

LIBBY LIVINGS- Conversation number 1-- Vertical Integration in Your Manufacturing Partnership. First we'd like
EASSA: to know, where are you? Please enter your name and location in the chat box, at the lower-right screen. You will see the icon for chat. Simply click on Send To, the dropdown box, and indicate All Participants. And we look forward to learning where each of you are located and who is with us today. So, again, please enter into the chat bot your location and your name.

And it looks like we have a tremendous gathering today. So far, we've got Seattle all the way to DC. Welcome, everyone! Look forward to seeing our other locations, here. What a tremendous group.

So today's agenda's going to move very quickly. We're going to have welcome and introductions. And, in just a moment, we're going to have representatives from OCTAE give us some information about why we are here.

Then we're going to go to our peer presenters and begin our conversation. And the majority of today we're looking forward to are going to be questions and answers posed to both our presenters and from you, our participants.

First I am honored to introduce you Sharon Miller, director for the Division Of academic and Technical Education, with the Office of Career and Technical Adult Education, who's here to welcome each of you and share a bit about the project. Sharon?

BRENT BAKER: She's muted.

SHARON MILLER: --conversation. The US Department of Education is committed to removing obstacles for students to attaining access and success in educational and workforce programs. To that end, we are interested in improving the success of partnerships between industry, colleges, and schools. In this series of four consecutive weekly conversations between newer and not-so-new partnerships, we hope to move everybody toward greater common understandings.

What do we know about how to keep partnerships moving forward, after the initial flush of hope and possibility? How do we continue to assure that our partnerships serve the mission of each participating group, that our partnerships remain vital? One of the best things we can do is learn from each other.

These four weekly conversations were developed in conversations with many of you in our

peer communities. And each of these communities is asking, how do we build the next generation of manufacturing? How do we improve what is called by some in the industry "the talent supply chain"? We hope to learn much from each of you.

With that, I turn things over to our moderator, Libby Livings-Eassa. Take the lead, Libby.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:**

Thank you, Sharon. Also in our audience today, we also have Greg Henschel, from the Office of Career and Technical and Adult Education. We're delighted to have him with us today.

I am Libby Livings-Eassa, and I am going to guide you through this process today and have the honor of facilitating this process and look forward to your engagement and participation. As your moderator today, I'm going to introduce and define each topic. Our conversation today will be driven by subtopics and copresenters that we'll introduce shortly.

I want to reiterate, this is a conversation-- which takes each of you engaging today. We hope you're going to capitalize on this opportunity to engage and freely inquire. And, like our peer presenters today, you are all colleagues, and you've traveled this road, so this is your official invitation to participate and engage. Your participation will be facilitated via the chat function that you have just utilized.

So why are we here? Sharon has shared some wonderful comments with us about the project and what we hope to accomplish with this. We indeed want to start a conversation. And that is why this series of conversations has been presented as technical assistance for each of you. The conversation topics we're going to introduce surfaced after discussions across the nation with many experts, partnership representatives, partners from industry, education, state, and local governments. So we're providing these conversations as an opportunity for you-all to discuss challenges your partnership may face and to identify potential strategies to address them.

Again, we're going to utilize that chat box to collect your questions and thoughts. So don't forget to click on All Participants and enter your questions and comment at any point during the course of this conversation. We're going to continue the conversation and invite you to join our online discussion group on LINCS. For those of you who are not enrolled in LINCS, you can simply do so at the link shown. In this group, we're going to continue to answer questions and provide opportunities for you-all to collaborate, solve shared challenges in developing your partnerships and the network together. So please create that LINCS account, so that you

can post questions and contribute to the conversation post today.

And now for our peer presenters and conversation to begin. First, we want to welcome Kate Cundiff, director of Workforce Solutions, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council. Kate, greetings!

KATE CUNDIFF: Hello! Thanks so much for having us today.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: And we're so delighted that you could join us. And I understand that we have your cohort in crime, Brent Baker, Pathways Codirector, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council. Greetings, Brent!

BRENT BAKER: Hey, there! Thanks for having us.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Absolutely. Your colleagues today will share real-life examples of challenges, again, identified by manufacturing communities such as yourself and as relate to workforce education. Again, we invite and encourage you provide comments and questions within the chat box, beginning now, as we continue through the conversation. For those questions and conversations that share strategies we may not be able to address or target during today's conversation, we will capture and post in the LinkedIn group.

