



How the Workforce System Can Advance Workplace Health and Safety During and After the Pandemic

Hosted by the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program

September 8, 2020, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. ET

Description

Across the nation, workforce development professionals are making efforts to help workers connect to jobs and provide for their families amidst concerns about workplace health and safety during the pandemic. And the risks to health and safety are not distributed equally. Due to occupational segregation and other factors rooted in structural racism, Black, Indigenous, and people of color are more likely to endure severe health consequences from the virus and to be concentrated in frontline jobs with high levels of exposure.

In this webinar, panelists share about the crucial role workforce development professionals can play in advancing workplace health and safety, including through direct engagement with employers and partnerships with local advocacy organizations. Panelists also discuss how these strategies can be applied to other job quality areas and ways public and philanthropic funders can support this critical work.

Speakers

Hugo Avila

Coordinator of Business Services, SERCO

Hugo Avila began his career in print publication developing advertisements, performing copy writing, and graphic design work. As the demand for print media diminished, his customer service and sales background provided him with a path to new opportunities, leading to his current career in social services in the field of workforce development. He holds a bachelor's degree in advertising, a certification of completion from the Job Developer Track offered by the Chicago Jobs Council, and a certification from the board of Certified Workforce Development Professional. He is currently enrolled in Morton College and in the process of obtaining a degree in business management and a certification in business management. He is partnered and is a member of several chambers of commerce and employer organizations, such as the Berwyn Development Corporation, West Suburban Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and Alliance Manufacturing of Illinois. He has been in workforce development for

over six years, with a prior 10 years in customer service and sales, along with four years in management and eight years in business-to-business employer outreach.

Christopher Dews

Policy Advocate, Job Opportunities Task Force

Christopher Dews is a professional actor, speaker, educator, theologian, and political activist currently living in Baltimore City. He works as a policy advocate for the Job Opportunities Task Force, where he lobbies for policies that promote better jobs, skills training, and wages for low-income workers and job seekers in Maryland. Current policy efforts include expanding sick and safe leave access to all workers, reforming the cash bail system, reducing auto-insurance rates for indigent communities, ensuring voting rights for eligible detainees and misdemeanants, criminal record expungement, and the decriminalization of poverty throughout Maryland. Before his political activism, Christopher spent years transitioning formerly incarcerated Baltimore City residents into full-time environmental construction positions such as solar panel installation. It was this work that truly exposed him to the debilitating barriers that hinder lower-income communities from advancing into safe and sustainable lives. Christopher has always had a passion for empowering the disenfranchised and views influencing legislation as the most effective way to accomplish this mission.

Clair Minson

Founder and Principal Consultant, Sandra Grace LLC

Clair has ten years of experience in the non-profit sector, specifically in workforce development and mental health counseling. Since 2017, Clair has focused on the intersection of racial equity and workforce development, examining the manifestations of systemic and institutional racism in workforce policies, practices, and messaging. She has a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Clark Atlanta University and a master's degree in Community Counseling from Argosy University. She is a nationally certified counselor and a licensed clinical professional counselor in the state of Maryland.

In her most recent role, Clair served as the assistant vice president of talent development at the New Orleans Business Alliance, where she was responsible for developing and leading the implementation of the talent and workforce development strategy with the use of a racial equity lens in partnership with the city's Office of Workforce Development. Currently, Clair serves as the principal consultant for Sandra Grace, LLC, a counseling and consulting firm committed to providing consulting and thought partnership to non-profit, for-profit, and public organizations seeking to embed racial equity practices in their organizational, operational, and programmatic activities.

Recorded Remarks

Daniel Castro

Employment Specialist, The HOPE Program

Daniel Castro is a proud employment specialist with The HOPE Program, a non-for-profit organization that serves individuals from New York City's low-income communities with barriers to employment by offering a variety of workforce training, wellness services, and job placement assistance. Before becoming a workforce development professional, Daniel attended various vocational training

programs, one of which was called "Sustainable South Bronx," a division of The HOPE Program. After graduating, Daniel joined HOPE as a staff member. During his time with the organization, he has participated in citywide energy efficiency initiatives, assisted hundreds of job seekers with connections to gainful employment, helped to combat recidivism, and facilitated classes on career advancement. Daniel brings a philanthropic spirit and a compassionate outlook to his work each and every day.

Moderator

Amanda Newman

Senior Project Manager, Economic Opportunities Program

Amanda Newman joined the Economic Opportunities Program in June 2016. Her work is focused on advancing equitable outcomes through workforce development and related strategies. At the Institute, she manages projects that explore ways to improve economic opportunity and enhance job quality for low- and moderate-income workers.

Amanda has a prior background in education policy and has worked in nonprofit and public sector organizations, including the Government of the District of Columbia. Amanda completed a Master's in Education Policy at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, where she worked with the Center for Education Policy Research and Boston Public Schools. A former educator, Amanda taught middle school Literature and remedial reading in Bridgeport, Connecticut. She is also a graduate of Wesleyan University's College of Letters, where she earned high honors for her thesis project in literary and political theory.

About

The Job Quality in Practice webinar series is designed to support practitioners across fields – including workforce development, economic development, capital deployment, policy, worker advocacy, and business – to address job quality in their work. Webinars share updates on current conditions and priorities as well as actionable tools and approaches. We also seek to highlight leading practitioners' work and create connections across disciplines. We are grateful to Prudential Financial for its support of our Job Quality in Practice webinar series and our ongoing efforts to advance a job quality field of practice.

The Economic Opportunities Program advances strategies, policies, and ideas to help low- and moderate-income people thrive in a changing economy. Follow us on social media and join our mailing list to stay connected to our work, including events, publications, blog posts, and more. Learn more: as.pn/eop

Transcript

Amanda Newman (00:00)

Good afternoon and thank you for joining us. I'm Amanda Newman, a Senior Project Manager with The Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program. I am thrilled to welcome you to today's conversation, How the Workforce System Can Advance Workplace Health and Safety During and After the Pandemic. Particularly coming out of Labor Day, as we reflect on the continued struggle to achieve

fair, safe and equitable working conditions for all. This conversation is part of the Economic Opportunities Program's ongoing job quality and practice series, in which we highlight innovative work by practitioners and businesses to advance job quality. We're grateful to Prudential Financial for their support of this work.

At the Economic Opportunities Program, we focus on advancing a more just and inclusive economy by expanding an individual's opportunities to connect to quality work, to participate in business ownership and to build the economic stability necessary to pursue opportunity.

