**Slide 1:** **Part 2: Promising Practices in Massachusetts ABE Career Pathways Partnerships**

Hello and welcome to the pre-recorded webinar series on Using Adult Basic Education (ABE) Community Planning Strategies for Adult Career Pathways. My name is Patricia Pelletier and I am the community planning consultant for Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) in Massachusetts. I am also the designer of the Indicators of Effective Community Planning for Adult Basic Education Coalitions in Massachusetts.

**Slide 2: Overview**

The webinar is divided into three parts. Part 1 of this three-part series focuses on using the ACLS research-based Indicators of Effective Community Planning Coalitions as a framework for implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and to enhance Adult Career Pathways partnerships. Part 2 presents some Massachusetts ABE programs that have successful career pathways partnerships and Part 3 is an overview of some national models for adult career pathways partnerships.

Let’s begin the presentation for Part 2 of this series with presentations from George Kohout from the Hampden County Adult Career Pathways Working Group, followed by Peg Johnson from the Franklin/Hampshire Adult Career Pathways Partnership, and Gina Frey from the North Shore Adult Career Pathways Partnership. Here is George.

**Slide 3: Hampden County Adult Career Pathways Partnership**

Hello. My name is George Kohout and I am the Director of ABE/ESOL Services at Springfield Technical Community College.

Much of my community planning experience has come through my work with multiple ABE/ESOL programs and various initiatives with workforce development organizations in Holyoke and Springfield. I’d like to begin with a brief history of how adult education partnerships have evolved over the years in response to the changing needs of adult learners and community allies.

**Slide 4: History of ABE Partnerships in Hampden County**

Let’s begin with Literacy Works, a subcommittee of the Hampden County Regional Employment Board, a partnership that was developed in Hampden County in 2003. The initial purpose of Literacy Works was to serve as the convener of a variety of programs that provide adult education in Hampden County.

As an early model of ABE community planning, its members included program directors and representatives from the public schools, non-profit organizations, and workforce development allies. In Hampden County, as shown on this slide, there is a strong network of ABE programs that provide ABE, HiSET prep, and ESOL classes.

**Slide 5: Hampden County Workforce Development Partners**

At the core of both ABE community planning and Adult Career Pathways programming is the inclusion of employer input. Direct participation by employers and the private sector in these ABE planning groups is a work in progress and varies across the state. However, here in Hampden County the ABE programs have built a very strong relationship with the Hampden County Regional Employment Board, or REB, and the two local career centers.

These partners represent the perspective and experiences of the employer/business sector in lieu of employers’ actual physical attendance at work group meetings. As the new WIOA measures related to employment based outcomes become a priority for ESE-ABE funding, however, creative relationships between ABE programs, workforce development partners, and the business community will become much more important.

Some ABE programs have strong Advisory Boards with active business representatives and some ABE community planning partnerships also are able to maintain private sector representation but in Hampden county participation from this sector is done mainly through our relationship with the REB and the career centers.

**Slide 6: Hampden County Adult Career Pathways Programs**

Hampden County currently has four Adult Career Pathways, or ACP, programs which form the Hampden County Adult Career Pathways Work Group of the Regional Employment Board. The ACP programs in Hampden County focus on contextualized and experiential-based learning that introduces adults to local career opportunities of the major industry sectors identified by the REB.

As mentioned in Part 1 of this series, adult career pathways partnerships can be structured in different ways, depending upon regional needs. In Hampden County, there is a lot of cross-fertilization between the individual ABE community planning partnerships and the ACP partnerships. Each of the ABE program directors assists in the convening of the community planning partnerships in their communities. This perspective and experience fosters relationships between the REB, career centers, and local K-12 systems. A few examples of this collaboration across the two workgroups include:

* Internship opportunities in the Ludlow K-12 school system that allows students of the ACP program to gain valuable work experience in early childhood education, customer service and office settings.
* In Holyoke, the ACP students have access to local employers who participate in affinity groups such as industry roundtables, Chamber of Commerce meetings, and City Hall subgroups. Green Industry leaders such as Holyoke Gas and Electric, Northeast Solar, and ECO Buildings have also supported the training and hiring of qualified graduates of the Holyoke Works ACP program.
* In Springfield, staff of local nursing homes, temp agencies and the Marriott Hotel participate in mock interview and resume review sessions with the ACP students. Their pro bono commitment is a direct result of outreach efforts by the ABE community planning partnership.