So today's conversation is scheduled to end at 12:45. However, we're going to stay online an additional 15 minutes, to provide further opportunity for conversation for those who wish to or can't stay with us. So now let's go to our topics.

The first topic today is going to be integrating the K-12 education system. Or, some might say, perfecting that reach-down. These are your three overarching conversation topics. I'm going to further define each one. And, when prompted, Kate and Brent are going to provide us some brief real-life challenges and strategies that they have experienced on these topics. And, as they share, again, we look to you to post questions and provide comments.

So let's take a look, then, at integrating the K-12 system. We heard from you, across, those that we had the conversations with, that a lot of the issues here had to do with taxonomy disconnect-- or, we just weren't talking from the same page. We did not have common vernacular.

We heard about sharing and developing common missions and visions and about how to formalize and establish operational structures, processes, commitment, et cetera. The list is

quite long. But we had to learn how to formalize them. And then, lastly, we also heard commonly about how to eliminate duplication and the need to eliminate all types of duplication.

So, again, these were the most prevalent challenges within this topic. And so I'd like to begin-- I'm going to pose a question to you, Kate. You shared, in our conversation, a great reach-down effort in which there were those shared expectations and tremendous work that you experienced in mapping and leveraging efforts. Could you share with us a little about CareerSpark and Junior Achievement?

KATE CUNDIFF: Yes, absolutely. Well, hello, everyone, from Peoria, Illinois. I am so excited to share some information about CareerSpark with you. So, if any of you are familiar with Junior Achievement, I'm sure you all are, but we partner with Junior Achievement, here in central Illinois, very closely to implement an event called CareerSpark. And we actually modeled it after a Junior Achievement event called JobSpark.

We talked with folks over in Indianapolis about the model that they had. But ultimately what we did was we created a regional event for all of our eighth-grade students in the area to attend this really big, two-day event and reach out to eight different industry teams and get experience in those 16 National Career Pathways. So we had eight different industry teams that were each showcasing their most critically needed careers in the area. They had interactive, hands-on activities.

And the students came for about two hours. Each school came for about two hours and was able to tour all of those career pathways. So we gave them curriculum before the expo and after the expo, to introduce them to what a critical career was, what an industry was. They took a career-cruising, career-exploration test, ahead of time.

And then, after the event, they had a debrief session with their teachers. And so what we really tried to do was make sure that that curriculum was embedded in the classroom and that, rather than it just being a field trip, one day out of school, they were actually learning about it in school, from their teachers, with their classmates, before, during, and after the expo. So we actually were able to fit in 3,400 eighth graders, over two days, here at the Peoria Civic Center. And it was a really crazy but exciting two days. And we had about 44 schools come, from five counties. And we had about 400 volunteers, total, 400 industry partner volunteers, total.

So it was an exciting event. We piloted our first one last year, in October. And we're looking

forward to launching our second one this year and hopefully increasing the number of students that we have.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: That sounds tremendous, Kate, thank you. And, Brent, I wanted to ask you-- I know when we had our conversations, I believe you began your work in this space in about 2015, correct?

BRENT BAKER: Yes.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: And I know, with regard to your Peoria Public Schools, your region's largest and most challenged school district, I'd like for you to share with our colleagues on how they were challenged and about your integration efforts and building those robust pathways.

BRENT BAKER: Right. So, just kind of what you got back to, here, one of those key pieces, that taxonomy disconnect, we're not talking the same language. And things weren't aligning as they should be. So this pathways effort was started in earnest, really around, how do we start reconnecting with the community college to create more of those pathways, integrating more early college credit, aligning to those programs of study. Big for us, of course, is manufacturing, here in the region. And then, how do we work with those industry partners to create those career-exploration activities to help supplement that?

So, in our work with Peoria, very large school district, kind of a majority minority population, majority low-income, how do we work together to help connect career pathways? So, in the first year, we were successful in getting about 11 new early college credits. And some of those were in the welding and engineering track at Manual Academy. And so we were able to partner with Caterpillar, who's headquartered here, to help bolster that pathway.