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic an area of job quality that's coming to stark relief is workplace health and safety, particularly as stories emerge of employee outbreaks in workplaces ranging from grocery stores to meat packing plants to mass transit facilities. Concerns about safety on the job are not new. But as the coronavirus is creating a new set of workplace hazards and as workplaces reopen more workers are being forced to make difficult decisions between returning to work to support themselves and their families and protecting their health and the health of their loved ones. Advancing safety during the pandemic can also be particularly challenging given the lack of clear guidance from the Occupational Health and Safety Administration, the Federal agency that oversees health and safety hazards on the job.

Importantly, as we'll discuss, risks from the virus are not distributed equally due to factors rooted in structural racism including occupational segregation and unequal access to healthcare. Black, indigenous and workers of color have experienced more severe health consequences from COVID-19 and are more likely to work in frontline non-remote jobs with high levels of exposure.

This webinar will explore some of the crucial ways workforce development professionals can advance workplace health and safety during the pandemic. Earlier this summer we published a brief while sharing the chat about some of the innovative approaches workforce professionals are taking to address workplace health and safety during the pandemic. We'll talk about some of these strategies today with a few of the workforce innovators who shared their ideas and experiences with us as we developed that brief.

We'll touch on the implications of these strategies for employer engagement, for soliciting worker input, participating in policy advocacy and addressing job quality issues. Additionally, we know these strategies require resources, so we'll consider what funders can do to support workforce organizations to adopt these types of strategies within their organizations. Toward the end of the discussion we'll open the floor to questions from the audience. Before we start let's review our technology.

All attendees are muted during the webinar, but we welcome your questions. Please use the Q&A box on the bottom of the Zoom window for questions. You can also upload questions of interest to you. Many of you submitted questions in advance. Thank you for that and we'll try to get to as many as we can. We encourage you to tweet about this conversation and we'll be using the hashtag #jobquality, all one word. If you have any technical issues during the webinar, you can send us a message through the chat or email us at eop.program@aspeninstitute.org. Finally, this webinar is being recorded and will be shared via email and posted on our website.

And now I'm really thrilled to introduce our panelists. Hugo Avila is a Business Services Coordinator at SERCO in Southwest Suburban Cook County. Chris Dews is a Policy Advocate at Job Opportunities Task Force in Baltimore. Clair Minson is the founder and principal consultant at Sandra Brace LLC. And we'll also feature pre-recorded video from Danny Castro, an Employment Specialist at the Hope Program in New York City.

Thank you so much to each of our panelists for joining us. We're going to get started with a little bit of background on you and your roles. So Hugo, you're a Business Services Coordinator for the Southwest

Suburban Cook County American Job Center, west of Chicago. Can you tell us a little bit more about SERCO and what the business services team does specifically?

Hugo Avila (04:36)

Of course. Thank you, Amanda, so much for that nice introduction. So once again, my name is Hugo. I am the Coordinator of Business Services for the Southwest Suburban Cook County American Job Center. We are directly funded by the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership to leverage what's called the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, WOIA Program, as a lot of our workforce development individuals know it.

My company, SERCO is a nationwide organization. Our primary focus is to provide, what we like to call, upward mobility and we tend to focus on training and workforce placement services, specifically in aiding and assisting individuals with everything from job readiness, preparation, placement and follow-up services. And during that whole process administering supportive services as well.

Amanda Newman (05:22)

Great. And can you tell us a little bit more about the business services role?

Hugo Avila (05:26)

Oh, of course, of course. So, with focusing on workforce development there's two categories of clients that we service. There's the individuals themselves that are currently looking for employment, and also we service the employers that we're looking to assist employment with. So, as a business service person, our role is to really establish and maintain relationships with employers, which is the other side of the coin.

So, there's a lot of support and services that goes to the individual, which is very profound and needed, but once you've prepared the individual and you're got them ready to start hitting the employment market, it's really important to have established a relationship with employers so you can understand what the labor market information that you have obtained is, have a better understanding of what the pulse of the economy in your local area are. Who's hiring for what roles, duties, responsibilities, requirement. And being able to establish those relations with employers gives you a lot of inside information that may not just be found in the job posting.

So a lot of what we do is actually go out, knock on doors, establish these relationships with employers, tour their facilities, have a better understanding of what the duties and responsibilities are. Actually view somebody producing or creating or operating in a particular position so that we can go back to our client, our customers that we service. And be able to inform them of what the duties and responsibilities are from a first-hand perspective instead of a second-hand perspective, which may be reading a job description and then inferring certain things from that job description.

Amanda Newman (06:52)

Great. And we're going to come back a little bit later in the webinar just talking more about your direct engagement and relationships with employers. Clair, I'm going to turn to you. You played a variety of roles in the workforce development field. Can you share a little bit about some of your past roles, about

your trajectory, and how they've shaped how you think about the role of workforce development and advancing workplace health and safety and other issues related to job quality?

Clair Minson (07:18)

Yeah, sure. Thank you for having me here today. I'm going to give the disclaimer I always give. I am parenting at home and a four-year-old doesn't always respect the boundaries that we set. So I may have to parent while we're doing this.

But I really started off in workforce development providing direct services, individual counseling, because I am a licensed therapist in Maryland. But as well as developing, overseeing job readiness, job training, programming, particularly supporting predominantly black workers in Baltimore. And so in that role, not only responsible for the day-to-day operations but as well as program design and delivery, engaging with employers, building out industry sector training and industry advisory councils.

And then from there transitioned into a more explicit intermediary role focusing on race explicit program design, but also supporting practitioners in Baltimore. Understanding what it means to really adopt a racial equity lens or framework to workforce development, program design and then connecting them with opportunities to funnel that operationally and organizationally. And that role really helped, I think, crystallized the reason we need to be really explicit about race specific or race conscience programming and design because we can see the outcomes are racialized. The folks who are typically at the bottom are communities of color and individuals of color.

And so from there I was able to then really pull together all of those skills and then come to New Orleans, which is where I'm based, and work, again at the intermediary level, more in a capacity building, technical assistance role where I'm supporting direct service providers, but didn't have the same level of authority to speak about structural racism and institutional racism as explicitly as I was providing that support in my previous role. And so it really was an opportunity to figure out how do I then influence and have these conversations in a way that still allows me to move the day-to-day work forward, if you will, but also allows us to put the root issues on the table so that we don't leave them out of the discussions.

