**All State VR Agency Call**

**3 – 4 p.m. EST**

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Operator: Ladies and gentlemen thank you for standing by and welcome to the National All VR webinar.

 During the presentation participants will be in "listen-only" mode. Afterwards we will conduct a question and answer session. At that time if you have questions press the star followed by the one on your telephone. You may also enter questions at any time during the webinar by using the chat feature located in the lower left of your screen. If you need to reach an operator at any time press star zero. As a reminder this is recorded Tuesday, May 12, 2015. I would like to turn the conference over to director of Office Ticket Operations and Provider Support.

Regina Bowden: Hello everyone and I would like to second that welcome and thank you for joining us today. We have a full agenda and a lot of information to share with you. Before we get started, our deputy associate commissioner Rob has some information to share with you about a marketing summit. Rob.

Rob Pfaff: Thanks Regina. Good afternoon everybody. I wanted to announce we are going to have a SSA Ticket Program marketing summit in the Dallas regional office on Wednesday, June 24, 2015. And the purpose of this particular summit is promoting beneficiary connections to ticket to work specifically this is related to a message that David Weaver had released in a blast to Employment Networks notifying them of a change in the way that we were going to send marketing information to our employment networks, um, and the concerns being over the release of personally identifiable information. So as a part of that messaging he indicated that we would be hosting one or more marketing summits in the near future to talk about strategies and techniques to engage beneficiaries to, um, engage them in the ticket program and to gain better participation with our service providers. And so for the role of the Vocational Rehabilitation agencies we would like for those -- we like to invite those who are in the area or would like to participate otherwise to come to this session. It's a one day session on June 24.

 We will have representatives from MAXIMUS there to talk about Partnership Plus efforts and particularly what we would like to do in terms of engaging the VRs is identify opportunities to strengthen our partnership plus relationships in the local areas and in Texas and other nearby areas. So -- and also to get your input as far as ways that we can improve the program overall. This is not relegated specifically to marketing initiatives. The morning sessions will be targeted for marketing sessions but the afternoon sessions will include input by our other partners in the program. So would he plan to have local WIPA presentations and representations. We also are hoping to have the local regional SSA partners there as well. And the one thing I want to note about this particular meeting and why it's being held at the Dallas region is that it will coincide with the Dallas regional administrator meeting which is going to happen during this same time frame.

 And SSA Dallas region was kind enough to give us meeting space. We all know that budgets are tight, you know, and so meeting space is at a premium. So we wanted to take advantage of having the participants, the ticket program officials there for us to be able to get some space for all of us to gather in a room and get together and discuss strategies and techniques to strengthen partnerships throughout the program. We'll have participants as well from bass there. They will also discuss with us in a walk through some of the initiatives that they conduct to market the ticket program. We're going to discuss the website, email and social media campaigns and other things that they are engaged in and to get feedback on ways that those areas can perhaps be improved.

 We want to get input from the ENs as far as their specific methods for attracting ticket beneficiaries or beneficiaries into the ticket program. And then as well as representatives in the afternoon from our I mention WIPA but we will have participants from the local PABSS as well so we're looking forward to a very productive event filled day to really establish further working relationships for the ticket program. So I would encourage those agencies that are interested in participating to contact Jenni at MAXIMUS to let her know if you will be attending.

 Again the summit occurs Wednesday, June 24, and it will be located at the Dallas regional office. That's 1301 Young Street in Dallas, Texas. So again Jenni Purdum is taking responses. Reach out to her if you have questions or want to attend. We look forward to seeing you. With that I'll kick it back to Regina. Thank you.

Regina Bowden: Thanks Rob. As I said Desiree Fitzgerald and Danielle, our new VR team supervisor, has updates to give you but before they get into the updates I thought I would give you good information. We attended the conference in Bethesda and enjoyed the opportunity to talk with everyone and do training and get feedback in reference to some of your concerns and we want to address one of the concerns expressed to us and that is you have -- you had information about -- you wanted information on the -- some of the denials you have been receiving. So what we're going to do is reinstate the quarterly conference call. These calls are to address specific concerns and specific cases where we can go into more detail and that's something we can't do on this national CMPS call. So with that I'm going to turn it over to Desiree.

