALL. And I know we just got some Houston folks that walked in from HCC in the house.

Now, our Workforce Division Director, Mary York, was planning on being here today. She wanted to come and say a few words. But she was unable to attend. She got pulled away for something else, which is OK.

My boss does happen to be here today, which would normally probably make me nervous, but not today. She's easy. But she's here. I'm not going to point her out to you because then that might set me up for a situation that we don't want to get into. So I won't point her out to you. But she is here so that she can learn a little bit more about the things that we're doing.

Let's get started. Are you guys ready? We're going to go through-- I'm going to have a couple of slides. We're going to talk about some things. And then we're going to have a couple of activities. And we're going to have activities, as well, for our online folks, which are-- you guys are going to get thrown into some breakout rooms so that you can also participate in these activities.

I had talked a little bit about our AEL contracted measures. So these are your current contracted measures. These are the ones that are in your grant. These are the ones that we put in our request for applications.

We have enrollment targets. You guys are all familiar with that. Total enrollments-- that's in both of our 231 and our 243 grants. We have integrated education and training for both of our grants, 231 and 243.

We also have intensive services. That is only for our 231 grants. Our 243 grants do not have that as a contracted measure. But all of you have measurable skills gains and all of your exit-based measures, which include credential attainment, employed or enrolled in quarter 2 after exit, employed or enrolled in quarters 2 through 4 after exit.

And if you want to know more about the methodology of those-- most of you are probably pretty familiar with them right now. But if you want to really dig into the methodology-- numerators, denominators-- go and check out the performance guide. It's all in there. So you know exactly who's going to fall into that numerator and into that denominator.

Some of the things about our current contracted measures-- and for the last couple of years, we've been working with I3. You guys are probably familiar with who that is. I talk about them a lot.

I3 is a division within our agency that really helps us to look at performance. They help us with all of our federal performance reporting. They also help us with any ad hoc type things that we want to look at when we're evaluating our program success and our improvement models.

So we've been talking with them for the last couple of years about how those contracted measures-- while they keep us very aligned to our federal measures and to some of our state measures, they may not tell the story, the full story, of what we do in adult education. So we want to make sure that all of the work that we're doing is some way getting captured.

So a good example of this would be students that don't get to 12 hours. How much money are you guys spending-- zero money-- on students between 0 hours and 11 hours? No, right? We're spending money, time, resources on getting those students to 12 hours. But you won't see them on any report that we count federally or to the state.

So we got lots of money going for assessments and testing. We got a lot of money going for staff resources. But they're not captured anywhere. So right off the bat, we're losing the story of-- every year, I say, oh, we're supporting 70,000 students in Texas. But the reality is that number is a lot higher because there's a lot of students that come in that never make it to 12 hours.

And that can be because we have some retention issues-- students non-committal. But it can also mean that a student's coming in to take a math GED test and they only need 10 hours of remediation. So it's not as though we're not doing our jobs. So those are some things that get lost in translation, I think, with the existing measures.

I think there's also just little consideration for the specialized activities that are happening within your grants and within your service delivery. And those innovative practices don't really pop out when we're talking about some of these current contracted measures.

So if we're really thinking about how do we look at those measures and how do we look at the work that we're doing and try to quantify that in some way-- that's what I want us to think about today. This is meant to be brainstorming. It's meant to be innovative and creative. I want to hear from you what some of your thoughts are.

We've been working with I3 for the last probably year or so about this and just looking at the data, looking at trends, looking at things that we're measuring, looking at things we're not measuring that I feel like we should be measuring. So I want to talk a little bit about some of those possibilities before we go into this.

Now, when we get to the activity phase of this, I want to set some boundaries and some parameters for this. So here's the guiding principles. The guiding principles are when we're talking about contracted measures, it needs to be quantifiable and measurable. That's the big one. It needs to be something that we can quantify in the data and that we can measure to make sure that we are moving in the right direction or we're not.

It needs to be focused and aligned to our strategic goals. This big QR code up here is our strategic plan. That strategic plan I don't take lightly. When we design it and we develop it, I keep in mind all the other things that are happening in the state in education-- building a talent-strong Texas through the Coordinating Board. We have things that are happening at TEA to support skills development. That gets taken into consideration. We have our core WIOA partners. We have an entire WIOA system plan.

So I want to make sure that if we're going to be looking at things that we may want to consider as a quantifiable, measurable thing for adult education, we're keeping in mind all of those goals. Makes sense, right? We set a plan. What are we doing to help move the needle on some of those actionable items?

And then we do have to align it in some way to our current measures. We don't want to have measures that we're doing great when we're looking at contracted measures and then our federal numbers start to slip. So they need to be aligned. They need to be comparable. They need to be supporting that same goal as our current contracted measures.

And then last, aligned to House Bill 1602-- raise your hand if you've heard me talk about House Bill 1602. We've been talking about it since it happened. So this really is anchored into increasing the number of high school equivalency credentials and post-secondary credentials that our students are earning. And that's what that bill is all about. So be thinking about that because there is a little language in there that is tied to funding. So we want to make sure that if we're measuring something-- that it's also aligned there.

So just for the purposes of today's activity, I have put these into buckets. These are some of the things-- and the guys, as part of this activity, you may think there's another bucket that's a better bucket. And that's totally fine. I just had to, again, provide us with some parameters for today's discussion.

So here are the buckets. So when we're thinking about contracted measures, we're thinking about something quantifiable, something measurable, something that's aligned to our strategic plan, but also comparable to our state and federal measures and the contracted measures that we have. Here's the four buckets. One is student outreach, assessment, and intake. The other one is student services and activities. Third are all about the outcomes the students are making. Fourth is staff and instruction.

So I'm going to go through each of these and just walk through a couple of examples when I'm thinking about these buckets, what pops into my head and some of the things that I think. What's quantifiable? What's measurable within that based off of the work that we're doing and the service delivery?

So let's talk about student outreach, assessment, and intake first. So an example of something that we could potentially measure-- enrollments. What are the number of enrollments or the percent of a specific targeted demographic or ABE level?

So if we wanted to say our grants need to have x percent of the students that are entering into their programs meet this specific demographic, we could do something like that. Some other states do that when they're trying to really target a specific population in their state.

Another one is the percent of planned goals, number of students that have a planned goal of earning a high school equivalency or transitioning to post-secondary education. That could be something that we're measuring. Are we increasing the number of students that have that as a goal? Is it decreasing, looking at those numbers?

Another example may be the percent of reportable individuals that retain to a period of participation. Are we keeping students and being able to analyze maybe why students are not staying?

Student services and activities, an example-- retention number of days, number of instructional hours, or outcome-based measure that a student is staying in service. How many are receiving or what percent are receiving maybe career pathway services, percent of GED students passing above a 145? That speaks to our instruction.

How many of our GED students are we getting to be TSIA exempt whenever they're passing their HSC? We may want to start to measure that and promote that. We've talked a lot about we don't want students leaving adult education and then going where? Developmental education. We want our students to be ready to go into college on whatever path that they choose.

Another one is percent of GED students who passed all their exams within 90 days of the first passed test. Why is that one so specific? Those of you who attended the Fall Institute not this year, but last year-- we actually did an evaluation project with I3. They looked at all the GED test and all the completers. And what they found is that students who complete or take all of their GED test within the 90 days of passing their first test do better and get their credentials faster. So those are the types and level of analysis that we could potentially look at.

And then student outcomes, post-test rate-- we already have that. But it's a little lax. It's in our testing guide. And it's in there. We could continue that. Also, the x percent of students connected to industries that they trained in-- this is a WIOA Title I measure. We have never done that. But if we are supplying students with training in CNA or health care, then when they leave our program, are they getting a job in health care or are they going and working in fast food?

Right now, we're just looking at wages. But should we be looking at, are they actually getting into those industries? And how are we helping to connect our students to industry that we're training them in? These are just examples to help your brain wrap itself around the activity that we're getting ready to go into and some of the things that we've been discussing.

The first step is we're going to do an activity. We're also going to do this in the breakout rooms. They're going to send you guys in breakout rooms. So let me go over the instructions and what we want to happen here. I want you to think about these two buckets-- student outreach assessment and intake. What are some things that we could measure that are quantifiable, that are measurable, that tell the story of the students and the work and the money that is being spent on adult education and literacy activities for students in that bucket?

Student services and activities-- what's the story there? What is something that we may want to measure or that we feel like is important that other people looking and peeking in the door gets to see about the services and the service delivery that you guys are offering? And Ms. Glenda just had a great idea. So if you're a reporter, raise your hand for your table. Who's the reporters? Raise your hand. Who's your reporter? Nobody? Y'all forgot that part?

The only reason I was asking you to self-identify was I wanted you to send us-- you can send us an email if you want of what your ideas were from your table. So we're going to do a little report out. And we're just going to randomly go around the room. And you guys can talk about-- for my staff, we're going to be taking notes on some of these ideas that you have. And then we'll have some further future probably discussions to dive into some of them.

I'm going to go ahead and start with the Region 6 folks over here on the right-hand side because I know that you're always prepared. Christie Heyman. We're prepared to let Connor do it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Well, now I got a high bar to clear. So the main thing we wanted-- we started discussion with was asking, is-- the problem we're trying to solve, we believe, is that 70,000 students are reported out of a population of 120,000 students. So there's 50,000 students that, for whatever reason, due to student services or outreach assessment intake, are not persisting past 11 hours.

So the big thing we talked about in terms of data collection would be, how do we assess why those 50,000 students failed to persist? And so I think a key thing that we would want to do is really targeted survey at that population to discover what are the top three, four, or five reasons that students don't come, because I've done this before with students. And there are a variety of reasons that they don't persist.

A lot of times, what I see in my own interaction with students is it's almost a multi-factored family crisis-- going to transportation, going into childcare, going into family care, things like that, that maybe it's a little bit harder to serve at the population level. But we don't know the answer to that of solutions until we know-- clearly define the problem of those 50,000 students.

And my provider issues are different from other providers' issues, I think. And so looking across the state population and what maybe you all need to focus on at first at a state level-- I think that would be very valuable data to actually try to do surveys, either through phone or email, with those 50,000 students.

But the thing I think we talked about a lot at our level is the challenge is the intake process and assessment process is long for many students. We look at the enrollment packet. And maybe there is some sort of pilot we could do to see if there is an initial questionnaire we could do to establish a reasonable assumption that the student will qualify for services with their assessment and then when they get to the 12-hour mark or they finish the rest of that enrollment paperwork at that time.