And so I've transitioned now out of that role into my own business really where I can work with individuals and organizations who want to have explicit conversations about race, racism, and workforce development, and/or in the nonprofit sector and how they engage their employer partners, their community partners, etc. And so all of that work together has really allowed me to get clear that they're not separate and apart from each other, that they're all connected. That the workforce development system is one that has tremendous power and opportunity, but we just don't leverage it. And so I know we'll get into more of that later on. But hopefully that was a good enough overview for you and everyone here.

Amanda Newman (10:17)

That's great. And we're really happy to have you with us to really ensure that we're centering equity in this really important discussion about workplace conditions and working conditions. And so, Chris, I'm going to turn to you. And interestingly, we're having a conversation about workforce development and yet you are a policy advocate and you sit within an organization that also offers a workforce development training program. And so, can you tell us a little bit more about Job Opportunity Task Force's different work streams and about the relationship between the policy advocacy and the workforce development teams?

Christopher Dews (10:53)

I certainly can do that. Well, first of all, thank you for having me, Amanda. My name is Christopher Dews and I am, of course, a policy advocate for the Job Opportunities Task Force. Just as a general overview, we are a nonprofit independent organization that works specifically to help low wage workers advance to higher wage jobs. And to do that we utilize a three-fold model. Public policy, which is part one. Research and public education. I guess I'm actually going to take those in reverse.

The way that we maneuver all of it is that the direct experiences from our program participants, those are Project JumpStart, which is our pre-apprenticeship construction training program. Our Community Bail Fund that we also do which is part of our programs, wherein which we help those who are currently on pre-trial, successfully re-enter into the community thanks to the unaffordable bails and costly home detention models. So basically, we fund getting people out of incarceration based off of certain criteria. And we also have our Train Baltimore website wherein which we help people find low cost or no cost training programs.

And so, what we see the people go through in those predicaments from pre-trial, from empowering the people in the communities, affects our public policy and our agenda. So both our programs and public policy agendas are supported by the research that we do, which is our third prong, which includes using research to educate, engage and empower really, policy makers, workers and people of different communities.

Just to give a very brisk and brief example in real time. Punitive child support enforcement. We often may hear of how child support works. The vast majority of people who do this work are somehow impacted, because if you're doing workforce development, you're going to come across child support issues and how they affect your participants. Way too many of our JumpStart program graduates and participants will have their licenses suspended immediately for lack of payment of child support. Or they'll have their wages garnished from both the state or federal levels. And so what we were discovering was it doesn't matter if we're putting people to work if their licenses continually get suspended or if the amount of money that they're making on their pay checks continue to be garnished by child support, which de-incentivizes them from working.

So what this means is that on the policy side... Well, first of all I'll start off by saying on the research side we then looked at this issue, found some numbers to back it up and then released a report called the Criminalization of Poverty where we were showing how people end up in the criminalized system are being generally screwed by the system based off of not having enough money. And how they're getting backed off from a lack of access to employment for those same purposes.

And so then we go to Annapolis and advocate on those issues. We're advocating right now for the elimination of driver licenses suspensions for child support, but that's totally based on what we're seeing from people in our communities. And then we continually release reports to help educate policy makers on that same note.

I hope that that was clear. I know I tend to talk very fast and it could be a little edgy.

Amanda Newman (13:47)

That was great. And we're so fortunate to have you with us to really help us think about the connections between workforce development programming and policy advocacy. And ways that those pieces might work more together and ways that really draw off the lived experiences of workers in those training programs. So that was a really great example.

So Clair, we're going to come back to you. And so, as you discussed, your work really focuses on the intersection of workforce development and race equity. And so, we're hoping you can do a little bit more to set the stage for us as we think about why the field should view workplace health and safety as a key racial equity issue all the time, but particularly in this moment.

Clair Minson (14:29)

Yeah, so, great question and three different ways that I can answer the question. So I will do my best to make sure that the response is concise. But I think I want to start with, when we talk about a racial equity framework, we're really talking about four different approaches or ways to think about it.

One, is analyzing data and race. I mean, data by race and ethnicity. Two, is understanding disparities and learning why they exist. Three, is looking at root causes from a structural standpoint. And four, is naming race explicitly when talking over problems and their solutions.

And so if we take that framework and we apply it to the context of workplace health and safety in this current double pandemic world we're living in, when we think about which communities are disproportionately impacted by the COVID pandemic? We say they're communities of color. And so what does that mean for creating a workplace context where workers are not only protected physically but also protected in terms of their health? And how do we think about health in a more broadened sense, if you will?

So a lot of times we think about their physical health, they have a cold or not. But in the land of rampant structural racism and institutional racism and microaggressions, we also have to think about mental and emotional health of workers. And we're seeing numbers where communities of color are disproportionately impacting, dying at higher rates, hospitalized at higher rates. When we think about what it means about workers who are predominantly workers of color also in low wage, higher exposed jobs, there's no way to separate these two conversations.

And so, I think a part of the conversation is how do we make sure that we're thinking about what a workplace culture, what a truly inclusive workplace culture looks like recognizing that workers bring their whole selves? And so yes, we want to make sure workers have masks but how do we also ensure that there's an emotional, there's access to mental health services for workers who still must come to work when family members may be sick, and/or seeing black and brown people shot and killed on the TV on a regular basis? That trauma that they experience externally, but also making sure that the environment is one that is not also perpetuating that racial trauma.

And so all I can say is they're not separate. You can't really adopt and apply racial equity framework without thinking about job quality, worker health and safety.

Amanda Newman (17:02)

That's really helpful as we think about being really explicit about race in this work and also as we think about, in this moment I think there's a tendency to think about health and safety as really physical, particularly as we're dealing with a virus. And so what you're doing is you're offering a more holistic approach for thinking about health and safety that's really grounded in equity. So that's really helpful.

So we're doing a little bit of context studying and so I want to turn to you, Hugo. And as we know workforce organizations, many of the people in organizations who are part of this discussion right now are participants, have had to quickly adapt to changes since the start of the pandemic. So can you

share a little bit about what's been top of mind for your business services team, particularly when it comes to workplace health and safety and ways you've had to adapt your work during the pandemic?

Hugo Avila (17:51)

So the interesting thing about the business service side of things, I mentioned in the brief intro is, part of our role is to actually go out there and interact with the employer on-site. And so safety has always been a big concern. You touched a little bit on OSHA and how that plays a factor. And so when we walk into these facilities, these manufacturing environments, we have to go in there with PPE, from helmets to eye protection, boots, or whatever the case may be. So we've always had that kind of training in place. But now that the pandemic has really hit in we had to take that to a new level.