Desiree Fitzgerald: I have a walk on item. It's just an update. Actually there was a question and I thought the response would be something that you all would want to hear as well. But she asked about the status of the QBER. We have the information programmed for the replacement. I should make that clear. We had to withdrawal the QBER itself but the replacement service we offered instead would be us scanning our records and identifying the beneficiaries for each of your organizations who have the earnings information in our system that would allow you to request a payment. Of course we would have to check all the other eligibility factors but this would be a list of those people who in your QBER you would have seen they had nine out of 12 months of SGA. So the list will just be a list of SSNs. We are trying to figure out how to disseminate it. We have a service here called government services on-line where you can have an account -- you can send secure information to that account and we go to that account and pick it up whoever you're sending it to will get an alert in their mailbox here and they can go to that secure accounts and withdrawal whatever messages are there for them. So we're looking into that as the longer term solution. But if that process takes a while to set it up for all the agencies then we will just use -- what do you call it? We will use the file -- what do you call it when you need a pin to open the file. I can't think what it's called. Encrypted. An encrypted file and you will use the pins you use with us and MAXIMUS. So the last data that we gave you all was the quarter data you got earlier in the calendar year.

 So we've missed one quarter of data. And the fall -- you actually didn't miss any quarter of data if we get the file to you before July. So you would have the March quarter of data which is the one we just did it includes the March quarter. So if we can get that to you here in early June let's say if not sooner then you will have not missed any data at all from us.

 And so the concern is if you miss data, you know, and you didn't get the file for the timely filing would there be, um, exceptions or whatever. If you think that missing filing is related to this data you can let us know. But you would have had this file -- you would have had it by mid-April. So, you know, we would look at whether or not that was the reason that the timely filing wasn't met. But the data that you're getting at the beginning of June is data that if the QBER were up you would have had probably mid-April. I don't think it's going to be a problem and we're happy to offer this service and I will turn it over to Danielle arm strange for the cost update.

Danielle Armstrong: Hello everybody. I'm about a month into the new position. I've gotten to speak to some of you by phone and some by email.

 Before I go into the updates just some general things that I wanted to say. Um, I've gotten a lot of things in and a lot of questions about certain things that you've started to receive or certain ways that you've gotten responses back. One of the things that we're trying to do overall is stream line the processes. So we're trying to make things more efficient. And so that you're getting timelier responses. Some of the things you've gotten on the helpdesk you may have received or may have come back asking for different information. That's just so that we can help you to help the beneficiaries more efficiently. You may have different people come back to ask you more specific questions that you may not have had to answer before. That's just an effort to make sure that we're getting the right answers to you in the more timely fashion.

 We're trying to shift work loads and put the right people in the right places. So if we can help you better than you can help the beneficiaries better. So that's our goal right now. That being said with the last month we cleared 2261 claims and that brought the pending number down to 3770 which is the lowest it's been since October 2013. So we are making things happen for you. Those claims allowed actually paid out $26.4 million.

Where we are right now with the backlog we're currently working March 2015 claims. So anything that you've sent in that is prior -- after that actually we haven't gotten to yet. So if you have something that you sent in that you haven't received anything on if you sent that into the helpdesk they'll be able to respond to you and give you a status on those cases. Along the lines of streamlining processes you've been hearing a lot about the new Ticket Portal.

Right now we have Linda Patino who's going to give you information on her ticket portal experience.

Linda Patino: Okay well thank you for the invite to your call. My name is Linda Patino with the Office of Education a Ticket to Success Program. We're actually in California. Sun sunny right now. We've been an Employment Network since 2003 with the partnership plus and the American Job Center so we've been an active Employment Network. When the offer was brought up about the social security portal and testing it out on accuracy we were really interested in that so we volunteered and what wanted to do is share a little bit of the insight on what we have experienced and also, you know, some of the comments that I'm going to be base this on is what others have experienced also by testing the portal. So to get you started one of the things a lot of individuals are having difficulty with is setting up the Social Security account with extra security. This is individualized. And you have to have the cell phone that accepts text messages which is what some are running into some difficulties with. But I want to give you kind of a time line on how long it took me. One of the beginning processes to get started and get set up. On September 12, 2014, I had to call because I tried to set up my on-line account. I was having difficulties. I had to call the toll free number for Social Security and actually the worker helped me unblock whatever it is in the system so that I could add the extra security. So as soon as I did that I was notified that I would receive a letter and I did receive my letter on the 26th which was two weeks later. And once I got that it was like -- that was on a Friday I think. On Monday the 29th I notified Theresa our contact for ENs I had notified her I received my letter, what my code was and was advised I was actually in their system added to the iTOPSS system by October 3, 2014. So altogether it was about four weeks for the process of initially trying to set up the account and getting approved and getting in the system. Um, but just remember I was one of the first ones going through this flow so it's actually stream lined a lot. The other thing I was having difficulty was once I got approved I was like okay every time I sign in I'm getting my personal information, I'm not getting this portal. So I realized I had the wrong link. Theresa sent it to me once we did that everything was good to go.