**Slide 7: Cross-fertilization of Groups**

As I look at the diagram on this slide, I’m struck by some overlap of the members and the charge of the three ABE working groups in Hampden County. The ABE Community Planning Partnerships are local and particular to the four communities represented by the Adult Career Pathways programs (Holyoke, Springfield, Ludlow, and Chicopee.) The primary focus of these community planning partnerships is twofold:

1. To cultivate relationships among varied local organizations that support adult students and their families in that community, and
2. To share information, resources, and strategies that help offset some of the barriers impacting the progress of ABE learners.

On the other hand, the Adult Career Pathways Working Group, convened by the Hampden County REB, has more of a regional, county-wide approach to its work and focus primarily on employment related activities. This group’s primary charge is threefold:

1. To mutually design curriculum and activities that focus on preparing ABE/ESOL students for specific Hampden county occupations,
2. To develop processes that help share classroom resources, student referrals, and sometimes instructional and advising staff among the four programs, and
3. To respond to local industries’ training and talent-development needs as communicated through the REB and career centers.

The charge of the third regional work group, Literacy Works, is more strategic and, through semi-annual meetings, promotes long-term planning and collaborative activities. A few examples that help frame this group’s efforts include:

1. Identifying and vetting outside funding opportunities to expand the capacity of ABE services. This effort resulted in a $15,000 grant for volunteer coordination in 2010.
2. An annual inventory of ABE/ESOL capacity in terms of student slots and weekly schedules that helps identify the need in the county, and, their third charge is the identification of national Workforce Readiness initiatives or resources appropriate to Hampden County. An example of this was coming together to promote promising practices included a series of meetings with representatives of Jobs for the Future who provided information and tools related to their Accelerating Opportunity initiative.

**Slide 8: Benefits**

This slide highlights some of the benefits from the partnerships.

First, local workforce partners like the REB and career centers provide regional and local labor market information to programs that support education and career development plans with students.

Secondly, the REB is charged with identifying and developing career pathways for the predominant occupations in the region, which include the education and skills required to enter and move through the career pathway. Both local community colleges, in addition, through the federally funded Transformation Agenda, have also developed user-friendly handouts and web sites for ABE students describing career ladders and related educational requirements. All of this information is highly valuable for curriculum development. The bottom of this slide has the link to access those curriculum modules of the Transformation Agenda.

In addition, One Stop Career Centers, a partner in the ACP partnership, can help make connections to employers for hot jobs and exposure to various workplaces through tours, internships, job shadowing, or informational interviews. All of these benefits ultimately contribute to the success of learners and the program overall.

**Slide 9: Impact**

The most current iteration of the ACP partnerships has resulted in many positive impacts. Some examples of these impacts include:

In Holyoke, the Dean Vocational High School currently hosts a Manufacturing Production Tech certificate class developed by Springfield Technical Community College. This unique evening program allows HiSET graduates and other deserving participants valuable hands-on experience in a shop setting.

In Springfield, half-day Career Encounters on the Springfield Tech campus in areas of allied health, call centers, and manufacturing are regularly scheduled. These types of experiences allowed students in the career exploration phase of the ACP program a real taste of either medical or machine shop settings.

An additional impact is a system of cross-referrals between the different programs. Yhid facilitates program recruitment and enrollments in the various levels of ESOL or HiSET classes. Another unexpected benefit of the partnerships is staff retention. As we all know, the part-time nature of positions in ABE often creates staff turnover. Our Hampden county partnerships have helped to create a mechanism of staff referrals between programs to add hours to part-time staff positions or allow staff to become employed at another organization. This sharing of staffing talents leads to better retention of experienced instructors and advisors.

Employer involvement with the ABE programs has greatly increased since the ACP partnerships have been in place. For example, in Springfield, local companies such as the Marriott Hotels, Bay State Health System, and Financial One have provided tours for students. Internships at the Ludlow Public Schools administrative offices have been developed through the Ludlow program. And in Holyoke, the Meridian Industrial Group and Heritage Hall Health System have worked closely with the ACP staff to provide tours and inform industry related curriculum, and also serve as guest speakers.

And last, but certainly not least, is the impact that formal and informal networking between the two sectors has increased. Two examples of this are Holyoke Works membership in the Mayor’s Industrial Development Council and Springfield Learning Center’s participation in the Workforce Development subcommittee of the City Council.