So just like many organizations I'm sure, we had to pivot, we went virtually. The pendulum went too far to the left and we all went virtual and then we realized that there's something that gets lost on the lack of human interaction, whether that's with our participants. Not to say that they weren't necessarily being served, but there was a little bit of a disconnect when you don't get that how are you doing, face-to-face, to be able to assist in work.

Well, the same thing happened on the employer side. So you work on developing these relationships with the employers so you can have very candid conversations and really understand the inner workings of what is going on in these facilities and you build up a certain level of respect and honesty toward each other. And as you start going virtual, just like the interaction with our participants that were getting a little bit disconnected, that seemed to have happened with the employer.

So there was a quick rush for us to figure out a way how can we start going back on these job sites to really start talking with these employers to establish and maintain the relationship we worked so hard to obtain. And also how to build new relationships, because that's a big part of the business service side of things is not just maintaining the relationships you build, but also establishing new relationships which gives you a lot more flexibility in regards to making decisions of which employers are you working with and which employers aren't you working with, which I'll get into a little bit later on in the conversation.

We definitely had to talk to the employers to get a better understanding of what are they doing? Are they following the guidelines that CDC is putting in place, social distancing, masks, are they having dividers, have they a reduced workforce, the numbers of people in certain areas? Those kinds of things. Because a lot of these production facilities were really elbow-to-elbow to maximize space. And especially in an urban environment like the city of Chicago where I'm at, square footage can get really expensive. So when employers have to figure out how much a machine takes up versus the operators are going to take up, you find that within safety and OSHA, you're still cramming a lot of people into small spaces. So we had conversations with employers to get a better understanding of what was going on.

What's really nice, because we work not only with the employer side but also with the customer side, we were able to get feedback not just from the employers in our interaction with them, but we reached out to our candidates and clients that we had on-site to get a feeling for are these things happening? What are you noticing? And plus, we really had to take a step ourselves and actually do our own homework and our own research and figure out what are the guidelines, how can I be perfecting myself? Because obviously we're going on to site and if I go there and I come back into the office am I exposing my co-workers and counterparts to something that I may have already captured?

So there was a lot of conversation with regards to how to do it the best possible way. But as restrictions started lifting and moving to different phases here, especially specifically in Illinois, they started to open

the door to say, "Okay, what can I do? When can I come in? When I come in what am I going to expect?" And we had that ahead of time.

So, the most important takeaway I can say right now is communication is such a big factor here. Communicating with your client and communicating with the employer, especially when you're planning to do these on-site visits, get a better understanding, a picture of what it's going to be like. Am I going to have to get my temperature taken? Is there a release of consent form I'm going to have to fill out? Do I have to walk in and put on gloves, masks? All those kinds of things.

So definitely, top of mind, safety has been a big part, it's always been a part because of the type of work that we do, being on-site and some of these facilities are hazardous in some capacity. And so OSHA needs to always be taking its place, but now adding this additional with the pandemic took us one step further to be more cautious.

What was really nice on my particular end is I deal a lot with food manufacturing and I found that a lot of food manufacturers were very quick to pivot into the safety realm, because so much of what they have to do is so much safety related with the spread of disease and cultivation of bacteria and things of that sort. And so they had really strong sanitation programs already in place. We were required to wear suits or boots or those throwaway disposables and things like that prior, and so they made that transition of safety to move forward. Not to say that there weren't issues with some employers in that particular industry. But I found a lot of employers I've been working with really took this very seriously and they pivoted really fast to make sure that safety was a priority for them.

Amanda Newman (22:47)

So that's really helpful because you're helping us think about some different ways that workforce development has had to pivot. Pivot to being remote and now pivoting in reopening in terms of what that means for business services teams in terms of how they're gathering information and whether they're returning on-sites.

And it's also really helpful to hear about your dual approach to gathering information about the workplace. Yes, you're asking questions of employers but you're also asking questions of alumni who are on the job right now, which is really helpful as we think about ways that workforce organizations can really solicit worker input, particularly in this moment when there are a lot of unknowns.

And so, Chris, I'm going to turn to you to talk a little bit more about what workers are experiencing. And we're hoping you can help us set the stage in terms of some of the key challenges your organization is seeing workers and community members confront, related to workplace health and safety during the pandemic.

Christopher Dews (23:45)

Got it. I'll take that right now. So, depending on which statistics you're viewing, you may notice that the infection rates specifically in the state of Maryland have decreased precipitously when it comes to COVID-19. However, generally, when it comes to worker health and safety in Maryland, many issues generally persist. I'll say right off the top, the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act is a law that we passed in the State of Maryland in 2018. And just to be clear, it took six years to be able to pass this and the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act only gives five days of paid leave to certain workers and we have to consistently fight every legislative session to protect that.

So I just want to say off the top, we have a lot of Maryland residents, just talking about Maryland here, who are already in trouble outside of the Federal moves that have been happening to increase paid leave by about a week, generally speaking most Marylanders do not have access to paid leave. Five days during a quarantine, during a coronavirus is just not enough.

So we're looking to expand the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act and looking at other worker protections. The other thing we're seeing definitely on the ground is that a lot of employers, construction and otherwise, just don't have access to PPE or are not enforcing PPE, which is personal protective equipment, on job sites. There's a lot of disbelief as to whether or not this virus is serious and if it's real. And we see a lot of issues with regard to that.

As well as retaliation against a lot of workers. So somebody will say, "I can't be here. I have to take care of my family member. I'm sick. I really can't be there." And they're finding their jobs being either minimized hourly so they're losing hours, or they're just being let go from workforce positions altogether.

And then on top of all of that you have what's called the digital divide, which is just a general issue that has arisen thanks to the coronavirus. You may say to yourself, what does that have to do with workplace safety? But since everything that we do, from filing petitions to research, and everything is done online, and a lot of positions have moved to remote, having access to affordable broadband Wi-Fi access is key to just generally any working citizen in the state of Maryland and all across the nation.

And so we're seeing specifically for communities of color, you don't have a lot of access to Wi-Fi and broadband connection. So when they do want to file a petition, when they do want to go after OSHA, they may not have access as stringently as other people might have. So most people think of the digital divide as some type of issue that has to do with children and education, but it actually expands specifically when you're looking at a safer workplace.