And so, as we look forward, we're going to scale up and connect with about five new districts, in the near future, and start to scale this mapping and sequencing effort as we look to build that taxonomy regionally and help bolster those connections.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Brent, thank you so much. And I'm looking for questions, here, or any comments, again, as we move to these topics. And I do have a quick one from Heidi, and we'll post that one, as far as integrating K-12 system.

Why don't we broaden that for purposes of Heidi's specific question. She has asked "What are the specific needs of manufacturers, when it comes to partnering for skills training?" And maybe, Brent or Kate, if you could give us just a couple of sentences on how you've manage

to do that. Because we know that that's part of that reach-down in integrating K-12, that we have to determine those needs and weave that in. So, anyone got a short answer, here, that might help Heidi?

BRENT BAKER: Sure. So we've been leveraging our community-college partners, as we kind of draw those industry partners around the table. So we've done a couple of things. Last year, we did what we called "the talent forecast," that engaged some of those partners to get at what are those key skills and what are the educational requirements for those skills. So essentially an industry roundtable, providing feedback that then we could use in collaboration with the community college, to help align the skill sets that are currently being offered at the community college and figure out how some of those can back-map and the curriculum that we can align and help standardize between school districts at the K-12 level.

So, again, that's that early-college piece. And we're just trying to get to that now, as we pilot it in one school district, with Peoria, and how does that scale, and how can we start standardizing and sharing that curriculum between schools and build that capacity.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Tremendous. And I have just a couple of other quick questions, if we can just maybe give kind of a very, one-sentence-- Jill Watson asks "Who created the curriculum?" I believe, Kate, that's being posed to you. "Who created the curriculum?"

KATE CUNDIFF: Yep! That was the Junior Achievement. It was the Junior Achievement job shadow curriculum.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Thank you. And Joe Collins adds, that two-day event was not just manufacturing, correct? You referenced all 16 pathways.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

KATE CUNDIFF: We aligned our efforts with the 16 National Career Pathways. And we combined it into eight different industry teams.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: OK, thank you so much--

EASSA:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

KATE CUNDIFF: Yeah, I can provide more details later.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Yes, absolutely. And please go to the LinkedIn chat. We're going to provide information at close on how you can contact Kate and/or Brent with more in-depth questions. We see we're drawing a lot of interest, and that's tremendous.

Martha Mooneyhan I see you've made an inquiry, and I believe yours is going to be right on point for one of our follow-up points, so I'm going to hold off on responding to Martha [Mooneyhan in just a moment. Let's move on to our next one.

And that's going to be leveraging CTE resources. So let's take a look at that. We know that that can be anything from facilities to funding to staff. Then we've got territorialism. We all know that push-and-pull, which requires, then, many times, how to conduct an environmental scan, and then how to build that clearinghouse.

So I think, Martha, you may garner your answer here, as we hear Kate and Brent's responses. If not, please follow up for us. So, Kate, if you will speak to us about your Greater Peoria EDC and how they acted as neutral conveners between the educators and employers. And I think this goes to that push-and-pull we've talked about.

KATE CUNDIFF: Yes, absolutely. So, in our area, the Greater Peoria EDC acts as that neutral convener between the employers and educators. So, in order to do that, we established what we call our "workforce alliance." Our Workforce Alliance team is made up of employers and educators and other workforce partners, such as our WIOA funder in the region, who all work on either developing, attracting, or retaining talent within greater Peoria, within our five-county region. So we have middle-school and high-school educators, EFEs, who are CTE funders in the region, the regional office of education, our community colleges, and community service agencies and HR managers, all part of that team.

This group meets quarterly to discuss different updates from each of our three collective impact regional strategies. And then they coordinate that work-force strategy, moving forward.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Thank you, Kate, excellent. And, as I conclude reading our comment, here, from Martha Mooneyhan "thank you for this excellent input." I invite you all to scan the chat box. We've got some great information there. And, again, we will capture it and post it again for you.

And she's responded at length. She is responding to that need, again, about clearinghouses and how to garner that information. Great insights, Martha, thank you. And this is the kind of engagement and sharing that we are hoping's going to happen.

So Jill Watson is posing a quick question-- "Was this spearheaded to economic development, or the college system?"

BRENT BAKER: What was that? Sorry? Oh, got ya-- yeah.