And it's expected that students after 12 hours have the remainder of the digital literacy questionnaire or the other items and data we have to collect about their post-secondary experiences back in their home country, all of those things-- maybe those come in at the 12-hour mark so we can get started with the students. We can get them to 12 hours. And then once we have them committed, the rest of those steps might come in. So those are our main two ideas.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
I have a question. Actually looking at-- sorry. I understand that these are recommendations and being able to tackle that. But are you saying that is a measure that you would be willing to entertain if we had some solutions to reach that measure?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
I think it provides a measure. I think what might be helpful is to see if we're trying to assess if the problem might be challenges with intake and the length of the process-- if you did some sort of pilot with a group of students that were allowed a maybe one-page assessment to see are you likely to enter that, and then at the 12-hour mark, you see if that population persists at a higher rate-- and so you could actually get data on, do these students that maybe have an expedited intake and assessment process persist at a greater than 7 to 12 rate, which we're talking about today? If that's not the case then, that's not the problem. So maybe we just move past that and we go back to the drawing board or to the survey to see what the problem might be.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Awesome. Thank you. Something else, too, and to his point-- other things I'm going to be listening for is more what Connor is talking about, which is a policy change. So we say you have to do the PEARL when you intake a student.

Technically, there are some states that say wait till they hit 12 hours before you even think about doing that. Make sure they're going to stay in the program. That's a state policy. So I'm going to also be listening if there's something that's coming out of this that may help us as a state or help you all, something like that, where we don't require the full PEARL until 12 hours or something. Let's go with Jody's table.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
Hello. So we talked about outreach versus enrollment. So when you're you have an outreach team or your director's going or whatever and they're going to the Fair on the Square on the weekend or they're Sip and Shop and having a booth about GED, do you ever look at how many people you actually outreached versus how many people you enrolled from that particular event? And are those events worth going to and spending the time energy and effort? Are you getting a good return of enrollments on that outreach?

The other thing that we talked about was counting the number of referrals that you had made to show that you were providing the resources to overcome barriers so that they can complete their HSE or PSE. Another thing that we talked about was the targeted population and how would you specifically outreach.

And we talked about the ones of us that have had our quarterly report out so far. The ITP population was attached to our agendas. And they said, OK, well, you had 300 ITPs in your county but only 20 in class. So you could devise a recruiting strategy specifically for those ITPs. And I would include the college or wherever they're attempting to reenter to get back on their career pathway.

I also think that you could do that with employers and employees that don't speak Spanish. You could definitely find out a lot from your employers in your region about what their workers need as far as basic skills or English as a second language, and then the 90-day GED-- just keeping track of who actually completed within 90 days and using that as a motivation for other students' success story-- hey, he did it in 45. I bet you can't do it in 42, or something like that, just to try to get that sense of community and that sense of competition amongst the students.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Great. Let's go up here, Socorro in San Antonio.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
So we were talking about outreach, and there is a targeted population that we were interested in just seeing how it would go. In our district, we do have a high truancy rate, and many of the judges in the county will tell the students that they need to go get their GED. It's court-ordered, so they can't return back to school.

So, at that point, we do have some contacts in the district where we can get the number of students that would fall under that court-ordered GED, get their information for contacts and try to recruit, and then even see from there whether or not they finished the program and what the numbers would look like for that particular population.

And then the other thing we talked about also was the career navigation part of it. Are career navigators making sure that they're meeting with every single student? Are they being counted towards the direct hours, and if they're being, one, documented and, two, entered into teams? So those are two things that we're looking at.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
And I'm also thinking about this from the perspective of what maybe our current system-- maybe not doing, but the new system that we're having is-- particularly, Jody's talking about referrals. That may be something we can measure in the future because we're going to have capability there where we may not have the best now.

Before we move to the next table, for those of you who are the reporters for our online folks, go ahead and start putting your comments in the chat. And then, when we get around the room here, I will ask Wayne to facilitate and tell us what's happening in the online world for this activity. I'm going to go right here. We've got Victoria.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
So we talked a lot about what's already been said, but that there's just so much qualitative things that we have to do at intake before students ever hit 12 hours, and there's not really any way right now that tracks that information.

And students may not hit 12, but it's not necessarily always that they're dropping out. It may be that they got referred out somewhere else or they completed their goals before they ever hit 12 hours. So, sometimes, it looks like we're not retaining the students, but that's not actually what's going on. And then kind of same thing with referrals, like tracking how many students are we referring out for these other services that they're needing that isn't in adult ed specifically.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Back.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
We had a lively discussion, so we never got past the passing within 90 days of the first pass of the GED test. But what it did bring up is we understand that not all classes are the same. Some classes are going to have people at a more at a lower level than versus a higher level.

So instead of the percentage being overall students, but really identifying an NRS level that students may make it can pass the first test and pass all of them within 90 days. And so whatever that NRS level could be-- I don't know, a 5 or a 6-- but we did think it was a good idea at least to have some type of goals that you can do when you do the planned MSG. So we had a lot of discussion around that, and I was very excited about that, actually, because I'm a person that likes to put goals on folks.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
And I want to make sure, Rachel, I understood what you were saying. So you said maybe something quantifiable would be if they have a planned goal of earning an HSE, and they're in a level 6, then when they pass the first test, within 90 days, are they earning a credential? Is that what you were saying?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
Something like that, just really understanding who's truly in the denominator because, sometimes, you can have 800 students in the denominator, but your 800 students really are not going to have that planned MSG of getting their HSE.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Right, got it. All right, we've got our HCDE and HCC and our Houston folks back there.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
Good morning, everyone. First of all, hearing some of the comments over there, I think one of the things I'm going to freestyle just a tad was simplifying the process of our intake because one of the things that I know that is difficult for our program is the intake. And I think the style of student that we're receiving, sometimes that can be frustrating in itself with all of the testing, with all of the data entry for all of our staff and stuff like that. Those are more the complicated things. I always tell people all the time, it's harder to get in, but it's great when you're in. Does that make sense?

So that's one of the challenging things that I know that we have at HCC is because we have our paperwork, we have the school paperwork, and then we have TWC paperwork, and then you have all the other stuff that kind of mix and mingle, and then you have this test that we have to give them as well.

Some of the things we discussed at this table, to get off my little soapbox, is the-- so what we discussed was some students that come in on a higher level that will come in, pretest with a GED-ready class, and then achieve their GED before they even reach 12 hours. But we need to get them to 12 hours so they count and they can change into student accounts.

But then there's also, on the flip side, is the students that don't achieve any MSGs but still come to class as well because I know we don't have a lot-- we have a lot of students that come ready, but we do have more students that don't come ready at all and are a very low-performing, and they can sit in class for maybe even two years and not obtain an MSG. And it may be just because of the barriers that they come with, whether it be disabilities, whether it be whatever the other barriers can be. But that's kind of what we discussed here at this table.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Great. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
And I didn't report enough, so she wants to take over.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
He did a good job. But one thing that we started at HCD is we do have a support service, one-pager, at the beginning. And when the students come in, and whether they're taking the GED ready right off the bat or a tape test, one thing that we actually are able to become diagnostic technicians is give them the support service paper. And, at that time, we're asking them to provide or check off what they need from bus passes to some sort of transportation, going all the way up to rent, utility.

And what we have done is work with partners to provide these things within two weeks of the time that they filled out this paperwork. And so what we're asking TWC is to consider that when we do provide them with these support services, do we get credit for that outcome as we align them to receiving these types of services? Because it's really proven successful, and we've eradicated a lot of barriers. But one thing that we have not received is credit for it.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Got it. I've heard referrals several times in here, so it's definitely seems to be like a running thing and a big part of what we're supposed to be doing with our WIOA partners anyway. So last but certainly not least, table-- looks like you're self-elected, Octaviano.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
Consequences of being late. Actually, because we were late, we got this question wrong. So we talked about Thanksgiving and-- no, I'm kidding. Quantitative-- we realized that when we started to ask ourselves for the data, how do we quantify? There's a lot of things that we do that we really don't track correctly because they're hodgepodge made by different people to take care of a situation.

And having maybe a new system that allows us to maybe track those things within the system instead of having five different types of spreadsheets to track different things would be awesome, where you could go to, for instance, a state database that would track referrals, would track counseling sessions, would track all of the things that they were asked to do, which the more we thought about it, it's like there's probably a lot of things, as they said, and services that we do, that we're not getting credit for that it just happens somewhere.

And we know it's happening because they're all things that we need to do. So that kind of opened a question for what this new system is going to be that's coming.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Yeah, all the things. I'm trying not to oversell it. I'm actually really excited about it. I think there's going to be a lot of features in our new system that we don't currently have that are going to allow us to look at things in a different way than we currently do. I mean, reports, as you guys know, since WIOA has just been a big thing, and our current system just-- well, we just don't have any, not much. So that's always going to be a big one.

But when we're thinking about that and we're thinking about our new system, we also are thinking about all these new things that we will be able to track. I think, from y'all's perspective, I would imagine pros and cons because the ability to track things also means that what do you have to do?

You gotta enter, you gotta put it in there. So it may also put more onerous-- so we're trying to balance some of these things and keeping that in mind with our new system as well. OK, Wayne, did we have anyone that wanted to contribute in the chat from online, and does he need a microphone? Oh, he's got one.

WAYNE CRANDALL:
OK, From Tiffany Lee, she said, here's our ideas-- student outreach, assessment, intake, percentage of number of student intakes less than 12 hours versus the ones that have 12 hours, ESL, ABE, ASC levels. Let's see.

Oh, percentage of students with a plan goal of a HSE have it added to their ITEC plan and teams. Percentage of ESL students have plan goals for ESL, have improved English for work, improve English for academics, or pass citizenships, and adding it to the ITEC plan in teams, and then student-- well, I lost it.

Student services and activities retention classes that are published for fast track courses, less than required hours needed. And that was all from Tiffany. There seemed to have been some discussion about whether they were doing the first bucket or all the buckets. So I think she kind of spilled over to your other buckets.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
That's OK. I think that's OK.

WAYNE CRANDALL:
And we do have some more who contributed if you have the time.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
I have three minutes.

WAYNE CRANDALL:
OK. Valerie Fuentes-- I probably butchered that name-- outreach, number of potential students reached through specific channels, number of flyers/brochures distributed to

relevant locations, website traffic to our programs, and then for intake, time taken to complete in the intake process and program.

And then services during intake excesses-- needs for child care, transportation, and other barriers that may be hindering completion. Number of students using tutoring services. Correlation between service usage, tutoring, and GED passing rates or English proficiency gain.

There's more if you have the time for the next one. I have seven messages waiting in there, so that's all according to what you want to get.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
We'll get to them because we're going to have part two. We've got two more buckets. So keep track of maybe whose you read this time, and then next time, we'll make sure we hear from some other folks.