**Slide 10: Lessons Learned**

Over the past decade a we have learned a number of lessons in this work; three of which stand out:

1. Be project based. Sustaining a collaboration of like-minded organizations is difficult but worth the effort. Everyone is busy but members of our Springfield Community Partnership stay involved because we focus on attainable, short-term projects.
2. Think regionally. Act locally. We have also made an effort to reach out to ABE-related organizations throughout the Pioneer Valley to stay informed of their activities. This regional network helps our partnership to share promising practices and occasionally program and staff resources beyond our own community.
3. And lastly, try to broaden membership. This wider, inclusive outlook also pertains to membership of our local Springfield partnership. Notices of our community planning meetings and activities are broadcast widely through our personal networks in an effort to attract new, active members and also to regularly remind this larger audience of our ABE and ESOL programming.

**Slide 11: Contact**

Well that’s it. Thanks for sharing this brief overview of the Hampden County ABE partnerships. Please feel free to contact me with questions at the email address or phone number on this slide.

The next presentation will be from Peg Johnson from the Center for New Americans which operates an Adult Career Pathways program as part of the Franklin-Hampshire Adult Career Pathways Partnership.

**Slide 12: Franklin-Hampshire Adult Career Pathways Partnership**

Hello. My name is Peg Johnson and I am currently the Career Pathways Coordinator, Alumni Coordinator, and the Interim ESOL Program Coordinator at the Center for New Americans in Western Massachusetts. I have been happily employed at Center for New Americans in various part-time capacities since 1998.

**Slide 13:** **History of the Franklin/Hampshire Adult Career Pathways Partnership**

The partnership developed between Greenfield Community College, the Franklin Hampshire Career Center, and the Franklin/Hampshire Regional Employment Board was largely influenced by the Policy to Performance project developed in 2011 through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The Policy to Performance project was designed to advance states’ activities in systems and policy development to facilitate adults’ transition from ABE to postsecondary education, training, and employment.

Employer partners include the Valley Medical Group, Western Mass Green Consortium, and Northampton Business Improvement District. The Literacy Project was the ABE partner and the career pathway areas were green jobs and health care. The components of the Policy to Performance project included contextualized curriculum in ABE/ESOL, College Readiness Class, Career Awareness module, Accuplacer, and specialized career coaching. We were fortunate in our region to have the partnership continue and evolve into the now Adult Career Pathways Partnership, sometimes called the ACP working group.

**Slide 14: Adult Career Pathways Partnership**

The Franklin-Hampshire Adult Career Pathways Partnership includes two ABE programs, the Center for New Americans and The Literacy Project. The workforce partners are the Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board and One Stop Career Center. The career pathways identified in this region are health care, manufacturing, green jobs, and STEM careers.

**Slide 15: Impact**

From the Policy to Performance partnership, a strong partnership has been maintained with Greenfield Community College, The Literacy Project and the Center for New Americans. Through this partnership, the Bridge to Health Careers Program was developed where ABE students could follow a course of study to prepare them to enter health careers or health career programs at the community college.

Ongoing curriculum development with the ABE programs and Greenfield Community College has benefitted ABE programs and students to advance into higher levels and to transition to certificate programs. Greenfield Community College health department personnel are always willing to provide student supports by conducting presentations in ABE classes and providing guidance to students who want to enter health careers. A referral system has been put into place between The Literacy Project and the Center for New Americans that ensures that students have access to a continuum of adult basic education levels.

**Slide 16: Challenges and Hopes**

While strong partnerships always result in positive impact on programs and learners, a challenge always arises to maintain collaborations and the momentum when the funded initiative ends. As I mentioned, we have been fortunate to maintain strong relationships with our regional employment board and career center as well as the community college to continue serving adult learners toward their next steps and career goals.

We hope that we can continue to strengthen partnerships and develop new ones that can support limited English speaking learners that will build a curriculum and design so they have access to certificates and other credentials that will support their success in a career pathway.

**Slide 17: Lessons Learned**

Some lessons we’ve learned as providers of an Adult Career Pathways program are to first communicate with partners, both old and new, to find new options for learners’ next steps. It is important to continually reach out to training partners to see if there are new programs available for learners. For example, Greenfield Community College programming has expanded to include Personal Care Assistant training courses that are free and shorter in duration. This option is a great one for students who are considering the longer, fee based Nursing Assistant program. It gives them a chance to try out the community college environment with less risk. Being in regular communication with area training programs allows our students to be exposed to possible next steps continually.