LIBBY LIVINGS- Yeah, so was this spearheaded by your ED, or the college system?

EASSA:

BRENT BAKER: Right. So this actually got started a bit unique. So the mayor of Peoria, that early pilot we had with Peoria, that's kind of how it started. So the conversation started at one district, and we started making connections with the community college. Both Peoria Public Schools and the community-college leadership kind of changed hands, in the very-- as this work was getting off the ground. So, as new leaders came into place, it kind of grew.

So it started really on the focus of Peoria Public Schools. And, as we made connections into new organizations and realized that this needs to be a regional conversation and not just kind of a one-county conversation, we started working more closely with the community college. And the new president over there is just, like, all about pushing this work forward regionally. So it really started with the economic development council, but it's grown into engaging several regional partners to help build that network.

LIBBY LIVINGS- Yes, excellent, Brent. We all know we have to identify those champions and have them on
EASSA: board, to push all of this great work forward. So, on that note, Brent, you also have made a confession in our earlier conversation. So I'm going to go back to that.

BRENT BAKER: [LAUGH]

LIBBY LIVINGS- You honestly shared with us, y'all hadn't yet overcome this territoriality problem. Anything
EASSA: you'd like to add, on that?

BRENT BAKER: Yeah. I mean, it's really just a matter of us sticking to it and understanding that not all of the partners in this work have necessarily the same shared mission and vision. So that's kind of the continued commitment to this work. But, being able to pull all these partners together, we've been able to identify how best to move forward, as a region, and how to respect people's wishes, currently, knowing that they might not stay how they are now. So, how do we pull people along, without being overbearing, kind of stepping on toes? Which is a delicate line to walk.

But we're able to have those conversations now and understand that, every time we have those, we emerge more committed to the work. So I think it's a positive thing, addressing that, but it's certainly a challenge.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:** So, Grant, Joe Collins has a question, here. And it is-- I'm going to put this one under the Champion category. He says "I might have missed it, but who from K-12 is most useful in taking action to build that relationship between education and employers, counselors, superintendents? It can be difficult, finding the right person."

BRENT BAKER: Absolutely. And it's amazing, how finding that right person can really move the needle. You can be spinning your wheels for, like, six months. But, as soon as you find that right person, you can move in six weeks.

So this is one of the things we're looking at doing regionally. So, as we do this employer engagement work, we're trying to decentralize it so that teachers maybe and superintendents in individual school districts aren't responsible for going out and building these relationships, but that could be the role of the community college and the economic development council to help establish these relationships and then help connect them to the schools, so they don't have to necessarily go out and do that door-knocking and cold-calling, themselves. So trying to create a regionalized system where students and teachers and counselors can engage with this work.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:** OK, and just one last quick question. Heidi asks "Who is the manufacturer have you found to be best for building that relationship?"

BRENT BAKER: Far away, I mean, Caterpillar, just by virtue of scale and scope, here. But they also have an incredible supply chain of smaller manufacturers. So we've had both huge support, financially and philosophically, from Caterpillar, but we've also seen success with small manufacturers who have been integral in the work of the CareerSpark or planning CareerSpark and hosting students on tours and being really open to help building this pipeline.

KATE CUNDIFF: So typically that person, at a company like Caterpillar, at a smaller manufacturer, would be the HR manager. So whoever the lead human-resource manager or recruiter is. Typically, for the positions where you're going to be really developing the middle-school and high-school students, and hoping that they get some sort of certification or dual-credit classes, usually that would be someone who's working on the assembly production side at that manufacturer,

whoever is recruiting that talent.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:** Tremendous. And thank y'all for that great follow-up. As you do note, sometimes you will often post questions within chat, and I may send a response. If I don't, know that we are grabbing those inquiries, to respond to you in length. Again, make sure you join our LINCS community.

So now over to our third conversation topic. And that is determining a networked approach. A little bit that we've already sort of already broached that topic, a little bit, so I look forward to us expanding it. Within the confines of determining that network approach, it can be anything about, determining efforts must be local, or regional.

That is the huge starting point. How do we determine and focus those efforts? What requires? What does that workforce require, or the manufacturer require? How do we map those efforts? And here goes to that analyzing partner services to meet the gaps in the workforce skill-- I believe that was Heidi that pointed that out, a moment ago-- as well as planning that approach.