So the first activity was really about the student intake and assessment and testing and student services and outcomes. So a couple of takeaways for me is I heard a lot of talk about basically the ITEC plan. What's the plan goal versus what the student is actually accomplishing and when in terms of the time? They come in. They say, we're going to do this plan goal. You're going to accomplish it 90 days. Well, did they actually do that? It's something that we could measure.

Referrals came up a lot Hopefully, our new system is going to be much more equipped to be able to handle that. And you'll be able to see the referrals both coming into you and going out. And we'll have reports that will be able to show who's making those referrals and the result of those. So that would be nice too. So activity number two, I'm only going to give you 10 minutes for this one because we're running out of time. So this one these two buckets are student outcomes, and then staff and instruction.

Staff and instruction really maybe speaks to something I think Octaviano, or maybe, actually, it was HCC was hitting on is if we have students in the program for a long time and they're not making those gains, are we really looking at instruction? Are we looking at what's happening in the classroom? And is there any way that we should be measuring it and trying to quantify those numbers?

So I'm going to go back here to this slide for those of you that are online and looking at this before we do our breakout. So the two we're going to be focusing on are student outcomes and then staff and instruction. And under staff and instruction-- I didn't really go over this one before, but percent of instructors, maybe with a certain amount or certain percent of students with MSGs, before the end of the program year or end of a period of participation.

So, as you guys all know, MSGs are very program year-based in the federal policy and in your contracted measures. Don't have to be. We could decide that we want to do it based off of a period of participation. Again, there's going to be pros and cons. We want to encourage you to have year-round services. We know that that's difficult when you want to enroll a student in June when the end of the program year is in 30 days, and you're on the clock to try to get that student an MSG.

But if we said it was based off of their period of participation, now, all of a sudden, we're focused more on retaining that student to an outcome as opposed to maybe having a disincentive for enrolling them late in a program year-- things like that. So that's what we're kind of talking about when we're talking about staff or instruction in that mindset.

All right, 10 minutes. Same thing-- talk about this at your tables. But really think about and tailor those discussions to staff or instruction, ways that you can measure positive instruction or student outcomes. 10 minutes-- breakout rooms will start now.

All right, I think for the purposes of time, I'm going to randomly select some tables for report outs. And for those of you who are online, go ahead and put your stuff into the chat. We're going to pull the chat. And so we may not get over to Wayne, but we're going to pull the chat. So go ahead, if you're a reporter online, put it in the chat. That way, we have a record of what your ideas are for this segment of it.

I'm going to do a little random selection, and we're going to do three tables. And here are some ideas that you guys had on these two buckets-- student outcomes and staff or instruction. I'm going to pick on the HCC/HCDE folks first. And then I'm coming over to you guys up here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
So our discussion revolved primarily around assessment. And one of the things that we-- Dr. Honold, actually, is the one that came up with this. He's generated through Excel. He put in the formulas. And so all we have to do is put in the numbers for retention, the attendance, et cetera, the outcomes. And it generates a value that tells us what that teacher is doing that we mirror that over against the student assessments that they do. Once they complete a course, they go through and tell us how we did, and we evaluate our instructors based upon those two tools.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
I think Brownsville was doing something similar to once upon a time, measuring number of instructors whose students earned a measurable skills gain. All right, coming up here, up front, we've got Socorro, Far West folks, as well as Restore Education and Charmin. Oh, plus Charmin,

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
Plus Charmin? I'm going to pass this to Sasha because she really had some really good input about student outcomes. But I will share about the staff instruction. Do you want us to go ahead and talk about that as well? So we were just talking about really-- it takes a lot

to train staff in that it just can't be, oh, we're just going to go over instruction. It really does take we're going over instruction-- you're going to observe a class. You're going to do this, that, and another. You're going to see how all these processes work. We're going to talk about what does a period of participation looks like. We're going to understand how our funding works.

I think it doesn't matter if they're a full-time employee or a part-time employee. I think everyone should understand the basics of AEL. They need to understand how your program works in the big picture, which I think also goes back to when you're interviewing, you need to be straight-up and honest because I tell people all the time, these are adults, not children. And I tell them that in the interview. So I don't have time to train you for a week or two weeks and then you quit after 90 days. Don't do me. Anyways, here we go.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
We had a lively conversation at this table. And so the one thing we're looking at with assessment is I think we always look at students coming in and then MSGs. But if there's no assessment happening in the middle, then the MSG number is always going to be wrong, you know what I mean? Because if I'm bringing in 100 people, and my MSG is 80%, but I only tested 20 students of that 100, that's really not a good number.

So the whole thing is to be able to really look at, quickly, the students who come in, they've hit their hours for whatever test you're giving, and then we've post-tested them in a quickly and effective manner, whether that's in July and they have an overdue POP report, and then that MSG report is accurate along with that POP report.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
And so we have a consortium and we design our own funding formula once for internally and we've included post testing rates and MSG rates in their funding formula because they just are not listening to us when we tell them to post-test. So we're putting money to it, and then, hopefully, they'll do it, incentivizing the testing. All right, last we're going to do this table here in the middle, Ms. Jody Cobbler or community action.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
Angie.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Angie.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
OK, we talked about getting credit for points and improvement, not just going up the NRS level, because lots of people that are the bottom of the NRS level are making more points but not moving up. We talked about potentially instructional hours. So students that get 150-plus hours or something, recognizing that they may not be good testers, but if they've been in class that long, guaranteed they've gotten something out of that.

We talked about measuring employment or promotion while they're in class because a lot of our students do benefit immediately, not just once they exit. And then we talked about digital literacy. We talked about since we are asking so many things at intake, we should be able to measure that. That should be part of their outcomes, not just their assessment. So they come in at a lower level, and they do improve in digital literacy, somehow getting credit for that.

Staffing-- we talked about percentage of teachers that have success or progress rate in class, incentive pay. And then we talked about digital badges. A percentage of teachers that are content masters or receive digital badges or rewarding teachers or programs that their teachers obtain credentials in different ways.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Yeah, great. I feel like y'all got this more so on the second round. So that's good for me to know. So a lot of good stuff there. I really like the idea of digital badges. We've been talking about that as well for something on our end, as well as there's conversation at the federal level about gains within a level. So right now, those students, you've got to go full level.

You gotta level up before we get credit. But a lot of students coming in at the lower end of that level make a lot of progress within a level. And so there's a lot of conversation happening at the federal level as well around that. So if we wanted to come up with a measure to start doing that in Texas, hey, we could provide them with some data to help to support, move that along maybe.

All right, so thank you for indulging me. I appreciate everybody's feedback. We are going to have a little bit of a recognition. Then we're going to take a break. Then we're going to come back, and then I'm going to turn it over to Alma, and she's going to start the rest of this afternoon. So if you guys need to take a bite of a protein bar, go get you a bit of caffeine on your break, you might want to do that and be ready to take some good notes.

All right, are you guys ready for the recognition? Are we on pins and needles? OK, I'm going to go over the Co-Enrollment Award first, and I'm going to talk a little bit about what this is. So, basically, back in program year '23-'24, we had two data-driven awards. One of them was the co-enrollment.

The Co-Enrollment Award is all about matching data against both the Workforce Solutions TWIST system as well as VR. So it's really about how many of your students are enrolled in other services with our your WIOA partners. So what do we need to do data matches? SSNs. So we take all the students out of the AEL system and a seed file that has an SSN, and we match it against these other two systems, and that brings us back. And then we can see who's doing the most referrals and at what percent. So that's what the co-enrollment methodology looks like.

So, typically, we would do a first, second, and third. We're going to do the same today I'm going to start with third place. So third place for co-enrollment is Victoria College.

[APPLAUSE]

All right, second place would have been-- and I don't know if they're here-- Southwest Texas Junior College.

[APPLAUSE]

I don't think anybody's here. So if you're online, let me know. Wayne, we got anybody from Southwest Texas Junior College online? If you are, do a little shout out. Hopefully, you guys are clapping online. For very first place, Region 9, Educational Service Center.

[APPLAUSE]

Woo! They have done quite a work. They actually made a very big leap from the year before. So I know that they were working on some practices related to that. Best-in-class-- I'm going to give you the CliffsNotes version of best-in-class. Best-in-class-- we measure really three key buckets. And this is a ranking system, and it's weighted. So we have measurable skills gains. We have credential rates. And then we have our enrollments.

The measurable skills gain is worth the highest weight at 40%. And all this has to do with what percent of target are you in meeting your performance in these areas-- MSGs, credential rates, and then enrollment numbers. So we break down the total enrollment by total, IET, and intensive. So each of those is worth 10%. Then you have MSGs worth 40%, and you have credential rates worth 30%.

So weighted all the way across, every single one of those buckets gets a ranking. And then the overall ranks have to do with who's done the best across all of those measures. So there's a lot that goes into the calculations for that. So this is a pretty big deal, I think, if you are at the top. I'm going to start with third place.

Third place for best-in-class for program year '23-'24 is Far West. And Socorro, I'm going to let you come up and get your recognition. Go! All right, second place. I have not seen her here either-- Laredo College. Laredo College.

[APPLAUSE]

And if you're not here, I guess we'll ship these out to you and be nice. Or maybe I'll hold them hostage. We'll see. First place for best-in-class-- Southwest Texas Junior College. So for those of you who are starting and you're kind of new to this, those are some folks and some peers that have been working really hard. I will say this, again, when we are doing data match on a lot of these things, that makes a big deal. Southwest Texas Junior College runs about a 98% collection for SSN. So that's a big factor. I think that takes place within these numbers.

ALMA GONZALEZ:
My name is Alma Gonzalez, and I'm with Subrecipient Monitoring of TWC. Just by a show of hands, how many of you have been audited by our department? A few of you. So it was pretty easy, wasn't it? For those of you that are new, we're refining our process in AEL monitoring. What we do is we monitor both the program and your fiscal.

So I'm going to be going over what to expect when you get a call from us saying that your program is going to be audited. And I'll also be going over not only the program but the fiscal, but I'll also be going over the data validation that we also do, which is separate and apart from our regular monitoring of the program in fiscal. So I'm doing two things at the same time until Annetta gets back.

If you have any questions or concerns afterwards, this is my contact information. Also, I have about 100 slides I need to go through, so it's quite a bit of information. So if you have any questions, I'm going to ask if you can put it on the parking lot for both online-- if you can just add your questions or if we finish early, I will be more than happy to entertain a few questions. But what I would like to do is reconcile all the questions, both online and that you have here, and issue a Q&A to everyone on the questions that you have.

So what are we going to do today? Today, our agenda is I'm going to give you a little bit of background. I'm going to talk to you about the monitoring process, what you can expect, our both fiscal and program monitoring. I'm going to talk about the FMGC. Many times, we go out in the field, and people don't know what the financial manual for grants and contract is, and they give us a deer in the headlight look.