I'll just say this very quickly. So Project JumpStart, which is our construction training program, is very big on workplace safety. And we have a hybrid model right now because of the coronavirus that's spreading across the country, where we do everything online. But if somebody doesn't have access to that type of opportunity because they don't have access to Wi-Fi or internet connection, then this basically becomes a barrier to employment. And that just becomes, and when I say a barrier to employment, I mean overall a barrier to better higher paying jobs with more protections.

So there's a lot of different types of issues that I could talk about, but specifically issues that are traditional and untraditional in nature when it comes to workplace health and safety. But specifically, that's what we're focused on, expanding workers' rights, making sure that access to PPE is given there. This is specifically what we're hearing from the community and that workplace retaliation doesn't happen because somebody gets sick. So, that's what we're looking at.

Amanda Newman (26:57)

Great. Thanks so much. So we're going to dive a little bit more deeply into each of your strategies. But before we do, we're going to highlight another key role in the workforce development system that focuses on direct engagement with program participants. I had a chance to speak with Danny Castro, an Employment Specialist at the Hope Program in New York City, who supports program participants and alumni to connect to job opportunities. Danny also happens to be an alum of the organization's training program, one of the organizations training programs. We're going to play a few clips of the conversation. Danny is first going to discuss how he supports job seekers to navigate health and safety concerns. Then how he supports alumni on the job and finally, how he supports clients who may choose not to pursue employment in this moment.

Danny Castro (27:44)

My inclination is to really just have an honest discussion with people about their priorities, their needs and then what jobs would we have available. I try my very best to offer every detail and every piece of information that I have on job leads, but the reality is sometimes we don't always know everything about the job conditions on the site. Sometimes an employer will sell us a dream, so to speak, and then we get some of our candidates on-site, the feedback we're getting is quite different.

So I will definitely be as transparent as possible with our participants. Transparency is really key for me because I feel like it builds trust. If I see a concern rising about workplace safety, it usually jumps to the top of my priority list. I'll do my best to reach out to that client as soon as possible and hear from them in their own words what their concerns are.

And again, a lot of times this feedback is very valuable for other participants that we may be considering for that same opportunity. This may be a situation where we might want to consider putting a halt on that opportunity and then the conversation with the client usually moves to a place of what are our alternatives? What's the Plan B right now? But we also need to understand what kind of barriers the candidate is up against.

A lot of times people will get the job and people unfortunately deal with abusive circumstances and safety circumstances that are not up to code because they can't afford to go into another job search phase for another two to four weeks. So we do our best to come up with any solutions. You know what I mean? Can we transition to a part-time job so we have a little bit more time to job search and try to get you into a better position? We have a lot of discussions around potentially making a lateral move, instead of taking a step backwards to...

If a person decides that entering the workforce is not the best thing for them at the moment, it's always a decision that the Hope Program supports. Because we don't want to have somebody working on the job in a mental state or a physical state that is not healthy for them. So, one thing that's really great about the organizations that we have, we have a really strong emphasis on health and wellness. We have a wellness team that helps connect our participants to various city organizations that help with a variety of things, housing insecurity, food insecurity, combating [inaudible 00:30:51], tons of things.

Amanda Newman (30:55)

Great. So thanks so much to Danny for those insights, particularly related to direct engagement with program participants. If you're interested in hearing more from this interview, we'll be featuring an extended version of the recording on our website in the next week or so, so please look out to that.

I'm now going to turn back to you, Hugo. So you talked a little bit about how you've been gathering information about working conditions from employers, from alumni who are in jobs right now and also from actually getting on-site. So can you talk about a time during the pandemic that perhaps you found out some information about working conditions that you were concerned about and how you responded?

Hugo Avila (31:35)

Thank you so much, Amanda. I think Daniel hit a lot of great points to the conversation here. And I think it's very important to be transparent. And so, when we as business service representatives go out to job sites, it's to get a much better sense of what is the employment, what are the environment, are there

any hazards, condition? I find a lot of times that most people leave employment because of some environmental factor, either bad management or safety concerns of some sort.

And so it's very important to get a grasp so that when you go back to your participants and you pitch these jobs and these opportunities to the individuals, you're setting them up for success instead of setting them up for failure. And so when we have conversations with employers, you're hearing really one side of the coin, the employer. They're probably going to tell you things like, "Oh, everything's great. Everything's fantastic." And you're like, "That sounds great." But you want to get the other side of the coin and that's really where you want to start having these conversations with your participants.

I found over the years, I've been doing this kind of work now for a little bit over eight years now, that really your participants are your best resource when it comes to employment because you really want to hear from them in regards to what kind of work they're interested in, what companies are catching their eye. And that gives you direction in regards to who I should be talking to. Because my participants are telling me, "This is who I want you to talk to, Hugo. This is the companies that we're interested in. This is what's catching our attention, and this is what we're interested in." Where I find that a lot of times some business service reps have a lot of issues because they're being reactive, meaning that they're engaging with employers that reached out to them and thus they're turning around and presenting these job opportunities to their client instead of going out there and finding employers that they know that their clients are already interested in.

So that helps service a little bit of some of the hesitancy of participation in employers because the participants are already telling you, "Hey, I've heard these things about this company. I like them. Can you talk to them? How can you get my foot in the door there?" And I feel that's a much more proactive approach to job development than the other.

But specifically, to your question, the way we deal with a lot of employers' scenarios is we start doing them a little bit of an ease back situation. So when we're engaging with employers and they're telling us everything is great and then we reach out to our participants and say how are things, and we're getting that mixed story, we go with our participants story. Because we know we built a strong rapport and relationship with those participants because we helped them from day one as they entered our program, and they move forward with successful employment and we take their concerns and comments very seriously.

And so some of the things we've done, and this goes back to a comment I made earlier about why it's so important not just to maintain relationships, but to engage new employer relationship, is that it gives you that flexibility to be able to step back from the employer relationship and then pivot and start engaging with a new employer relationship that you build upon.

And so the way we've dealt with this with some of the employers where we have scenarios during the specific COVID pandemic that's currently right now, is we really stepped back from the employer in regards to engaging with them. So we're not necessarily proactively promoting their job opportunities. We're not proactively sending them candidates to fill out these job forms. We're taking a step back. We're giving them a little bit of time and then we're re-engaging with our participants, "Have things improved? Can we start re-engaging with this employer?" Taking it from them as temperature, how are things feeling, are things better now? Have these things been addressed?