So, Kate, we all know that one single entity ain't going to get the job done. When we're trying to develop these programs and implement these strategies, we've got to have more. How did you begin?

KATE CUNDIFF: Right. That is a great question. So we conduct something called the Talent Forecast survey, in our region, where we talk with employers about their hiring needs. And we also use a tool called MC, which I'm sure a lot of you are familiar with. But MC can actually, that economic-development data tool, can project out the careers that are actually most in demand and how many jobs are going to be needed over the next year or two, or 5 or 10 years.

So we actually pull together a report of the jobs, the critical careers in our region, the wages that are paid for those jobs, and then the training level required for those jobs. And we gather all of that into one report, and we share that with all of our workforce partners, like our Workforce Alliance, as I mentioned earlier.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:** Thank you so much, Kate. And, Brent, I do recall that you had shared with us some landscape-mapping or analysis. And maybe you could share those with us and how they fed into your strategy.

BRENT BAKER: Sure. So, way back before this work started in earnest, about 2014, which feels like a lifetime ago, the group that was pulled together at the EDC, here, what we call our Greater Peoria

Pathways Strategy Team, they brought in an organization called Jobs for the Future, to help conduct a very wide-scale asset map. So, really beginning to help identify where are those gaps in what we're referring to as kind of the "talent development chain" and then what are the low-hanging fruit or the levers that we could start creating strategies to address to help move on that. So that's where the impetus of this Greater Peoria Pathways work really started to conceptualize.

So that outlined there was huge disconnects between the K-12 system and our industry partners, which wasn't surprising but they outlined how we can start doing that. So, building, again, a centralized system where we can start looking at what curriculum is currently available at the K-12 high schools, or the 9-through-12 high schools here in the region. How does that connect to the community college? How are we integrating that early college credit and that career exploration? So, doing the curriculum mapping, and then also creating these career-development opportunities like internships and job shadows and centralizing all of that was kind of the clarion call from that report and has guided our work going forward.

LIBBY LIVINGS-

EASSA:

You know, I recall, also, Brent, and going to mapping efforts, I'm going to go to that four-letter word "data." [LAUGH] And, on that, you shared with us, you were on the front end of that work. And I know our colleagues across the nation, you know, that's one of the most difficult parts. That is usually front-end work. And we're not to the endgame yet on that. So maybe you could share a little bit with us about how, data collection, you see that to be a major asset to a partnership-- the purpose it serves, if you will.

BRENT BAKER:

Absolutely. And I'll take it up one level, real quick. So one of the advantages of having this work being spearheaded by the EDC as well as a couple of the regional partners is that, by virtue of our designation as an Economic Development District, we have to file what is called a "comprehensive economic development strategy," every five years. And so now we've just got a new CEO, here at the EDC. We're trying to reconceptualize what that CEDS document looks like and how that can be used as the measuring stick for this work.

And a key piece of data is data collection. So, with that knowledge, on the front end starting to have this conversation that, if we want to do this work regionally and establish a shared expectation, understanding, and framework and outcomes, that we need to start sharing data between either the community college and our industry partners to see if the work we're doing is really translating into people pursuing careers or getting careers in these areas, and as well as sharing data between the K-12 institutions, the community college, and industry partners.

So we're exploring what that looks like now and how that can feed into using this five-year document as the guiding light and kind of the measuring stick for all that.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Oh, tremendous. Thank you, Brent, so much. So, as we move into our final Q&A, over all of our overarching topics, does anyone have any comments or questions? And, yes, I see one here, one from Joe Collins. Thank you, Joe.

He says "Curious if you have examples of work-based learning models that have worked well for youth under 18, particularly as pertains to OSHA, hazardous occupation limits, et cetera. Site tours and job shadowing are fun but don't leave a lasting impression." Amen, Joe. So either one of you might respond to that quickly.

BRENT BAKER: Sure. So we have a kind of a loose framework that we use for getting all of our employers on board. Manufacturing seems to pose a larger challenge. So we started doing this employer outreach and start making the case for involving students in the workplace. These challenges do come up a lot, about insurance, what a student can and can't do.