 Since that process all of my staff have went through the clearance and it took them once they signed up two weeks to get the letter. I guess that's the average. And as soon as they get the letter I notified Theresa and within that week she had actually had them set up and they were on the portal. So about three weeks now is what it's taking for individuals. As long as there's no hiccups along the way. The other thing, the log in process just want to let you know one of the benefits that I'm finding like I say I've heard a lot of comments about well we have to use the cell phone, we have to get this code, it's kind of difficult. The thing is it's actually been convenient the way it is now.

 You have your cell phone pretty much with you all the time no matter where you're at you can access the portal, get in because you can receive that code to your phone by text and log in at any computer, any location. And I travel different locations, different job sites since we are in job centers. It's really important for us to have that flexibility.

 So whenever I'm at I can get into it because I'm able to activate that code in the system. And I know you can do that with OSM portal many are using right now but it takes time because you actually have to go in, change the phone number, um, at the location that you normally have it or have someone else at your office be able to receive the call, activate the line and be able to let you use it. Sometimes I work weekends so it's more convenient using this new method. Um, the other thing I was going to cover a little bit about the ticket assignments or unassignments. I know usually from what I understand VR uses more the batch method of sending in data. Um, I wasn't able to do that because we do more individual. But I know they're working on it because I've been testing it out on several Saturdays helping with the group that's working on improving the portal process. And I didn't have that type of ability to test it out. So I know there's some VR groups that are on or individuals that are on our testing or testing pilot and maybe they're able to test that process out. But anyways good news they are working on it and hopefully that will be available for you soon. Um, as far as the information on the portal it's been real-time. When I activate a ticket it's instantly in there. I see it. And that's a good thing. Or if I'm unassigning it's instantly, you know, unassigned. It's all real-time activities. So I appreciate that also and I'm sure you will. The other thing I was going to touch on is the payment process. Um, for us, you know, as an employment network the process was pretty difficult. A lot of paper work.

 And now with the new Portal it's taking us average from the time I enter information it takes about a ten to 14 day turn around for us to get paid which is great. With you doing a batch process or with ePay I'm sure some of this process is going to help speed up things for you also. And the other thing they have reinitiated the process where we can actually download to excel any of those spreadsheets. So our payments, the pending payments you're able to go in and see the status of the activity so you'll know what to expect as far as payments.

 With anything new there's a period of time to accept the change, adjust to it, to improve it where it's needed. I personally am very happy with the process. There's always little glitches along the way, you know, and that we can work out. But I'm sure the progress has been good and is going in the right direction. So that's basically my overview of what the Ticket Portal has been and I appreciate you inviting me to the call so I could share the information with you.