And then we take the concerns that those participants have provided to us and then we ourselves address them. I think that's very important, that business service representatives out there that are on this webinar, really understand that we have a requirement, an obligation to advocate for our participants. And so I know sometimes it can be very frightening or off-putting to call out an employer and say, "Hey, Mr. Employer, this is what's going on here. What are you going to do about this?" But in reality, we need to feel confident that we're doing this because we're doing this for our participants.

And I feel that having multiple employer relationships and continuously developing new relationships gives you a little bit more confidence where if you do call out an employer and you tell them this is what you need to do, and they give you push back, that you can feel confident. "Well, that's fine. I don't have to work with you because I have three other employers I can work with that are going to put my people in a much better situation."

And that goes with not just in this current pandemic safety conversation, but also Chris brought up the conversation about wage. And so I've had conversations with employers that I engage with and I say, "Hey, I'm going to be really honest with you. I'm talking to employers now that are offering people this wage compared to your wage. And so this is my pool of candidates and so if I have to make a decision about where I'm referring my candidates to, I'm going to refer them to the better opportunity. So are you going to be more competitive so you can start digging into my pool of candidates or is this where you're at and we'll see what we do from there?"

And so I think that's very strong language but it's much easier to have strong language when you feel confident that you can walk away from the table. That's always been something that I remember hearing in the past that in the negotiation the person with the power is the one that can walk away from the table. That's who wins in this negotiation. So when you're engaging with employers you need to make sure you have that ability to walk away from the table.

And so some of the things like I mentioned that we do is we start reducing our interaction with the employer. We start taking a step back. We're not necessarily referring candidates to them. We're not publicizing their openings, if anything we're actually removing openings from any of the media sources that we use, whether that's social media, distribution lists. We use a CRM that we manage here in the Chicago and area Cook County called Career Connect where we're constantly inputting case notes and notations, not in regards to participants, but in regards to our employers.

So we have a case management system not just for participants but also for employers where we are case managing our interaction with these employers, our conversations. And so somebody can go in there and say, "Oh, I see Hugo's working with this employer, and this is their interaction so I know I shouldn't interact with the employer because Hugo is giving me some red flags. Like, "Hey, there's been bad business, watch out for these guys."

And I think that's what's been very helpful with us as well on the business service side, is that we do talk to each other. So whether that's not just business service side that I'm coordinating here in our company but also with other business service from other organizations in the area. There's monthly meetings that our funders provide for us that gives us avenues. But as you're interacting with each other you get to know who the other business service people area.

I mentioned to you on a test call that workforce development is a very small niche network, so you know everybody, you know people are jumping around. But you see the same people in different places because we enjoy the work that we do so we stay within the industry or we may find ourselves in different places. You get to know the players and whose involved and so having that communication with each other gives you a better understanding of who you should be interacting with. But interacting with your customers really gives you a sense of how much interaction should you have with your employers.

Amanda Newman (38:32)

Great. So, Chris and Clair, I'm going to come to both of you to dive a little bit more into the strategies. I'm also watching our time because we have a few more questions to get to and we're going to want to turn it over to audience Q&A in about ten minutes or so.

So Chris, I really wanted to turn it over to you. We know that most workforce organizations aren't so fortunate as to have in-house advocacy capacity. And so I know that you have worked with workforce development organizations outside of Job Opportunities Task Force. Can you talk a little bit about ways that you've worked with other workforce development organizations, and any advice you have for workforce development folks in the conversation right now who are interested in building connections with local advocacy organizations to advocate on behalf of workers?

Christopher Dews (39:17)

Yeah. One hundred percent. So first and foremost, I want to double down on everything that Hugo said with regards to supporting and advocating for your workers. I think advocacy is actually one of the more important things when it comes to workforce development because if you don't advocate for your workers, for your participants, then who really is? So take the worker's voice and their statements as seriously as you would the employer partner. We just have good conversations with them.

I want to say when it comes to bringing workforce developers and advocates together, now we at JOTF are fortunate enough that all of our policies are based on what we already have within our programming model, which is the participants. But I know a lot of funding, with regards to funders, don't allow workforce developers to do that. But I would say directly is just partner with an advocacy organization that you're close with, that you can get in contact with that you can talk to. Because from what I know of every advocacy organization that we've ever worked with, they're always looking for testimonials to take to the legislature. They're always looking for people, even if it's just to make a phone call to the legislator to bring up this issue consistently. To talk about drivers' licenses, to talk about lack of access to PPE. And let the legislator work on your behalf because they do work for you, and I think a lot of people have disconnected from the legislators.

So just know that as a workforce development organization, you have that access directly and there are plenty of advocates that will gladly take up the reins to work on your behalf to push these issues because then they get credit for it as well. So, I think that pretty much is all I'm going to say about that question. I'm going to let Clair jump in at this point.

Amanda Newman (40:49)

That's great and I just want to reiterate that when you mentioned testimonials, you're talking about worker testimonials. So that's really an opportunity where the capacity that workforce has with access to workers can really come together with the capacity the advocacy has to really get out and advocate for these policies. So that's incredibly helpful. I hope it's helpful for our audience.

So Clair, turning to you, before we move to funder strategies, I want to ask you if you could talk a little bit more about ways that workforce organizations can center equity in their approach to addressing workplace health and safety or other job quality issues?

Clair Minson (41:25)

Yeah. So, I was looking for the reactions button and can we have some finger snaps and hand claps over here for what both of my colleagues have shared. And I'll say, one, centering workers' rights and needs, there is no work without workers. And so how do we flip the power dynamic between, right now our field has the employer as king. And really we need to flip that to say, no, this worker is the one who makes sure that that employer has a business, that they're receiving profits. And so how do we center what their needs are and prioritize that over an employer who just needs to fill a seat, if you will?

Two, I think really to Hugo's point around candidate choice, making sure that workers have choice and I think sometimes we like to say, well, any job is better than no job. But what that does is it strips the worker of their ability to choose where they want to go. And so our job really is just to give them the option.

Three, recognizing the power and influence and responsibility that we have as talent and workforce development professionals to really advocate on behalf of, and in many ways, stand in the gap for workers who have been systematically marginalized and silenced. And so, recognizing that we have that power and that responsibility, take it seriously and then figure out what's the best way that we can make sure that workers are honored, workers are centered, workers are safe, workers are healthy? But the relationship that I am building, because your reputation as an organization and as an individual practitioner is on the line with that worker.