With that being said, there's a couple of folks that have been to jump in the pool, Caterpillar being one of them. And one of the challenges with this work is that it can be so ad hoc. It can be-- somebody who's really passionate in one factory or in one office can make a connection with a school individually. And that work can happen without anybody knowing it, with just a handful of people.

And so we run into that all the time, but there are things that are happening with our small manufacturers. But essentially they treat the student like any other employee, like a temporary employee, part-time. And they just pay mind to all of those rules and regulations that they can and can't do.

So we do have some guidelines from the Department of Labor, as far as what are those hazardous occupations they can't do. And then I sit down with that employer and try to identify those ideal entry points for students. But I can share that framework out afterwards.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Absolutely. And again, that will go to the LINCS group, and we will hope to provide more models. I know have a myriad of resources that we will put with the LINCS group. So, again, thank you.

So here's where we come to our final Q&A. And I know we're getting to that 12:45 time

limitation. But, again, I want to encourage all of you who cannot continue with us, the next 15 minutes--

[ELECTRONIC ALARM BEEPING]

--to enroll in LINCS and to join the lincs.ed.gov group Strengthening Manufacturing Partnership, because it will be in that group we will continue to answer questions and provide opportunities for all of y'all to network and collaborate. As you've already experienced here today, you can see that there's some great input from your colleagues across the nation as well as shared from our copresenters. And you'll want make sure that you do activate that LINCS account.

So we're going to continue the conversation for the next 15 minutes, for those who can stay with us. And what I would like to do, first off, is I would like to go back to a question that Billy Hackett had And, if we don't have any responses, this is open to all of our participants.

"Is anyone aware, or has it been considered to use augmented and virtual-reality-based training in manufacturing education and skill-building? I ask because our company is developing one through an National Science Foundation funding. And several schools and universities are interested to make lab-equipment training available."

So, anyone-- anyone there have any interests or anything that they can share, with regards to that type of virtual training, for our friend? Or anyone aware of what--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

BRENT BAKER: I know there's a couple of our school districts that are using maybe some virtual learning. I mean, it's on their computer, but they are looking at, as far as bringing in the welding simulators, and a number of our trade, union trade training facilities use virtual and augmented facilities to do some of their training, as well. So it's more cost-effective, in the long run. So we do have some of our K-12 partners that are looking at how they can use virtual job shadowing to alleviate the logistical and funding challenges of getting students out of the classroom. So that is a model that we're trying to figure out how it works best into our framework.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Tremendous, thank you. I posted a link for chat, please. I'm going to go right here, as we continue answering questions. We have it posted in chat, as well as I'm going to leave it right here for everyone to get either copy while we are finishing up questions. So I'm looking for any

additional questions or comments coming from y'all out there. And, while I'm waiting for some of y'all maybe to post another question, I'm going to Brent, I'd like for you and/or Kate to identify some of the hidden aspects of this work.

BRENT BAKER: Sure. So one of the key takeaways, for me, as relatively new to collective impact work-- before this, I had been at a nonprofit, doing some program development. But what I realized, working at a higher level, is that, even if MOUs are signed, it doesn't necessarily guarantee that you're going to have people pulling in the same direction, programmatically, given that this work often engages several unique organizations with their own missions and visions and boards and governing structures. So, really being mindful and understanding how long it can take to work through some of that.

Just because somebody agrees to something on a symbolic document, to do x, y, and z, that it might not pan out as easily. Or that that partner may not know how to do what they committed to or fully understand what they've committed to. So taking time on the front end to really get a bearing on that is highly advisable. And, if you're in the middle of it, understand that that's something that you have to just really commit to and figure out how to find those champions.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: And, Kate, do you have anything you'd like to add, with regard to hidden aspects of this work?

KATE CUNDIFF: You know what? I think Brent has found a lot of the really key, important things for our team. It's really important for us to make sure that we just have the right people at the table. And it's taken us a long time to-- well, you know, two and a half years, I guess-- to make sure that, if we get a no, the answer "no," from a company or from a school, it really just takes finding the right champion within that company or within that school to be part of a team and really move that work forward. Definitely a community initiative.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Tremendous. And we have a great question, here. Rebecca Simon says "Is there a broader national effort or organization that is helping to promote and support this work?"

Actually, there is. And I'm asking, is there-- I know-- I'm hoping we have someone there from our IMCP community, to respond. And I know that Brent and Kate certainly can. But talk about IMCP and that work, there, and how they're meeting together.