Desiree Fitzgerald: Thanks a lot Linda. This is Desiree Fitzgerald. I'm going to go right ahead and make some remarks about the Portal as well. But first I'm going to say a couple of things. Linda made reference to Theresa Shilling being the contact. The VR helpdesk would be the contact for VR agencies working through the processes of getting into the portal and also at the point when you have your mySSA account you would contact the VR helpdesk and someone there would let you know whether your suitability information is in our records and they would enroll you based on that. But once you're enrolled you will not get the link. I'm seeing in the chat room right now that there was a question about that. You do not get the link until we launch the portal. Right now we're just in pilot mode and there are a few of you who are participating in the pilot. But if you're not a pilot participant then you would get the link to the portal on the date when we actually roll it out. But it's good to be ready and enrolled because we're going to flip a switch on a particular day and anyone who is ready will go into the Portal at that point. I'll go back to my planned remarks which is a call for action. We've been doing this a while and we are getting close to the expiration date for the current portal and I know that many of you use it and we want to make sure you're ready when the time comes. We sometimes refer to the new portal as the SSA Ticket Portal distinguishing it from the Secure Provider Portal that you've been using that's housed within OSM. But this is a service provider portal. This is your portal. It would be nice when you open if it says my Portal or something but we didn't think of that at that time. But this is really your portal. And that's why we wanted to have another service provider tell you about her experience and we'll be doing this again and having one of the VR participant do the same thing. We put EN functions in there and functions that apply to both providers but -- and we've recently in the release we just had this past weekend there are some uniquely VR functions in there and next week there will be more uniquely VR functions built in there. Remember we're building this portal with the future in mind.

 And as Nate mentioned many times it will be in the system and you'll be able to submit your claims through this system. So this is really important that you all get in on the ground floor and know how this works because next year this time we'll be talking to you about the launch of Vermus in our talks. Now we also think this is important because administrators say things you do the things in high volume and you would be doing your batch uploads in there and all of those things. So in June we're going to begin implementing the new portal and we're going to do it based on who's ready as I mentioned. The current portal, the IVR and the MOVEit will cease to be available to you. So if you use the IVR and don't use the current portal then you still need to get into the new portal because that's the way you will be able to check whether the ticket is available for assignment. And as I mentioned your batch case opening and closure files will actually be uploaded through the portal as well. So we're talking June. So the time is now to do what you need to do. Linda gave some dates associated with her experience. So these things don't necessarily take very long. But you never know if you're going to run into a bump in the road.

 Somebody else's two week experience might turn into a two month experience. So take whatever action you need to as soon as you need to and you need to do it before now. So hopefully everyone can find time to join us in this venture because we would love to have high volume VR users in the portal because otherwise we're really setting ourselves back because you will go to the way we were operating five years ago in essence. When you go to the portal you're doing things much more quickly and efficiently.

 Like if you're a VREN and go in there you put in a few pieces of data and you can trigger -- well actually you have e-pay so you don't have to go in there to do that but there are many features in there where you can see that your clients have been added, you upload your file and you'll see your clients have been added instantly to your report. And so we want you to have the benefit of all those things.

 You already know what it takes to get ready. The suitability clearance, many of you are in the process or already have somebody cleared at your agency.

 But we're asking that you assess if you haven't already done what your need is. If you need several people -- whatever your business needs requires in terms of the number of people we realize we have to accommodate that. So please take a serious assessment of who you want to use it. You might want different people depending on job functions, counselors, the IT people who may upload the files, financial people who may need to look at some information for one reason or another. But we're prepared to accommodate those folks that you need in there as long as they get the suitability clearance and the mySSA accounts and we'll all be ready to go. And so remember the June date and you'll be hearing from us on this topic a lot lately. So make sure you read your information, the e-blast that is sent out because we'll be communicating that way between meetings. So a lot of the information that you'll need between now and June will be coming to your mailboxes from gov delivery from OSM. Now I'm going to turn it back over to Michelle. We're ready for questions.

Michelle Laisure: This is Michelle Laisure from OSM. Before we go to questions and answers I just want to give an announcement that on our June all VR call we have a presentation by Joe Ashley, assistant commissioner from Virginia VR, and he will be sharing his comments regarding the work incentives, I'm sorry, Work force Innovations Opportunities Act and relations to the Ticket to Work Partnership Plus opportunities. So please plan to join us for the June call. And now we're going to go to our questions and answers and in fact we do have a few questions on our chat line then we'll open it for our line. Ana do you want to share any of them?

Ana Morales: Sure. Desiree this question is in reference of the cell phone use for texting. I’m not sure if you're able to read the chat. It's from Washington State. It's talking about they're prohibiting the use of cell phones for texting.

Desiree Fitzgerald: Their state prohibits the use of cell phones for texting?

Ana Morales: Yes state employees.

Michelle Laisure: Desiree we can reach out to the ticket coordinator and get more information for you.