We found that re-evaluating our bridge curriculum in an ongoing way ensures that we have the most updated materials that will support students to take the next step successfully, or more successfully. For example, students working on the Bridge to Health Care Jobs curriculum were having limited success with passing the written portion of the Red Cross exam after taking the class. They could pass the clinical, hands-on portion, but not the multiple choice test. So we have adjusted our curriculum to spend more time with students on multiple choice test formats based on the Red Cross certification exam so they develop strategies to successfully answer the questions. They often work in partners so to get feedback from their classmates. The students have given positive feedback about this addition, so we hope it translates into more success in the testing environment.

Making the curriculum come to life with field trips, guest speakers, and other similar activities from employers allows the curriculum to become infinitely richer when we bring the real world in or we venture out into the environments where this work takes place.

**Slide 18: Contact**

This has been a brief overview of the Adult Career Pathways partnership and the Center for New American’s role in the partnership. Feel free to contact me at the email address or telephone number listed on this slide.

Now you’ll hear from Gina Frey from the North Shore Adult Career Pathways Partnership.

**Slide 19: North Shore Adult Career Pathways Partnership**

My name is Gina Frey and I am the ABE Director at North Shore Community Action Programs (or NSCAP) in Peabody. NSCAP is one of three ACLS-funded agencies on the North Shore that together with Training Resources of America in Salem and the Adult Learning Center housed at North Shore Community College, comprise the executive committee of the North Shore Adult Education Partnership. I have had the pleasure of chairing this ABE community planning coalition for the past three years.

**Slide 20: History of ABE Partnerships on the North Shore**

Since 2007, our ABE community planning has focused on regional next steps. Our current mission is:

Strengthening the network of education and job training programs in the region to provide North Shore adults with the opportunity to reach their full potential at home, at work, and in the community.

This mission was revised in 2014 to reflect the changing landscape of ABE and to better respond to the needs of students in light of the evolution towards career pathways.

While our core executive committee provides leadership and guides the strategic direction and fiscal oversight of the partnership, it is our extended network of community-based organizations, libraries, businesses, college partners, and workforce alliances that truly allow us to be responsive to the contextual factors that impact adult learners on the North Shore. Although the mix of members may change over time, our vision and purpose remain clear.

**Slide 21: Cross-fertilization of Groups**

The North Shore Adult Education Partnership and its members cross-fertilize two other ABE and workforce-development focused groups on the North Shore.

The Adult Career Pathways Working Group is comprised of leadership from the region’s two ESE-funded Career Pathways programs which are my program at NSCAP and the Adult Learning Center at North Shore Community College. The group meets throughout the year with leadership from the North Shore Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and One-Stop Career Center. ABE is also at the table at the WIB’s quarterly Skills Gap sub-committee meetings. These meetings also include employer-partners and representatives from K-12 and higher education. Thanks to the overlap in partnership between the WIB Skills Gap sub-committee and the ABE community planning group, some of the strategic goals and activities have begun to complement one another.

As you can see from the diagram, each group may have its own specific focus, but at the center of our efforts is a collective focus on individual and family-sustaining careers and the education and training pathways that allow every individual on the North Shore the opportunity to access them.

**Slide 22: Joint Activities**

There have been a number of joint activities in the region dating back to the early days of ABE community planning. These included a regional legislative breakfast, College-for-a-Day events for students, and a teacher-focused workshop on bridging the gaps between the high-school equivalency exam and the Accuplacer.

One of the capstone events of the partnership has been the semi-annual Next Steps Fair. Held at the Lynn campus of North Shore Community College, the Next Steps Fair is a regional endeavor requiring extensive collaboration and coordination across all of our networks. Held the third week in May since 2012, the Next Steps Fair is an opportunity for more than 200 transitioning ABE students to learn more about next steps and career pathways. Often opened with an address from the College president, the morning-long event has included employer panels, student speakers, tours of the career center, and a resource fair highlighting post-secondary education, training, and employment opportunities. In the past two years, employers who have participated in the Fair have become valuable partners to Adult Career Pathways programs.