BRENT BAKER: Sure. I can speak to, briefly, the IMCP, but I also want to highlight one of the key pieces of this work that I haven't addressed yet. So, integral to this work getting off the ground,

understanding that with these collective impact model, again, involves a lot of unique agencies with their own work. So finding funds between these partners and staff can be a challenge.

So we were fortunate enough to get a grant from the American Federation of Teachers. So, out of their DC office, their innovation fund, they have provided about three years of funding to help pilot this work and really get it started. So they've been a huge benefit to helping integrate this work, as well as some state agencies here.

But Jobs for the Future, again, is a large national network that is really focused on building career pathways and integrating K-12 systems with postsecondary and industry partners. And they were integral in-- again, with the asset map, to begin this work, and support going forward. And then being part of the IMCP communities is that being able to help offset funds or costs to pull these manufacturers together and do a lot of the high-scale planning. So that's supported efforts with CareerSpark planning, to the Workforce Alliance, to doing this curriculum mapping with ICC, all of that IMCP work is wrapped up in that.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:**

Tremendous. Do we have anybody else who would like to add anything about the IMCP community who is out there in our audience? We would love to hear from you.

While you may be responding, I will add, too, that we are here, I am here, as your moderator, through Safal Partners, and we are delighted to support you through the lincs.ed.gov site, any of your questions or your networking that you have there. We will do our very best to try to find and post resources for you and to facilitate continuing this discussion. So far, it's been a tremendous discussion, so we're looking forward to your complete engagement and as we move forward into the next conversation.

We're going to stay with you nine more minutes. And I'm looking for any other comments or anything. It can be off-topic, at this point. Anything to do with your manufacturing partnership, to follow up, to inquire, and advantage of the great venue that we have today.

And, while you're doing that, I'm going to pose another question to both Brent and Kate, while we're waiting on any kind of questions. And I'm also going to offer the opportunity to open up our microphones. So I will ask if my partner will do that for us, open up the microphone, while I quickly ask Brent or Kate, can you share your largest success --

[LOUD TYPING]

Brent or Kate, if you could share maybe your greatest success, at this point, with regard to this work.

BRENT BAKER: Sure. So I think the largest success, for me, is twofold. One is that, when you see those champions and you see those other organizations who maybe weren't as closely involved in the work, start to recognize the importance and the merit of this. So the biggest success we've had is with those internships.

So, when you see a company who is on the fence or maybe took a long time to understand the importance of it, when they see that first success and they realize, this is great, we should have been doing this before, and they want to continue it, and they're continuing it with carving money out of their own budget to start figuring out how to sustain engagement with high-school students in the area. So that's been, far and away, the largest success, for me. And then, when you see those champions emerge, of course, and you would be able to connect with those and get them on board and working together immediately, and you see it all coming together, is really exciting.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Yeah, that is. It's tremendously exciting, isn't it? And kudos to y'all and to everyone out there for their great work. Kate, anything maybe you'd like to share? A different success?

KATE CUNDIFF: Sure, yeah. I think there are two things that I wanted to share. One thing that has been really successful for us is our talent forecast that I mentioned earlier. It's kind of like a workforce-skills-gap analysis. But I think the data piece is something that's really been getting from our region for quite some time. There have been all these strategies developed, but it wasn't really based off any data.

So, through that talent forecast, we've been able to capture the employer demand while also understanding who the available talent is currently in our region. And so we've looked at the unemployed talent that's available in the region. And then we've also been able to look at graduation rates from high schools and colleges and universities in our region, to see how we can actually fill those in-demand careers.

And then the other thing that's been big, that's made a big impact in our community and really just launched our pathways work, besides the internships that we've started for high schoolers, is our Greater Peoria CareerSpark event, that two-day event that's open to all eighth graders in the region. As all of you guys probably know, all the workforce-development research shows that we need to start targeting students earlier and exposing them to critical careers in our

regions earlier.

