The SA IT grantees participated in their July industry group discussion. This discussion focused on acquiring and educating apprentices and engaging with employers as state policies allow businesses to reopen. Grantees shared:

- Varied experience in designing and implementing pre-apprenticeship programs. They noted:
  - Differing challenges and benefits connected to pre-apprenticeship models
  - The flexibility of pre-apprenticeship programs in comparison to apprenticeship programs as they open up different avenues for pursing an apprenticeship pathway or offer skills that can be transferred to some other non-apprenticeship career pathways
  - Different strategies for developing and issuing completion certificates

- Opportunities around designing pre-apprenticeship programs including leveraging the pre-apprenticeship program experience in the academic institutions from which the SA grant program operates

- Challenges in developing and implementing pre-apprenticeship programs including:
  - Structure of the academic institution in which the apprenticeship program is nestled
  - Deciding on the right design of pre-apprenticeship program for the industry, academic institution and employer partners

- The impact of COVID-19 crisis on employer engagement. Grantees are experiencing difficulties in:
  - Obtaining employer partner buy-in from both established partners and new partners due to business uncertainties connected to the pandemic
  - Convincing those employers principally interested in upskilling that new apprentices can be helpful to their business models
  - Helping employers figure out how to manage apprentices remotely

- Strategies for continuing employer engagement despite pandemic and non-pandemic related challenges including:
  - Ensuring there are dedicated grant staff allocated to conduct employer engagement activities
  - Exploring new areas of need connected to the pandemic such as contact tracers and telemedicine IT technical assistance.
  - Integrating remote work modules into pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship curricula