We're going to talk about the tools. And you are if you all are consortium or even if you want to monitor your own program, you don't have to be a consortium. You can use the tools that we use. They're available to you. You can add on to them if you want to add on to them, but they're available to you to use and monitor so that when we go out, you're already monitoring the program.

We're going to talk about the reports. We're going to talk about SharePoint. And that is the shared system that we use to upload all the information that you will be uploading so that we can look at and we can audit. We're going to look at the regular data reviews and data validation. We're also going to talk about your file setup because there's a certain way that we like to have the files set up in SharePoint.

We're going to talk about an on-site review versus a remote review. And then the last thing that we're going to talk about is all the data validation that we're going to do.

So a little bit of background-- why do we monitor? Well, according to 40 TAC 802.62, monitoring activity should ensure that all programs achieve intended results, resources are efficiently and effectively used for authorized purposes, and resources are protected from waste, fraud, and abuse. Note that monitoring function requirements are applicable to contractors and to grantees and their subrecipients. So if you have a consortium, the same monitoring that your contract has for you as the signature authority on that contract, if you're part of a consortium, that also applies to your subcontractors.

So let's look at the monitoring process. Now, every year, we do a risk assessment. And the risk assessment consists of either prior-year reviews, issues, any technical assistance that you receive throughout the year, your total contract amount, any question costs that we may have had to request from you because of a prior-year audit.

Now each one of those, along with there's 10, 20 attributes that we look at, and we give them a weight, maybe 1 through 10. We will reconcile all the attributes for each one of the contracts, and then we will weigh it against a state average. Based on how you score or your contract scores against the state average, that is how we select what contracts to review every year.

Now the contracts that you currently are two-year contracts with three potential option years, which equals to a five-year contract. So at one point or time within those five years, you will be monitored. It's not you may get monitored. You will be monitored. And you also will have data validation one time or another within those five years.

So once we select which contracts we're going to monitor, then those contracts are given to one of four of our teams. We have three in Austin and one in Houston. The one in Houston takes care of, usually, all East Texas, all the way down to the valley, all the way up to deep East Texas. And then any of the other three teams, the rest of the state of Texas, is divided into those teams.

So each team consists of anywhere between two to three program staff and two fiscal monitors. So the team that will be reviewing will call you up and schedule the audit. Now our audits run from September through August of the following year.

So when we call you, more than likely, we try to get the board reviews because we also do board reviews, the Workforce Solution Board reviews. So we try to get those out early in the year of our fiscal year. So anywhere between September, October, November, we try to get those boards. So from January through August, that's when we do what we call our nonboards. We consider this a nonboard, AEL.

So we will contact you, and sometimes, we'll schedule your review anywhere from six months out, seven months out. But we need to put you on our calendar because within that time frame, we're not only doing your audits, we're also doing special audits. Things come up that they say, hey, we got a complaint, so we need you to go out and look at this. So we also have to make sure that we have ample time within our calendars to schedule those also special audits.

So the project manager will contact the grantee or whoever signs the contract-- could be a dean in colleges or a director-- whoever has the signature authority on that contract, or we identify the point of contact that AEL will give us. We will contact them and set up the audit. We will give you the week, maybe two weeks if we need to, but usually, they're one-week audits.

And we'll say we'll be there in March 13 through five days later. And our audits are usually Monday through Friday. If it's a two-week audit, we are not there over the weekend. It's Monday through Friday. Then we return Monday through Friday. So, sometimes, like I said, your audits are set up seven, eight months in advance.

Once we confirm the audit, you're going to receive, electronically, an engagement letter and a confirmation page. That engagement letter will be sent to the signature authority and the point of contact that AEL gives us. You need to make sure that you look at either your trash or your junk email because since you don't get a lot of information or emails from us, sometimes, your system will push them to the junk or to the spam folders. So make sure that you look in there.

But you should get a confirmation page. And here's a sample of the confirmation page and the confirmation letter. What we want you to do is we'll put on there the date of your review. But what we want you to do is identify at least two people within your organization--could be yourself, but also a backup, along with their phone number and their email, so that we can give them access and they will be responsible for uploading information.

Now if you're a director, and you don't want to upload any information, just make sure whoever has that access is available at the time that we do our audit because we're going to call-- we're going to be in contact with them when we need a client file or a client piece of paper to be uploaded. And we're going to be constantly talking to them to make sure that they upload that information.

And if, for any reason, let's say today you assign Alma Gonzalez, and then three months later, I'm gone, and then closer to the review, you need to let your project manager know that Alma's no longer here. We need to give access to this other person.

It's really important that if somebody should leave, that you advise us immediately. Because, remember, they will have access, and they will continue to have access to data if you do not remove that access. And that can include salaries because we do test salaries as part of our fiscal. So if you don't want that individual to have access to it anymore, you need to make sure that you let us know so that we can remove their access.

The next thing that you're going to be receiving-- approximately nine weeks before we go on site, you're going to receive a DRP. And that is short for a Document Request Packet. And that will go to, again, the point of contact and whoever has signature authority on the contract. Again, it's going to be electronic, so you need to make sure that you look at your spam and your junk email.

If, nine weeks before the scheduled entrance, you have not received anything, you need to let your PM know that you have not received anything so that we can resend it to you. It may be that we got the email wrong or there's changes in staffing that they're no longer there. So you need to let us know so that we can send you this packet.

So the DRP is information that we're going to use as part of our desk review. So before we even go on-site, we request information from you to include your GL because we're going to have to format that GL. And I'll get more into that. But it's just information for us to analyze so that we know, going in on the day of our entrance, what we need to look at, what we need to test.

This is what a Document Request Packet looks like. It will have the project manager's name on it, and it will have a deadline for you to submit the documentation into SharePoint. SharePoint, if you look at those reference that I highlighted that reference location, you see how it looks like. The first one says ORG CH number 1. You're going to have a folder that has that same location. That's where we want you to put that information. That's usually the organizational chart.

So your organizational chart-- not necessarily for the entire school. If you're in, let's say, a university, I don't want the organizational chart for the entire university. I want it for the program that I'm testing. So if we're testing AEL, then I only want anything from the dean down to the AEL person to the project managers, teachers, locations. If you have different sites, we need to know what sites you have, who's at those locations. Those are the things that we need to look at.

So things that we're going to be looking for are, for example, the organizational charts, any grant agreements that you have. If you have a consortium, then you should also have a grant agreement. We want copies of those grant agreements. Grant agreements should be signed. Grant agreement should be dated.

If you have leases that you're using and you're spending some of AEL funds as part of those leases to provide services, we want a copy of those leases, especially if you're using the TWC grant funds. Your cost allocation plan, your accounting records, and we only want it for the scope of the review. It's really important that you don't send us the GL for the entire, let's say, college because that is huge. What we want is just the AEL expenditures.

We also will request policies and procedures for the program. We want program policies and procedures. And we also want your fiscal policies and procedures. Any monitoring that you've done-- we want copies of those monitoring tools. If you found any issues, we want to know what issues did you find when you were monitoring, especially your consortium. We want to make sure that you have oversight over your subcontractors and that they're doing exactly what your expectations are.

The DRP will contain a deadline, again, for the information to be uploaded into SharePoint. And I'll go a little bit more into SharePoint in a few slides.

So key points of the DRP-- the general ledger. Do not send the GL for the entire school, as I mentioned. We only want the grant-funded transactions. And that includes salaries if you're using AEL funds, leases if you're using AEL funds, supplies if you purchased testing or slots for assessments. We want all that information. The GL that you send us needs to be in an Excel format because what we do is we will extract it, and then we format it to however we need to extract certain transactions because we test certain transactions based on funding.

Now while you're gathering all that information, we're not just waiting around for the information to come in. We're actually holding preplanning meetings. And we'll send out-- and we'll have a meeting, let's say, with AEL, with technical assistance, with fiscal. And what we do is while the grantee is gathering all the information to tend to send us in the DRP, the team will be holding preplanning meetings with AEL staff, the grant managers, the fiscal department to see if there's any questions or there's any concerns that we need to incorporate into our desk review so that when we're on-site, we can address them.

Sometimes, they'll tell us they haven't submitted this report. So when we're on-site, we will request that report and bring it back to them. Or they'll tell us you need to look at this grant because they're under expended. Get their process. How are they going to meet their enrollments because they're 80% through the contract, and they're less than 50% enrolled. So we'll get their process and we'll let them know what we found. So we're obtaining this information from other departments in order to give a more holistic monitoring.

Our testing samples-- all grantees will receive their testing samples the Tuesday before the entrance meeting. Folders will be set up for the grantee to upload the information in SharePoint. The project manager or the lead will notify the grantee that the samples are available. So you will get a list of all your samples. And then they're usually by client.

It's your responsibility to get us the information upload it into SharePoint. Do not put any password protections on it, not even on the fiscal, not even on the salary. This is a state-vetted software. If you do put any passwords, we're going to ask you to remove them and re-upload the information.

You will also get a questionnaire. And I think everyone has a copy of the questionnaire. It's a two-page questionnaire, and it looks very similar to this. This questionnaire-- we understand that you may have policies and procedures. The purpose of the questionnaire is to get your day-to-day activities. How do you do things on a day-to-day basis?

Many times, your policies and procedures for the program were developed five years ago, and you really haven't touched them. But yet staff have changed, directives have changed, needs have changed. And so you adjust your day-to-day work to meet that. That's what we want because that's what we're going to test against. We want to know how you do things on a day-to-day basis. And that's where this questionnaire comes in.

And it's important that you read each question because, sometimes, one question will have two questions embedded in it that you answer both questions. And once you receive this, because it'll be given to you at least two weeks before the entrance, this needs to be uploaded into SharePoint before the entrance conference completed.

We also want to know who's completing this because if we do have any questions or need clarifications, then we can contact the person that completed this document, set up an interview with them, and then we will get those clarifications. We need to read this first before we do any testing because this is the basis of our testing. So it's important that this information is completed and uploaded prior to our entrance.

Here's a sample of the questionnaire, which you all have a copy of. Now TWC SharePoint support will provide access to two grantees staff. Both staff will have the ability to upload information into SharePoint. It's really important that you keep in mind that whoever you're going to give access to do this upload, that you have no concerns if they look at-- because they're going to be uploading salaries and PII information.

So that person, you should be comfortable with them uploading the information. Could be your fiscal person, could be you as the individual. But we want two in the event that we're on site and we have questions and let's say our primary is in a meeting or they're on vacation and we have had that, where they go on vacation during our audit. We need to have a backup because we do-- and you can even ask those that have gone through one of our monitoring-- we do request a lot of information being shared back and forth.