So, by introducing all of our eighth graders to our HR managers, our recruiters, in those critically needed jobs, they can start thinking about their careers, they can start thinking about their futures, and then they can actually start planning out their high-school courses and hopefully be on a more secure pathway into a job that they will actually-- or into an education pathway that they'll actually be able to get a job in. So those are probably my two top things.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:**

Tremendous, thank you. And congratulations, you know, on those successes. So I'd like to go back, also, into our chat box. We've had someone mention to us about the talent-pipeline management and the work that's being done by the US Chamber. If you will look there, you will see the uschamberfoundation.org Center Education and Workforce. That is a tremendous effort, there. And they have actually developed a talent-pipeline curriculum that is extraordinary. And you can access that online.

Do we have anybody online with us that has utilized that curriculum, that might like to share some of the high points? Anyone, please speak up. If not, I encourage you to go to the website for US Chamber and look for "talent pipeline management curriculum." It is an extraordinary opportunity and one of those examples where we don't have to recreate the wheel.

Joe Collins has also offered a great resource for us-- Next Generation Sector Partnerships, as well as the link here. Joe, thank you. That is tremendous.

So we have three more minute that we welcome any kind of questions, comment, or, again, sharing. This is where we learn of great resources. And you know we all can't know everything. So this is why I love this type of venue, that we can network and share what we know.

Megan Wagner-- industryneedsyou.com. Thank you, Megan. And, again, we will gather up all of these great links and resources and add them to the group at lincs.ed.gov. So make sure that you join that.

Brent, I'd like to reflect back on one of our other bullet points. I didn't have the opportunity to ask you then, but I'm really interested about your integrated-technology solution and how you're utilizing it to manage roles and communication.

BRENT BAKER: Sure. So there's a couple of things that we utilize and help divvy up the roles. So helping to do that identifying students' interests earlier on. So, working with our school partners to implement some technology, we use two platforms, one called Career Cruising and the other one called Career Coach, which is being provided for free to the region by the community college. So those are tools that students can use to get matched to careers and explore. And then we can pull that data or have access to that data and be able to drive targeted outreach to those students or hone in on that outreach.

And then also working to create kind of a regional dashboard, here, that will tie into that document I alluded to earlier, Into the Future. But we're working on creating a way that we can start tracking some of this stuff better on a dashboard and then be able to point and highlight what kind of curriculum is available at the regional high schools, as we begin to do this mapping and sequencing, and be able to codify that on one dashboard.

So the current dashboard for that is gppathways.org. It's kind of static right now, but we're in the process of trying to make that more interactive and be the hub for tracking this.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Terrific. And, if you will, put that link within the chat box. What I would like to do is go to-- we have a question, here, from Melissa. "Who are some of the nonprofits you have at the table? Do you incorporate any human services or nontraditional process, domestic-violence shelters, to attract single mothers, et cetera."

KATE CUNDIFF: Yes. Thank you. So, Melissa, this is a great question. And my email is up on the screen-- Kcundiff@greaterpeoriaedc.org-- if you want to email me for more details. But we're working on gathering all of our human-service agencies and our nonprofit agencies who are working directly with the unemployed talent together. And what we're trying to do is really build that talent pipeline.

So we know, in our region, we have about 20,000 job openings this year. We also have about 13,000 unemployed people. So what we're looking at is, how can we work with those service agencies to make sure that we're training those unemployed people in the right job. So, that way, they actually can get a job after finishing up that training.

So we have a pathway designed. I'd love to share some more information. But always feel free to email me and reach out, and we can set up a time to talk on the phone, for more details.

LIBBY LIVINGS- Terrific. And thank you so much, Kate and Brent, for being such tremendous resources for our

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colleagues across the nation. And, at this point, we're going to say thank-you to the department, thank-you to Kate and Brent, and thank-you to each of you for joining us today for this dynamic conversation. And thank you for engaging so actively.

Again, we will gather up any unanswered questions. I see we still have some coming in. And we will post those for you on the lincs.ed.gov site, for strengthening our partnerships.

Our next conversation is scheduled for March 5-- again, at 12:15 to 12:45. We encourage you to log in early so that we are ready to go. You can see how dynamic the exchange is.

And please feel free to contact either me, at libby.eassa@safalpartners.com, Kate, or Brent. And please engage on LINCS. We'll be looking forward to your input, your comments, there, and following up on the great resources and in class today. So, again, we thank you and look forward to March 5. Everyone, have a great day.

BRENT BAKER: Thank you.