Four, practice what we preach. It's one thing to talk about I'm advocating for workplace health and safety, but we're not practicing that in our own organizations. We are not practicing the principles of equity.

Five, is tracking the challenges that are surfaced through workers. I think many times we dismiss the challenges that workers raise in terms of organizational and business and employer culture that is really harming to the workers, which then damages the relationship of trust that we're building with that particular worker. And so making sure that we are doing our due diligence and actually tracking that, noting it, all the things Hugo said already, because then we have more leg to stand on and say, "Employer, your culture's really harmful. Your culture is not conducive to the workers who I want to connect you to. "But what it does is, it actually, it tells the worker that you value the story that they have instead of marginalizing their voice further. What you do is you say, "I hear you. I'm going to document this. I'm going to make sure I hold this business accountable." Because that's your responsibility.

And finally, six, to really assess the workplace culture that you're then connecting workers to. And so that has to be a critical component. I think Hugo mentioned that. That has to be a critical component of the assessment. Is this employer, is this place of employment, is this career opportunity worth me connecting someone? Is their physical safety going to be jeopardized? Is their mental and emotional health going to be jeopardized? Is their dignity going to be jeopardized? Is their voice and the full inclusion of their full self going to be jeopardized? And those are all equity issues. So those are the six things that I would share.

Amanda Newman (44:54)

Thanks. So the strategies we're discussing require financial and staff capacity. And the strategies we've been discussing also require navigating some complicated power dynamics between employers, between workers, between workforce organizations. And so what are some ways that funders can support workforce development professionals to advance workplace health and safety as well as other crucial issues related to job quality. And Hugo, I'm going to start off with you.

Hugo Avila (45:26)

Well, I think there's two things that are very important here. One, in regards to the power dynamic. I had the luxury of, when I started doing this kind of work, prior to this I mentioned I've been doing this now for a little bit of eight years, but prior to this I came over from the private sector. I worked for AT&T. I was a sales manager, training new staff, retail side and worked very closely with business to business services and then transitioned very well into this type of role with business to business, interacting with businesses and those kinds of things.

But when I started this particular role, I had the great opportunity to work very closely with an organization here called Chicago Job Council and they had the Frontline Focus Institute. And so I was able to go into their job development track and had a variety of different trainings in regards to what was considered job development. And one of the specific trainings I remember having, it was in regards to engaging with employers, that power dynamic conversation. And the speaker presenter said something very interesting. He said, "If you're already meeting with the employer you're already in the room, and so you deserve to be there. And if you deserve to be there, they've already given you that power to say you're at my level."

So whether you're talking to a C-level person, a supervisor, or whoever it is, they already said you're at my level and that's why I'm talking to you now. And so they've already given you that power. And I think that's very important to understand that sometimes we may feel a little bit standoffish because we're talking to the owner of this particular company. I'm talking to the CFO, CEO, whoever it is, and you're looking at them with a bachelor's degree or whatever of education or years of experience or mastery in their particular field, and that can be a little intimidating. But I always think of those words that said they've already given you the power and that's why they invited you in. You're in the room, so you deserve to be there, so act like you're there. And so I think that's very important.

And to the point I made earlier that having that opportunity to be able to walk away I think gives you a little bit of power and confidence. But to know that they're not the only game in town. It's not a one-horse town and you're the only person with the horse here and so I have to do what you want me to do, whatever the case may be. You know what, there's plenty of other employers out there and there's plenty of employers that do value their employees and are providing support and attention and safety is a concern. And they are prioritizing and they are providing environments for growth and opportunity. There are people that are doing this and so it's very easy to go back and say, "Why aren't you?" Because you can't give me that excuse about money or unsuccessful model or whatever the case may be because somehow, they're making this model work for them.

But in regard to the next part is I think it's very important to find funding to advocate for business services because your business services people, not only are they the ones going out there and establishing these relationships with the employers, but these relationships with employers are helping your participants in being placed, which is a key performance indicator of the type of work that we're doing here.

But the other is when you turn around and go back to your funders, they want to know what employers you're working with. And so your employers now become advocates for you to say, "Yes, we work very closely, we're an employer partner with this organization. We're writing letters of support on your behalf." And so this helps you in searching and find new funding opportunities because now you have the employers on your back saying, "We're submitting new RFPs for this proposal and if you do award us, well guess what, we already have the employees in place and we can channel in to be able to provide these services to your people."

Amanda Newman (48:51)

Great. And Chris, I'm going to turn it over to you. What can funders do to support these types of strategies?

Christopher Dews (48:55)

Yeah, I'm going to just be blunt. The primary barrier for most funders is self-imposed and that's their inability to pay or fund policy or advocacy work. Thinking about everything that you guys have been talking about with regards to the power dynamics between employers and employees, historically the

way that's always been dealt with is through policy. There wouldn't be any child labor laws. We wouldn't have OSHA. We wouldn't have a 40-hour work week.

Retaliation, and like I just said, we just passed in the state of Maryland, up to five days of leave through the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act. We got resistance and I just want to say, historically, there's always been resistance on every single policy that goes to help workers in this regard. And so there's a whole game that keeps employers in power over employees in a very unjust, and as Clair has already mentioned multiple times, in a very racial and inequitable way. And so the only way that we can really fight to protect is through funding, is through policy advocacy.

And so if funders were just willing to trade up, fund policy or fund policy activism within the workforce development programs that already exist, you'd have a lot of solutions. I just want to say that to say this, programs can't fix everything. We've been putting people through programs for generations at this point and we still see that people are coming up with the same issues, the same barriers, the same resistances, the same struggles that they're seeing at work. And that's because of certain policies that have existed years and years and years and years before these workers ever even came to those programs. So I would just say fund policy and work with workforce development agencies, don't try to mix the... You can mix the funding is what I'm trying to say. I guess I'll leave it at that.

Amanda Newman (50:36)

That's great and a really important point and thank you for making it. So Clair, we're going to come to you before we turn to a few questions from the Q&A. We'll see how many we have time for. But Clair, what are some ways that you think that funders can really be supporting [inaudible 00:50:50] workforce development related to workplace health and safety and other job quality issues?