So select staff will receive an email from TWC SharePoint with a link. We ask that you test that link to make sure that you have no issues opening up SharePoint and that you're able-- you can upload a blank piece of paper just to make sure that you can upload. If there's any issues before, you need to contact your project manager or whoever your contact is at TWC and make sure that those kinks are taken care of before your deadline to upload the information is met.

Now keep in mind, I'm going to show you some samples of what SharePoint looks like. When you log in to SharePoint, you will not have all the folders that you're going to see the sample of. When you log into SharePoint, you will only see the folders for your contract. The sample that I have, of course, is my access, and I have access to all the folders.

So here's an example of what it will look like. You will have just your folder that you will have access to. So when you log in, you will only see your folder. Once you open the folder, at the top, you should have your name, AEL, South Texas. Or it could be a board. If you have multiple grants from TWC, such as skills development, AEL, apprenticeship, you will only see the programs that we will be monitoring.

So, sometimes, we monitor more than one program if you all have more than one contract. Once we're there, we want to get as much information and monitor as many contracts as we possibly can. So you may have an AEL and a skills development at the same time. Or you may have three, if there's more. If you have two AEL contracts, you may have both AEL contracts being done at the same time.

So once you click on the information, you'll see information, such as to board, or you'll see the-- let me see if it shows here. You'll have the FY21 or, in this case, it'll be FY25 or 26, depending on when we're out there. Once you click on that FY, you'll see something that says DRP, and then you'll have one that says Samples and Questionnaires.

Initially, we're going to want you to go into the DRP because that is going to be the prework that we're going to do. So you're going to go into the DRP. And if you're doing more than one contract, you'll see a folder for each one of those contracts. So each folder will correspond to the reference location that you see on the DRP. It should be easy to locate.

So whatever that DRP says that they want you to upload, that's what you're going to upload into each one of these folders. Do not leave a folder blank. There should be documentation in each one of those folders. Any questions regarding issues with uploading or what exactly we want you to upload, please contact the project manager or their lead.

Now in this example that I'm showing you, there's an organizational chart. This contractor actually also hyperlinked the documents there. What we want inside that "if not provided, explain," we want you to identify why it wasn't provided. Maybe it wasn't applicable to that contract, and that's fine.

We try to generalize our DRP because we use it not only for AEL, we use it for skills development, we use it for the boards, we use it for other grants that we also monitor. So we try to keep it as general as possible. But if it's not applicable to the grant that we're testing at your location, then put on there "Not Applicable."

So the next example I have are the Samples and Questionnaires. This is usually where you're getting your samples. And we're uploading information for you as well as the information that we're going to test from you. So let's look at the first one.

If you opened up that first folder, you're going to see a "To and "From grantee." So if we're looking at the assessments and eligibility, "To grantee" is information that we're giving you. It could be the list of samples that we're going to test from grantee will be additional folders of where you're going to upload all the information into for each one of the clients that we're going to test.

So here's an example of the "to grantee." We're giving you the eligibility and assessment sample. And it's in an Excel spreadsheet. Also, the questionnaire will be in there. Now our goal in the questionnaire, if you're brand new, we are hoping that you fill it out one time.

If the second year, if you get selected again-- and that has happened if there are concerns or issues that we need to do a second time monitoring-- then what we'll do is we will transpose the responses that you did that first year and transpose them to the second year or the third year.

Keep in mind that we update our tools and our questionnaires every year. So one year, you're going to fill it out, but the following year, it may change. We may add some information. We may take off the information because guidance requires us for us not to look at it anymore. So the questionnaire does not stay the same year to year, as our tools. We update our tools every single year. So by September of every year, we have new tools.

So there's key points to SharePoint. Once you receive the email, again, try logging in to SharePoint to make sure you are able to navigate. If you have any issues or concerns, contact the lead or the project manager. SharePoint is an approved and secure database used by TWC. It's been vetted, so do not upload any information that is encrypted or has passwords. Any person with access to SharePoint will need to be available during our review to upload information as needed, and TWC will not allow monitoring staff to download any application.

And there are some boards that say, well, we've got x, y, z software where we're holding everything. Can you log into our system? If you give us access to your system, that's fine. But if we have to download anything onto our system, we cannot do that. You're going to have to upload everything.

Not only that, if we can log in, but we're not able to download the information-- because we have to keep our records of what we tested, what we tested in SharePoint, and if we can't download that information to put it into SharePoint, you're going to have to upload it, even if we're able to access your system. The main thing is we have to have that documentation.

So once you upload all the information, the team will take account of the items to ensure that the requested information was received. You may get an email saying we're still pending x, y, z items. And we're going to continue requesting that information until we obtain it. If anything is missing, you will receive an email from the project manager identifying any missing documents.

Make sure that all information is scanned and legible. It's important that we're able to read the information. If you can't read it, then we definitely can't read it. And we need to make sure that we're able to read it. If you don't have a good document for us to read, we may have to fail the attribute, and it'll go on to audit resolution.

During the progression of the review, the project manager also identifies any missing or pending documentation via debriefings. So once we're on-site and we do our entrance, we're going to ask the director or whoever the point of contact is, how often do you want to be debriefed? And debriefings is just discussing with you the progression of our audit.

So usually, Mondays, when we do our entrance, we do not do a debriefing because we just got there or we're just starting the audit. So there's nothing to talk about. We're taking inventory of everything that you've uploaded, and we've started testing, and we're reading the questionnaires to make sure we have no questions.

But Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, it will be up to you to decide whether you want a debriefing, and we will go over-- during the debriefing, we will let you know how many we've tested, what's the percentage rate, if we're missing anything, still pending anything. If we come across any question, cost, if we come across any issues-- it's just to keep you abreast so that, by Friday, should we exit by Friday, nothing should be a surprise to you.

That exit, whatever's on that exit, we would have already discussed it with you. It's up to you whether or not you want a debriefing or you don't. We've got some directors that say I don't want any debriefing. And that's fine. We will test. But come Friday, when we start identifying, these are findings, and this may be a potential question/cost, it shouldn't be a surprise to you either.

And, usually, debriefings are done in late in the afternoon-- gives us time to get all our testing done in the morning, review any information. We will request any pending information on a daily basis until we get it. So Monday, we'll request information. If we still haven't gotten it, you'll see a status report with the same information.

We have to cut off our process at one point or another because we have to progress with our audit, and we have to close it out. So usually, by Thursday, noon, if we don't receive the documentation, we will fail the attribute, and we will document that we did not receive the information. At that time, it becomes a finding, and it moves forward to audit resolution.

So remote reviews versus on-site reviews-- before COVID, you would have six or seven of us walking through your doors. And I know that can be somewhat intimidating, seeing TWC coming in with all their information. But after COVID, we realized that we can do a lot remotely. So if we have to go on-site, it's because we're looking at PII, making sure that there's no PII being displayed at your workforce center. But it'll only be maybe one or two people showing up for only a few days, not for a week.

We were trying to do as much as we possibly can remotely, and that's why we want somebody with access to SharePoint available because we're going to be asking for information left and right on that week of our review. So most of the staff will conduct the entrance using Microsoft Teams. We will send you the invitation.

You will tell us who you want present. It's up to you to decide who you want at that entrance and at the exit. It's not up to us. So you tell us who you want. You will give us the emails, and we will send it to them. We will also leave the option open in case you want to forward the email or the invitation to other people within your department or within your organization. You're more than welcome to do that.

Now AI-generated software-- during our Teams meeting, we request that all meetings avoid using generative AI software, such as Read AI or any similar platform, for logging into our meetings. This is in line with TWC guidance, which prohibits the use of gen AI technologies for summarizing meeting notes that involve agency-sensitive data. So if you log in using AI or Read AI, we will immediately log you off. So that's in line with TWC cybersecurity. So if such software is used, again, we will respectfully say you cannot use AI, and we will log you off of the meeting.

The entrance conference-- now either the project manager or the lead will conduct the grantee-- they'll call you to confirm when you want to have the entrance conference. We try to do it as early as possible to allow us a full day to start testing, rather than doing it at 1:00 and only gives us four hours. We try to do it around 9:00-9:30.

Entrance conferences are just 10-15 minutes. That's it. And it's just to let you know, hello, we are here. This is what we're going to be testing. This is when we anticipate to exit. And that date and time can change depending on if we need to expand or we need to do more testing. It could be earlier, could be later. But like I said before, our audits are usually one week.

Since our current reviews are conducted remotely, we try to do our entrance conferences around 9:00-9:30-ish. The grantee will need to provide the names and staff that they would like to have in attendance, and it is up to the grantee to determine who will be in the debriefings and in the entrance and exit conference.

The entrance conference agenda will identify the purpose of the review, the projected date of the exit, contact information of either the project manager or their lead, and areas that we will be testing. An entrance conference agenda will be disseminated to all attendees. During the meeting, as people log on, you will be asked to sign in with your name, the organization, and your title in the chat box of Teams. This is how we obtained attendance and all participants who attend the entrance.

So during the entrance conference, we will obtain contact information. And we want to know, OK, who's going to be my contact? For example, if I'm doing the fiscal monitoring, I want to know who's going to be my contact within your organization. I want an email, and I want a phone number. So we need one for the program director, for fiscal-- who's going to be the contact-- who's going to be the contact for program, assessment, eligibility-- could be the same person, could be different people-- and any of the other areas that we're going to be testing.

Staff will contact the point of contacts to set up meetings. These meetings are usually done at the beginning of the week, and it's only to reiterate the process to make sure that we fully understand how you do things because no two grantees and no two boards do things alike. So we have to get used to how you do it at your local level.

We will work with staff to obtain or update the process and what you all use to determine eligibility, assessment, and processing bills. So if there's forms, we want copies of the forms. If you have a consortium and you allow the consortium to do their own forms, then we need two copies of each one of those forms. But if you're a consortium, and you have one form that all the consortium uses, then that's what we want.

Testing will commence immediately after the entrance conference. Throughout the week, staff will either email or set up Microsoft Teams meetings with the grantee to request information and/or share information. TWC testing tools-- they're available to the grantee to use or incorporate into your monitoring. To obtain a copy, you can contact me, and there's my email address. Feel free to contact me. And you also have my contact on page 2 of the presentation.

For the student service testings, these are the testing attributes that we will be testing for FY25. Our testing tools are on Excel spreadsheets. On the very bottom, you're going to have two tabs of the Excel spreadsheet, one that says tools, the other one that says instructions. So in order to test the attributes, we've given you the instructions as well as the citations that if you fail that for that one client, if you fail attribute A, you will know why you failed it because the citation is under the instructions.