In an effort to support collaborations among ABE and ESOL providers, post-secondary education, workforce training, employers, and wrap-around services in the region, the partnership also hosts two smaller-scale workshops each year. The topics are based on surveys of the field and pressing issues impacting adult learners. This December, in collaboration with the Workforce Investment Board and the career center, more than 25 education and career advisors and case managers from 15 agencies joined career center staff for a networking lunch. The goal of the event was to bridge the gap between ABE and workforce and explore the collaborative opportunities inherent in the new WIOA legislation.

The impetus for this gathering was a successful workshop last spring when the North Shore Workforce Investment Board presented updates to its Labor Market Blueprint. Nearly 30 ABE practitioners and administrators gathered for that event which focused on the critical industry sectors on the North Shore. The WIB and career center staff have also brought similar presentations into ABE programs and classrooms, including those offering Adult Career Pathways.

Efforts are under way to increase the opportunities for career pathways students to engage with career center staff through additional classroom presentations, joint-workshops, and career center tours.

**Slide 23: Impact of Partnerships on Adult Career Pathways**

As you saw from the history of joint activities, the longstanding partnerships on the North Shore have had many positive impacts on the development of career pathways in the region.

As a result of community planning, we have developed varied recruitment channels for Adult Career Pathways. At North Shore Adult Education Partnership steering committee meetings, we regularly dedicate time to sharing recruitment information among our partners. Our partners then share that information through other coalitions of which they are members. Currently, these coalitions and memberships include local resource groups, chambers of commerce, rotaries, and agency advisory boards. Our strategic efforts to expand these networks and to recruit steering committee members with ties to the local community have begun to have positive impacts on our ability to reach potential adult learners.

In addition, our partnership with the career center means that we are able to host recruitment and registration events on-site and leverage their newsletters, website, and other marketing channels to promote these events. Referrals between ABE providers are also strong in our region. Our career center out-stationed education and career advisor is an active member of the North Shore Adult Education Partnership steering committee. She maintains an active list of all ESOL, ABE, and career pathways programs on the North Shore. That list, which includes detailed contact information, eligibility requirements, and up-to-date class schedules is shared on our website and with all ABE community planning partners. Developed out of an expressed need from the field, the list serves as a valuable resource when advising transitioning and wait-listed students to career pathways and other programs. And, as we begin regarding ABE students and career center clients as “shared customers” under WIOA, we believe this strong referral and recruitment system will help inform a regional plan for those efforts.

In terms of partnership support for career pathways program itself, we are fortunate to have a strong champion for Career Ready 101 and the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate in Mark Whitmore, the Executive Director of the North Shore Career Centers. You can see a profile of the North Shore Career Center’s early work with Career Ready 101 on the Career Readiness Initiative Partners website on Mass.gov as shown on this slide.

The career center’s work has informed the implementation of Career Ready 101 in our Adult Career Pathways program and Mark and his team continue to provide training and ongoing support in this area. Last summer, one of our students in the career pathways class was able to take the National Career Readiness Exam at the Career Center test center. We are proud to say she did quite well, scoring just shy of the platinum-level. She is currently pursuing a career in IT and has met with career center staff for additional resume review, interview practice, and advising.

As I mentioned before, the cross fertilization of ABE-minded partnerships on the North Shore means that our career pathways programs have access to a wealth of labor market information from our local Workforce Investment Board as well as a growing network of employers. We believe these partnerships will allow us to continue developing and refining career pathways programs that are dynamic, relevant, and responsive to workforce needs.

**Slide 24: Lessons Learned**

I have observed many changes in the landscape of ABE in just over the three years and have learned some ways to make our partnerships work for us.

An important activity of the North Shore Adult Education Partnership that carries over into the other groups we work with is to develop and share a robust community planning action plan or strategic plan. Having a well-articulated plan and sharing it with members and staff helps to unify partnership members and operationalize their work. Also, collecting and using qualitative and quantitative data from the field to give voice to ABE needs and goals gives credibility and clarity to the partnership. And last, but certainly not least, when resources are limited, partnerships are more important than ever, as "we" is always louder than "I."

**Slide 25: Contact**

This has been a brief overview of the partnerships in the North Shore ABE and Workforce Investment Board region. Feel free to contact me at the email address or telephone number listed on this slide.

**Slide 26: Contacts**

Thank you for participating in this presentation. For further information on ABE community planning, please contact Kathy Rodriguez at the email address above. For information on Adult Career Pathways, contact Derek Kalchbrenner at his email address above. This concludes Part 2 of the three-part recorded webinar on Using ABE Community Planning Strategies for Adult Career Pathways. Thank you.