Clair Minson (50:55)

Yeah. So again, finger snaps, head nod, hands claps to everything all these have already said. And I just want to double down on something that Chris just mentioned. We're talking about years and years of race neutral policy that have gotten us to the outcomes that we are in today. So folks like to ask why is it important that we race explicit? Because when we were race neutral or color blind in our approach, it led us to where we are today. So I just want to put that on the table. Thank you Chris for raising that so I can double down on that.

But a few things, to Chris' point, fund advocacy and policy. We can't program our way out of these issues. Really think, consider multi-year funding, investing in systemic change, change the metrics that we're asking of organizations, invest in black-led and people of color-led organizations. Invest in, consider really asking about the ways in which the organization centers workers voice, centers job quality, centers racial equity. And not just adding a few words in a sentence because we have orders to do that, but really asking what their approach to really ensuring that workers are safe. And not just physically safe, mentally and emotionally as well. And how could they continue to fund to support that work.

And then just investing, I think, in organizations who are not afraid to not only hold employers accountable, but to also hold their funding partners accountable, because there's our power dynamic there as well. But I think Hugo made a really good point. If we're at the table then there's already a level of equal playing field that we're on. And so how do funders then think of themselves as folks who also need to learn and unlearn and engage with workforce development and talent professionals as partners in the work and not just reinforcing that grantee-grantor dynamic?

Amanda Newman (52:50)

Great. So I think that's a great transition into our questions. And so we're getting some questions specifically related to the role of unions and the role of labor. And so my question to you all is how does labor and how do unions fit into this conversation? Either in terms of the types of work that you're connecting participants to or opportunities to directly engage with unions or other labor organizing or workers' rights organizations? And so I'm going to start with you Hugo and then we'll go to Chris.

Hugo Avila (53:24)

Thank you, Amanda. So, our organization actually manages a program called Construction Work which sounds very similar to the program Chris is referring to with construction focus and apprenticeship. So we leverage this particular program to be able to provide opportunities for more people of color to enter into union trades. So we're working very closely with the different union organizations figuring out what their application process is, leveraging different funding sources to prevent some of the barriers that people are faced when it comes to applying to these unions, such as the fees or the application fees, previous dues, or whatever the case may be.

And so we work very closely on that front of the union trades. But in regards to just general unions across the board on the employer side, there are a lot of employers I work with that do have unions. So it's always a great conversation to make sure you're having with those union workers then to get a better understanding of what are they doing, how are they allocating? Because I'll be really honest, there are good unions and there are unions that don't seem to do a lot for their workers other than charge dues.

And so I think it's important when you're having these engagements with the employer if there is a union environment you have a much better understanding of what is this union doing for these particular employers? When is the last time they actually had a new union agreement? Does it look like this union is actually doing something or are you placing somebody into a good paying job, which becomes no longer a good paying job because most of their wages are going to union dues. That's one.

The other thing is a lot of my role consists of managing and implementing a program called On-the-Job Training, or OJT is the acronym for it. And so we work very closely with unions in this particular program because we actually have to have them sign up to say can we do this particular on the job training program at your facility? And just for context, for those that don't know, it's a Federal program from the Department of Labor where we put together a training curriculum for employers to implement on-site for their new hires. And for the companies when they implement the training curriculum we come up with, we help them offset their costs from hiring and training individuals by covering a portion of that individual's wage for them implementing these particular training programs, which we also monitor and document progression and those kind of things.

And so what's been really nice especially when we have these type of OJT agreements or on-the-job training agreements in place, is that we actually serve as a union steward of sorts. So I have had some areas where I'm going in and I have a participant with an employer that we're doing this particular on-the-job training program with. And we're, just like I mentioned before, we're constantly talking to our participant, getting a feel for what's going on on the job site. And if a concern is raised, we advocate on their behalf.

And then we've had some areas where we actually come in where the employer is telling me, "I'm going to have to write up this person." And then we say, "Okay, then let me sit in on that write-up as you're having that conversation." And then we create a little bit of advocacy right there and then. Because sometimes we do find that when a participant or a customer is being engaged by that employer there is that power dynamic that we were just referring to. And it's very one-sided.

And so we've been able to go in there and balance things out, where we say, "Well, she did say this and you're telling me that. Is there a way that we can... She admitted this. Can we move past that and what can we do now to get back to a place of employment and equilibrium?" And so that's been one really nice thing about that particular program because we have agreements in place then there's more of that. I can point to something and say, "Hey look, we've got in on paper. Let's talk about this. Don't dismiss this particular employee so quickly. How can we resolve this so this person can continue working and have retention and move forward?"

Amanda Newman (56:53)

Great. And so, Chris, I want to go to you and if you have anything to add, if you have thoughts about opportunities to partner with labor around different advocacy issues, that could be interesting to hear about as well.

Christopher Dews (57:04)

Yeah, I was going to say, with regard to the Job Opportunities Task Force, our Project JumpStart participants, we are just in general, very skeptical of any type of organization, beyond unions, that will drain funding from our workers. Only because, specifically in most of Maryland, they're not making... This is going to be blunt. They're not making enough in general so for them to lose more wages can be a bit of a tricky vine for us to climb.

So specifically, the way that we've been working with unions in the past, has been just straight on policy and advocacy. Unions are just largely more funded and have more people that working with them. And so when it comes to protesting, when it comes to advocacy work, lobby days, emailing and talking to legislators, going to town halls, we partner with them in that regard. And they've been very effective because, of course, they're advocates already for their workers. So we just build on that advocacy as well, come together on certain issues and then we all just move forward on specific issues that we see when we're testifying in Annapolis.

Amanda Newman (58:04)

Great. And I'm just going to add, there's a really interesting new report that came out in the last week or so that really talks about the relationship between unionized workplaces and opportunities to address health and safety issues that are arising. And so I'm going to ask my colleagues on the chat if they can share that link as well, not to the report itself, but to an article about the report in case you're interested in learning more about the role of labor unions in supporting workplace health and safety. It is a really interesting piece.

And so, I'm going to stop there. That's all the time we have. Thank you so much to Clair, to Chris, to Hugo, for joining us today. This was a really terrific discussion we can learn so much from as we think about strengthening not only workplace health and safety, but for addressing really a wide variety of job quality issues.

Many thanks to my Aspen Institute colleagues who are behind the scenes supporting and organizing this event. And thanks so much to all of you in our audience for joining us and sharing your questions and comments. Please, if you can, take a moment to respond to our quick feedback survey at the close of this webinar, or send us an email at eop.aspeninstitute.org and let us know what you think. We'd love to hear from you, and we hope you'll join us next time. Thanks so much.