So for the testing attributes, do the TWC approved scores in the file match the scores entered in Teams? I'm going to give you the criteria that we are going to use, which is the AL Testing Guide page 72 and page 16 through 17. Page 72 is the data collection and entry requirements. And page 16 and 17 is the alternative placement policy. And page 13, which is testing and placement.

The second attribute is all direct hours are entered in Teams and are supported with documentation. So the criteria for that one is the TWC Companion Guide pages 23 to 25, Remote Learning Documentation of Direct Hours AEL Letter 0620, and TWC Adult and Education COVID-19 Response FAQ sheet, pages 25 through 27.

You need to make sure that you have documentation to support each one of these attributes because each individual-- we will test each attribute against that one individual or that one case file. So is the workforce training hours documented and supported in Teams for those participating in IET? And, again, we will select a sample of those only that are in IET to test that attribute.

And we're going to be looking at TWC AEL Letter 0322, which is High School Equivalency Subsidy Program for fiscal year 2023 and AEL program year 2022-'23, which was issued September of 2022, along with Orientation to Record under Career Services in Teams. That is AEL Letter 0223.

The next attribute is, D, HSE voucher recipient meet eligibility criteria. And the last one that we're going to be testing is an orientation is recorded under career services in Teams. So we're going to be using a lot of Teams to make sure that the documentation is in there. But those are the criteria that we will be using.

For the comprehensive assessment testing, again, if you look at the very bottom, you're going to see the criteria under the instructions and the testing tool. You all can use these tools at your discretion, if you want. You can even add more attributes if you want to test more attributes. That's fine. As long as you're testing what we're testing, that's what we're looking for. Everyone-- sure.

MAHALIA BALDINI:

So I'm noticing a little bit of confusion on people's faces, like, where are these citations at. So, again, when you get the testing tools-- and we will make them available after this presentation-- when you click on the document you'll see the citations under a references or resources or whatever it is. So once you get the testing tool, you'll be able to see where the policy is coming from for each of those attributes.

ALMA GONZALEZ:

So for the comprehensive assessment testing, we're looking at our primary targeted occupation that we're going to test is going to be 16, 17, and 18-year-olds. And we're going to generate reports out of Teams specifically looking for those 16, 17, 18s. And the reason for that is because they require specific-- have specific needs. So whether you have hundreds or you only have four that fall under that, we will test those as a priority. So if you only have four, we're going to test all four. If you have 100, we'll select a sample depending on what our risk is.

So for 16 and 17, you can use the AEL Letter 0517 self-attestation for age-related eligibility, which was issued October 2, 2017. The next attribute is their proof of identity in the case file. That comes from AEL Letter 0518, Approved Forms of Identity, that was issued in October of 2018.

The next one is the release of information signed and dated. That comes from the AEL Companion Guide, page 14. Complete, signed, and dated enrollment form-- that comes from the TWC Companion Guide, page 14, also. The TWC approved test, NARS approved, or alternative placement used to determine if eligibility requirements were met prior to the first contact hour-- that comes from the AEL Testing Guide, page 16 and 17, and the AEL Companion Guide, page 13.

Now I'm not going to read you the criteria because I'm going to give you-- I mean, you all can read that, but I do want to give you the long criteria, but I do want to give you the reference criteria so that you can look it up. And again, like Alana said, if you go to the instructions, once you get the testing tools, all that is in there.

Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts-- many times, when we're on site and we're talking to the fiscal person, they've never heard of the FMGC. They're like, what is that?

That is kind of like our bible for finance. That tells us what is allowed, what's not allowed, aside from the contract.

As a program director and as a finance person, if you are part of the finance, you need to reference FMGC because when we're testing the finance, this Is what we're using to test it against. All the attributes come from this guide.

Once you get this presentation, I placed a link to it. So all you have to do is click on the link. It takes you directly to the FMGC. FMGC is made of two parts. One is the FMGC which has the chart of accounts and talks about monitoring, talks about-- but there's also a procurement that you need to be familiar with-- micro, small informal procurements. You may not have formal procurements with TWC grant funds, but you will have either small or micro depending on what you purchase, for example, slots for assessment. That can add up quickly.

For disbursement testing, this is financed testing. We're testing for reasonable and necessary. We're testing for adequately documented. We want to make sure that there is an audit trail that we can follow. Is there a need for it? What is it that you all require in order to purchase the service or the product. Did you follow that? Is there a receipt that you actually received it? Was it a good and service that was needed in order to implement this program?

We don't want you purchasing cakes for a graduation. That's not allowed. So you need to make sure that there's an audit trail. Training, valet parking, that is not an allowed expense. So when we're looking at this, we're looking at allocation. How did you allocate it? If you have multiple funding streams, is it based on benefit received? Is it allowable for the grant that you're charging it to?

So you may purchase a cake. And that's perfectly fine, as long as you don't charge it to grant funds, you charge it to non-federal, non-state funds, we don't have an option. Or you can charge it to other grant funds that have nothing to do with TWC. That's fine. If that's allowed for those federal funds or those state funds, then that's OK. But for AEL, we need to make sure that what you're spending the funds for are allowable.

Is it recorded? Is it recorded properly based on your chart of accounts? What we want to make sure is that you're reporting it in Cedar accurately. And that is how you're going to be reporting it when you run your monthly reports to report it to Cedar. You want to make sure that you're charging it to program or you're charging it to admin. You want to make sure that you are charging it to, let's say, janitorial service. And it's not a meal for a conference. That's where your chart of account comes into play. And we do ask for your chart of account as part of the DRP.

Micro-purchases. And we see this with a lot of schools and universities. You have a more strict micro-purchase than TWC requires. TWC has up to 10,000. We've seen it where the micro-purchase is 3,000, and that's fine. But we will test against your micro purchase since it's more restrictive. So anything that you purchase under micro-purchase-- and micro-purchase, the intent of micro-purchase is to eliminate administrative cost.

So we want to make sure that you're not doing a formal procurement for something that costs $100. Don't make the cost reasonable or establishing cost reasonableness difficult for you. That's not the intent of it. So make sure that your policies, and you've got to make sure that you read those policies in your finance that you identify how you establish cost reasonableness. That's one of the questions in the questionnaire.

Could be something as simple as a signature on a PO. And that's fine. If you can say Alma's signature on the PO says that she has knowledge, understanding, history with the vendor, and her signature establishes cost reasonableness, then we will look for Alma's signature. But if you're saying, You know what? we have to have two bids, then we're going to be looking for two bids, even if it costs only $1.50. And if it's not done, then we have a finding, because you didn't abide by your own policy.

Small purchase. Small purchase is anything from $10,000 up to $250,000. Your policy could be more restrictive. I've seen some policies only up to $150,000. That's fine. We will do the same. But for a small purchase procurement, you have to have a minimum two or more bids from adequate vendors. And make sure that you are comparing apples to apples when you're doing your comparison, not apples to oranges.

So if you're doing a purchase for computers, make sure that you're comparing the same type of computer. You're not looking at a Dell and then you're looking at an Acer. They have to be the same in compatibility. The mark may be different, but the process, the RAM, everything that encompasses that should be the same. These are the testing attributes that we use for fiscal.

We also look at your cash management and financial reporting. What we do here is we run reports off Cedar. And we want to make sure that what you're drawing down is not exceeding what you're reporting in Cedar. We know that you will report by the 20th of each month for the previous month's activities. So what we will do is we will go through the scope of review. And this one, usually, it's a 12-month scope of review. And we will draw down every single month, What did you report, and how much did you draw down?

If you drew down more than you reported, give or take, we understand that if you're an accrual basis, you probably won't post a salary, let's say, at the end of the month until the beginning of the following month. But you still have to draw down that money because it takes a whole week to get that money into your bank account. And you can't be waiting for it. We fully understand that. Or, for example, in September, we know that Cedar shuts down. So you have to draw down more money in September, before September before Cedar shuts down to accommodate for those expenditures that you're going to be getting.

That's fine. But when you have a 25% variance between Cedar-reported expenditures and your drawdown, then that's a red flag. And what we will do is we will select one to two months, and we will do a walkthrough with you to make sure, OK, what caused this variance? Could be late billing. It could be the timing of the billing. And that's fine, as long as we can trace that work and say, OK, so in June, you showed more drawdowns. So let's say $50,000 more drawdown, but yet July, August, and September, it adjusted itself.

We also look at the very end, the scope. We'll see, OK, where are they at the end of our audit? If you had a 1% variance, well, then we know that it's going to fluctuate throughout the months. But overall, if you had a 1%, then you're doing really good. So just as a program director, if you're looking at the finances, make sure that you're reporting and you're drawing down either as a reimbursement or to meet the need of your bills.

Then we also do what is called a financial reporting. Also under cash management, we also look at your bank statements and your reconciliations. So we want to make sure that they're being done timely based on your policy. If your policy says that every single month by the 10th of the month, the reconciliation should be done and that the CFO will review it and sign off on it. Then what we're going to do is we're going to make sure that it's being done every single month. There's no outstanding checks. That there's no checks over 90 days. And that they are being reviewed and signed off accordingly.

Then we have the financial reporting. And that's where we're comparing your GL expenditures each month to the Cedar expenditures that you're reporting. If your GL shows more expenditures than Cedar, we're going to ask why. Or vice versa, we're going to ask why. Why are you not reporting all your expenditures? So it's important that you report accurately for the month. Again, I went over a little bit of the debriefing meetings. We have these in order to give you the progression of the audit, to make sure that you fully understand what we're still pending,

And that if there's any questions or any concerns that need to be addressed, we address them with the program director or their contact. We want to make sure that management in your organization is aware of everything that's going on. We're trying to be as transparent as we possibly can to let you know what we're coming across, and if you can correct any issues. And some things can be corrected while we're on site.

For example, if you coded something incorrectly, you coded a meal to janitorial services, and we bring that up to your attention, all it really takes is a journal entry to correct that coding. And that's fine. It may not take away or remove the finding or the error. It's probably going to stay as an error. But we will document that you did provide us with support documentation to show that the correction was done while we were on site. And again, it's up to the program director to decide who they want present at these debriefings and whether or not they want to have them.

So after the meeting with the project manager, we always follow up with an email. We want to reiterate everything that was discussed, the progression of how many transactions we tested, how many case files we tested, What's our error rate to that point? And we do that every single day. So after the meeting, you will get an email of the conversation or the meeting that we had. And it's in a status form. That status form also goes to our upper management so that they can keep track of what's going on in the field.

Grantees will have until the day before the exit to provide any information. As you are aware, we have to conclude our exit. And we have to have ample time to test everything. So usually, we ask that by Thursday, you provide us with as much documentation as you possibly can. After Thursday, since we have to reconcile all our testing and our error rates, we have to have that ready in advance for the project manager to put on the Exit Conference Agenda. And write everything out.

So by Thursday afternoon, if we don't have it, then we have no choice but to fail it, unless the audit goes into a second week. You may not want it to go into a second week. So if it goes into a second week, they may say, You know what? You will have until Monday or Tuesday. And again, we will give you that opportunity. But that's going to be up to the project manager to decide based on what was still pending and how much work it encompasses. So if we do go on a second week, we may have a little bit more time.

They may also tell you, look, we're going to exit, but you will still have-- because the following week, we're still working on the project, we're closing it out. We're doing our field work. They may say, You know what? We'll give you until Monday to provide any information. We'll test it, but the errors will still stay on the Exit Conference Agenda. So until we-- it may not be in the final report if you provide us the documentation, but they will be on the Exit Conference Agenda. So those are just scenarios that may be helpful to you to talk to the project manager on.

So the Exit Conference Meeting will be conducted at the end of the review. Usually, we try to do it on a Friday afternoon. The project manager will send a meeting notification via Microsoft Teams to all attendees noted in the Entrance Conference. The Entrance Conference Report will be sent to the point of contact prior to the Exit Conference. Now, the Exit Agenda, or what we call the Exit Conference Report, which identifies any errors, will be sent to the point of contact. Could be the project director or their lead prior to the exit, so that you can have an opportunity to review it. This way, there's no surprises.

So the Exit Conference Report will identify one of the following-- either you're going to get a management letter. And a management letter means that you have controls, both over program and fiscal, and we have no issues. That's what you want to see is a management letter. Or it may identify potential issues noted during the review. Keep in mind that if we find any issues, it has to be in the Exit Conference Agenda.

It may not be in the final report that is issued. And it may or may not have a question clause. At the time that we do the exit, if we have any findings, we do not identify question costs. What we do write on the Exit Conference Agenda is saying any of the following findings may result in a question cost. Because at that point, we still need to finalize our paperwork. We still need to re-review everything that we tested before we make the determination whether it's a question cost or not.

A management letter indicates that the grantee has strong internal controls and no or minor findings, which we call Areas of Concern. And no question, costs were noted. So you can have an Area of Concern, such as the example I gave earlier on the chart of account. You put it to a janitorial service, and it was really a meals. That could be an area of concern. Maybe we tested 40 transaction. That was the only area that you. And it was a small error, and you corrected it. Then it becomes an area of concern. It's not something that you have to address with audit resolution.

Findings/question costs. Not all potential findings noted will have a question cost. Potential findings on an Exit Conference Agenda may not be on the final report. So if it's not on the Exit Conference Agenda, it cannot be on the final report. So we can't come back later and say, oh, we found this. It can't be the-- if it's not on the already identified on the Exit Conference Agenda, it cannot be on the final report. Excuse me. All potential findings noted in the Exit Conference Report will have been discussed with management during the week. That's why it's important that you have those debriefings, so that you are up to date with everything that we are finding.

We will not surprise the grantees with any issues. If finding is noted on the Exit Agenda, it may have a potential question cost on the final report. If a finding is not noted on the Conference Agenda, it will not be on the final report. Once TWC monitor completes their work papers, the project is reviewed by our Quality Assurance Unit to ensure that findings are well supported and documented, and that the citations are accurately noted.

When the final report is generated, it will go through a 48-hour review. So TWC AEL and other departments can review the report before it is released. After the 48-hour review, the report will be released. Any findings noted on the final report will be resolved with audit resolution section, which is part of the SRM Department.

The reporting process. The Executive Director, or appropriate representative for non-Board, such as AEL reviews, will be provided a courtesy copy of the final report 24 hours prior to the dissemination. If the review results in no findings are identified, a management letter will be issued, and the review will be closed.

Audit resolution. After issuance of the monitoring report, TWC Audit Resolution will issue an initial resolution notification regarding administrative findings and question costs noted in the report. The monitored entity will have 45 calendar days from the issuance of the initial resolution notification to respond. And that can be more documentation that you provide, or it could be a check back to TWC.

For administrative findings. If administrative findings are resolved based on responses to the Initial Resolution Notification, a monitoring closure letter is issued. Unresolved administrative findings will remain open-- TWC Audit Resolution Department will continue to work with the monitored entity until the next scheduled review to ensure follow-up. So even though it's unresolved, those issues, it-- let's say you were monitored last year, and you had unresolved issues.

And we're coming out again this year to monitor you. Those issues will become a second-year issue in this year's. So those issues do not go away. And if they're still not resolved after the second year, if we go out a third year, then they become a third-year issue. And at that point, we're looking at sanctions or something above my pay grade.

If question costs are resolved on the response of the Initial Resolution Notification, a monitoring closure letter is issued. Unresolved question costs will result in the issuance of an initial determination. And keep in mind that the final report, when we issue it, it's also going to contain-- it will contain the finding. It will contain the citation. And it will contain a recommendation. What is our recommendation for you to do in order to resolve it? It's up to you to implement that or maybe something else better to resolve the issue depending on your organization.

And it's important to note that if there are any question costs that you have to pay back, they cannot be paid back with federal or state funds. They have to be local funds. So special requests. Usually as part of our Exit Conference Agenda, you're going to have some special requests.

So for any of the following areas, it can be facilitated by the Subrecipient Department with other departments, for example, Monitoring Technical Assistance. I provide Monitoring Technical Assistance. So if you have any questions on the monitoring, if you have any questions on the tools or how we monitored, what we monitored, any of the findings that came up.

Training. If you need training on what we're monitoring and how we're monitoring, please contact me. Fiscal Technical Assistance, we always give you the TA email, Fiscal TA email. In case you have any questions on what's allowed, not allowed, fiscal questions that you may have. By all means, reach out to Fiscal TA, and they will respond to you.

And then, of course, your program technical assistance would be any of your BSS or your grant managers, technical assistants. They will be more than happy to help you with your questions. And again, for monitoring tools, procedures, training, I can do both formal training and informal training. Please feel free to contact me.

For Fiscal Technical Assistance, here's the Fiscal TA, and I've hyperlinked-- once you get this presentation, I've hyperlinked the Fiscal TA onto the presentation. And of course, Program Technical Assistance for any answers to a contractual questions, you can also all contact your grant manager. Is there anyone here that doesn't know who their grant manager managers? By hand? You don't count, Lord. So everybody knows who their grant manager is, correct? Good.

Then we also send out a customer survey. You are our customer. We want to refine the services that we provide you. We want to make sure that we're giving you the expectation that you expect when we're going to audit you. We want your feedback, whether it's good, bad, or indifferent. If someone did something great and helped you out, we want to know about it. If there's something that we can correct, we also want to know about it. That's where my training comes in with my front-line staff that I train.

I want to make sure that we're providing you quality work so that you-- our ideology is your success is our success. And we want to keep that. Because if DOL should come in, we want them to look at us and say, You know what? this is our model that we want to base it on. So your success is our success. And we keep that mentality throughout the process. This is why we try to be as transparent as we possibly can in the progression of our audits.

We want you to know what we're finding, when we're finding. If there's any questions, if there's any concerns, we want you to be aware of how we're doing things. And also, we want you to have the tools that we use so that you can see what we're doing. So if you can provide any feedback, by all means, we want that. We want to refine the way that we provide services to our customers. Are there any questions so far? I know it's a lot of information. Don't be scared. I don't want you to be scared. Yes, ma'am? OK.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
So this is not actually a question. When I stepped out a little while ago, I did find a Michael Kors clutch. So if you are the owner of a black Michael Kors clutch, I turned it into the help desk.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
OK.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
I was just going to say we're about 30 minutes from close. I think you can decide-- next step I'm guessing is data validation.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Yep.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Decide how much time you want. We can punt that to a different meeting and reconvene and do Q&A now or whatever you want to do. We've only got about 30 minutes.

ALMA GONZALEZ:
Do we have any Q&A online or? Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
I just get really paranoid about missing emails. So like the first one, does it ask us to respond to you or something like that? How will you know that we got it? Like, the very first one?

ALMA GONZALEZ:
The very first one? I think they do a return receipt or a read receipt with it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
So if we haven't opened it, you can call us or something?

[LAUGHTER]

ALMA GONZALEZ:
Well, we probably won't have time to call. Keep in mind, our teams do audits every three weeks. And in between those audits, we're closing one. And sometimes when we're on site, we're working from home. And we're doing the preparation for the next audit. So to say, Are we going to call you? It's going to get to a point that, yes, because we have deadlines that we need the information uploaded to SharePoint. And if today is your deadline and we don't see anything, yeah, you'll get a call from us saying, where's your DRP?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:
Yes.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
So also, we do request that when you have staff turnover that you notify our team as soon as possible because SRM will communicate with us. If they aren't getting hold of someone, usually, they'll reach out to us, or they'll try to get the most updated information for the grant.

So it's really important that you get your information to us when you have a new director, when you have a new signature authority, whatever the change is, because that information generally will not go directly to monitoring. And they won't know until they actually reach out to you guys. So when you let us know and they start working on doing a review for the program, they'll usually reach out to us and ask us what the most current contact information is.

ALMA GONZALEZ:
Also, when they call you to set up the appointment, find out who called you and get their phone number and their email address. And that will probably be the person that you're going to contact if you don't receive anything a few weeks later. OK. Any other questions? Anything online? No? Perfect.

OK, I'm going to go on then to data validation. Data validation is our way of verifying that the information that you're putting into the system is supported and accurate. We want to report accurate information to the Department of Labor. We're responsible to them. So this is why we do data validation.

So the AEL Letter that was issued June 7, 2021-- and you can look that one up also-- the purpose of this letter was to provide AEL grantees information and guidance on the data elements and documentation that they must gather on an individual prior to enrollment in AEL services and data validation procedures, which the grantees must have in place to ensure data integrity. Keep in mind, when we're saying about collecting data does not mean that it has to be hard copy. It can be electronic, OK? Nowadays, a lot of more people are electronic than they are hard copy.

So federally required data elements for AEL. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act supports performance reporting, which includes common definitions and data elements across WIOA workforce, VR, and AEL Core Programs. Was there a hand raised? Did I see a hand raise? I'm sorry. OK. Core Programs is AEFLA programs authorized under WIOA Title II and administered by ED.

So cross-matching. Cross-matching involves comparing participant information in one data system with participant information in another state and federal data system. The data includes widely used federal and state identifiers such as-- and this is the most common one, of course, the Social Security number, Texas driver's license numbers, and Texas ID numbers, which are not parol elements or required for program participation. However, these elements are vital to support performance accountability.

So TWC uses cross-matching, sometimes referred to as data matching to determine performance outcomes related to achieving certain measurable skills gains such as MSGs and exit-based measures, reduced duplication of participant records, identify core enrollment rates across TWC programs, and calculate the following areas of AEL performance, which is the attainment of Texas Certificate of High School Education, employment, and earnings.

So AEL staff verifies the Texas High School Equivalency attainment by cross-matching TWC participant records using the participant's name, the date of birth, and Social Security number. Complete and accurate collection of these identifiers results in more complete data matching. So for employment attainment, TWC uses SSN to validate employment and earnings.

In instances where employment information cannot be verified through an SSN matching to the unemployment insurance system, for example, if an individual is, let's say, self self-employed, federal guidance allows for states to capture supplemental wage information. So guidance on the use of supplemental wage information. I've linked the information there for you so that when you do obtain this presentation, all you have to do is click on it and it's there for you.

Now, without a Social Security number, it is impossible to automate data matching to determine whether a participant has met all the requirements to be considered successful in the exit-based WIOA measures for post-exit employment, post-exit credential attainment, or even post-exit enrollment in post-secondary education and training.

The grantee must conduct significant follow-up. And that is your responsibility as to follow up on those that they don't have a Social Security number to make sure that you obtain all that information so that you can get credit for it. So although Social Security is not required, it's going to require more work on your part to track the client.

So failure to fully report performance outcomes? It has a financial impact not only to TWC but to you. Fail performance reduces funding, which means less contracts, means less clients we can serve, means you cannot serve as many clients within your community as you would like. So this is why it's really important to track as much successes and exits as we possibly can.

So as part of having the quality validation framework, AEL grantees are required to capture 24 PIRL data elements. And they're not difficult to obtain this data elements. So when we contact you and we tell you that we're going to do data validation, which is separate from a review, and we do designate that we're going to do a data validation, data validation is predominantly based off exiters.

That's why this year, since this is a new contract year, we're not going to do data validation to any of our content-- so again, the project manager is going to contact you, set up a time. It's going to probably be one individual that's going to be contacting you to do the data validation.

We're looking at only 20 clients to test, unlike your annual review, that's based on a risk assessment. So if we risk your program as high, that means we're going to either test 60 transactions and/or 60 clients. If you're ranked a medium, we're looking at either 40 transactions or 40 clients. And a low means we do need to test, but you're not a high risk. Low risk is 20 transactions-- 25 transactions or 25 clients. So again, just like your review, the project manager or their lead is going to contact you to set up a week that we're going to do data validation.

Since we're only doing 20, it may not take the whole week. It may take two days, three days, depending on how you all set up your files. So again, the Tuesday before-- and it's not going to be an entrance. It's a very informal when it comes to data validation. It's just to let we're going to start. It's not a formal meeting like our annual review. So we will let you know in a Teams meeting that we're here, we're going to start. It's usually done remote. It's not done in person.

And we ask you to upload the information like you would with a review into SharePoint. You will have folders set up for each one of your clients. And each one of those clients will give you the information that we're needing. And I will show you examples on that. So TWC staff will provide access like we always do. It could be the same one for your annual review that you had. That's fine. If you want them to keep that access, they can have that access, but they need to be available so that they can upload information as we need it for the data validation.

Again, these are the same key points in SharePoint. No passwords. Make sure that you're able to navigate SharePoint. Make sure that you're able to upload. Try testing the system before the day of the entrance. This will be the list of an example of the testing samples that you will get. You'll get a list. You'll get the participant ID, their name, first and last name. This is an example of the attributes that we're going to be testing.

So for the client, we're going to have the date of recognized credential. And we're going to have what we're going to test, which is the value. So we want that credential that was dated 9/2/2020, not the date that you entered it, 9/2/2020. The actual document should be 9/2/2020. The type of credential, they got a certificate. So again, we're looking for the certificate that is dated 9/2/2020. Can you have a certificate and failed the date of credential? Yes, because some people will put in the date that they received it, and it could be 9/2/2020. But the date on the certificate is 8/31/2020.

Then date of most recent measurable skills gain. And we're looking at documentation to support that date. And if you're looking at a measurable skills gain in assessment, we want the pre-test and the post-test to show that there is a gain. And each one of the clients, as you can see here, will have 5, 6, sometimes 12 attributes that we're going to be testing. We need the support document for each one of those attributes.

So samples should be an average of 20. That's how many we'll probably be testing. Staff will allow the grantee up to the date of the exit to submit the information. Why do we allow that when in a review we allow probably up to Thursday? Why? What's the difference? The difference is these are already exited clients. There's nothing you can do. If documentation is not provided, then the attribute will fail at that point. And this is a copy or an example of the folders and what they will look like.

Again, if you want a debriefing, you're more than welcome. We will be more than happy to provide you with the debriefing, but it may be a three-day debriefing that you're going to have. I mean, we would try to get through this as quickly as possible, because it's not cumbersome. It's fairly easy to do.

The Exit Conference Report, we will debrief you and let you know which ones failed. Excuse me, which ones failed. Everything else would have passed. But if there's any fails, we will let you know. And we will allow you the opportunity to give us the documentation if you have it. If not, it stays a fail, and then we move forward. Once the team returns from the field, and in this case, it's a remote, we will complete the database, print out all supporting documentation, attach it to the testing cover sheets. The information is submitted to management, and it's verified with our Quality Assurance Department.

Now, these reports, they're usually a turnaround quite fast, because it doesn't require a formal report. And I'll show you what the report will look like. It will look like this. It will not have the names, but it will have the total at the bottom. And for example, the second one on the field of WIOA the characteristics, they were at 16% that they did not meet. So 4 out of 25 failed.

Now, if you want information, by the time you get this, you should know which clients failed and why they failed. But if you would like to reiterate and find out what caused this failure, just let me know and I can print out a report of what clients failed and what attributes they failed, and why they failed. Because in our comments, we will put on there why they failed it.

So the most common things that we do test, we do test-- the most common things that we test is type of training. If they're in it, if they're on the job training, ABE, ESL, customized training, those are the most common trainings. And we need documentation to support. In any of these trainings, we need documentation to support that they are in any of these trainings. Could be something from a school, a transcript. Your AEL letter identifies acceptable documentations to support these attributes.

Post-secondary education. Period of performance. So we're looking at copies of enrollment forms, filed documentation with notes from the program staff, school records, transcripts, report cards, anything to support the attribute. Date enrolled in post-exit education or training. Again, we're looking for enrollment records. We're looking for documentation with notes, identifying from program staff. We're looking at school records and transcripts. Can one document substantiate more than one element? Definitely yes. But it has to be identified on those acceptable documents.

Type of recognized credentials. If you identify a high school diploma that they got their GED, then we need to see documentation. How did you establish that? If they got a license or a certificate, we want a copy of their license and certificate for that training that they did.

If they got an associate's degree and you identified an associate's degree, we want to see a copy of the associate's degree. If you can't get a copy of the associate's degree, what can you do also to support an associate's degree? Well, you can also use the program from the graduation that identifies their name. You can also use that, as long as it shows that they got the associate degree.

Date attained recognized credential. We're looking at copy of the credential. We're looking for school records. And again, case notes documenting information obtained. Measurable skills gained, educational functioning level. We're looking for the pre- and post-test for that.

If you're obtaining this MSG, then we want to see the pre- and post-test showing the gain. Post-secondary education or training enrollment determined through data match, survey documentation, or program notes. And if you notice on the bottom of the presentation, it shows you the element that we are testing under that AEL letter for data validation.

Most recent measurable skills gain-- secondary transcript report card, where, again, if you have a copy of the transcript or copy of the report card, that's what we want. And you need to upload that information into SharePoint. Again, do not put any passwords on documents. Date of most recent measurable skills gain.

If there are participated in an OJT or an apprenticeship, then we need documentation of their participation in that. Either copy of the contract and evaluation from the employer, time sheets signed, dated from the employer, that would be sufficient.

Measurable skills gains-- skills progression. We want to see the results of a knowledge-based exam or certificate of completion, documentation demonstrating progress in attaining technical or occupational skills, or documentation of training provider or employer, or a copy of the credential that is required for a particular occupation and only is earned after the passage of an exam.

So date enrolled during program participation. Again, we're going to look for enrollment information, file documentation with enrollment and program staff, school records, transcripts, anything that will support that attribute. And then I'm just giving you a cross-match of the elements that we do cross-match with. So if there is anything that if any of your clients do not have a Social Security number, then we need documentation that you've tracked these clients in order to obtain, whatever attribute or whatever credentials you entered into teams.

This is all based off of what you all entered into teams. So if you entered all this information into teams, then there should be support documentation for all that information. Any questions? I know it was a lot of information. But we don't want you to be scared when you hear us calling. We're here to help you as much as we possibly can. Any other questions? No? Going once. Going twice. Sold. Thank you.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Thank you. OK. So that was a lot. And nobody can fault us for not being completely transparent in exactly what to expect when you get monitored.

And I think the big takeaway, hopefully, from you all is that Alma and her team and the subrecipient monitoring folks when they come on site, they're really there and want to be assistive. It's not meant to be an "I gotcha." We like you to be very prepared for what we're going to be looking at, you know exactly how they're going to be looking at it.

We can always have Alma or one of her team come back in the future as well, as we get a little closer. So if you take this information back today and something comes up and you think about something or you have a question about the process or a source documentation or anything, let us know. We have those monthly meetings with you all for this type of just-in-time stuff. So if you walk away today and you have questions, that's OK. Let us know, and we're happy to bring it up at a later time.

So you did that just on time. I was a little worried. I was a little worried. I was like, OK, if I don't get these folks out of here by 4:30, I'm going to be in trouble. But thanks, everybody, for coming today. I hope you got something out of the session. If you're staying on for the TWC Conference that kicks off tomorrow afternoon, we're going to have a lot of sessions planned. We've got a couple for AEL specific. We're doing one on pre-apprenticeship with Ms. Jodie from Brazos Valley talking about their initiative.

We are also doing a session on digital literacy with our TCALL folks and talking a lot about the things that we're doing and want to do more of when it comes to distance learning and digital literacy. So if you're sticking around, kudos to you. If you're not, safe travels home. To everybody that joined us online, thank you so much for sticking it out and for joining us. And we will see you all on our next bi-weekly call. Thanks, guys.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
Hey, guys, on the Scantron, please make sure you fill out both sides and make sure you put your zip code in, because if you don't, it stops the machine and the GAs cry. And this is a PE session. Thank you, Mahalia. So you do need to sign out. Be good AEL students and sign out, please. Thank you.

MAHALIA BALDINI:
--you get that PD, guys.