Desiree Fitzgerald: Actually the way this is set up we were expecting people to use their personal cell phones because it's connected to the personal SSA account and we don't want anybody else to have access to that device to get that access code. You should get that access code and use that access code. So we would not really want it to go to a work cell phone if those phones are shared. I'm not sure if they're not shared. This is personally associated with you.

 You're the only one that has that work cell phone. That's different. Because that's your personal work cell phone so that's still only you going in there and accessing that information. We can bring this up with RSA concerning the situation in Washington State and see, you know, how they want to address it. Because we met with them early on and they're on board with what we are requiring for the sake of security and the use of the portal. So if there's some state guide pens that doesn't coincide with them we would need to work to make sure everyone was able to use this tool. So you can send -- okay we'll get in touch with you. MAXIMUS you have the information to get in touch with Dawn?

Michelle Laisure: Absolutely we'll do a follow up and forward the information to you Desiree.

Desiree Fitzgerald: Okay. Thank you.

David Leon: First about the new portal as one of the testers I'm really excited about it and I think it's going to make a lot of things easier so thank you very much. It's exciting stuff. I really wanted to ask about at the very beginning of the call you alluded to the fact that you're currently working on March claims and at the very end of last calendar year beginning of this calendar year I was working with someone at SSA to clean up our pending list. As a result we went back and resubmitted 50 to 60 claims that could not be found in your system from the past several years. Two of those recently came back denied for timely filing. I'm in the process of working through those and appealing that but my question is until the system comes out what can we as VR do to ensure that every case submitted in a package is sent? Because until that goes through my new thought is I would have to do a return receipt requested separate envelope for each individual claim. And it wouldn't be an issue if I working through this -- my pending list had been all accepted based on the dates they were sent. But because some were denied for timely filing when it's clear in the paper work that based on the date I sent it was well within the 12 month period after SGA was met. So I'm just curious because I'm now about to work on the last six months that I hadn't touched yet. And I don't want to have more claims denied when there was no way for me to have known they hadn't been logged in SSA's system when they were mailed.

Danielle Armstrong: Okay. Thanks David. We will we were actually talking at the end there. We wish we could acknowledge receipt but at this point we're not because we're getting it through the mail and getting large volumes of claims.

David Leon: Nate actually started personally date stamping the c claims when they came in and I'm sure Danielle will keep that type of process so we won't lose things to the extent possible while we're dealing with all the paper. So that's one issue. But concerning the timely filing I'm going to turn it over to Danielle.

Danielle Armstrong: When we receive anything we may have lost or we never received or for whatever reason we use the date that you guys put at the bottom of the 199 for your filing. We don't say let's say it was a 2014 claim and you just submitted to us via fax or email yesterday we don't use yesterday's date we use the original date you signed it. If it's considered untimely filed it's off the SGA date not the date they have asked you to resend it. So if you're running into a claim that you know was timely please give us a call or email us or fax us. You know how to reach us and we will discuss it or review it.

David Leon: Okay. So it sounds like both of these -- because I just looked them back up the dates are still within that. So is it better to just resend in those two claims and highlight that information?

Danielle Armstrong: Yes you can do that. You can send email to the VR helpdesk or fax it to us because it's only two. So that's something we can quickly look at and redo for you. That's no problem.

David Leon: Okay. Thank you.

Operator: Thank you. Your next question comes from Eugenia Cox.

Eugenia Cox: Hi everybody. I wanted to also say I'm one of the testers also of the portal and it does some good things. There was just a few quirks when we were testing it yesterday, our agency so it wasn't a wide spread problem. It was cool you could assign tickets right away then check and the data just instantly updated. But that was very cool. And there was just a few concerns that I have which I already shared. But all in all I agree with David it's going to be very helpful and hopefully we'll be able to become more independent when it comes to looking up tickets and things like that. As far as the claims piece that he was talking about I also had that problem and claims that social security could not find I was able -- because we keep everything -- we were able to fax those over and Raquel did a good job for us taking care of the 18 or so claims that were pretty old. Not really old but old enough. So -- and, you know, they're very good to talk to and I encourage people to if you're having problems or if you have any questions with regards to claims contact the VR helpdesk.

 They really do look into it and everybody makes mistakes whether it be on our side or SSA side and they're very willing to discuss these things with us so... And make a fix. So the other thing I wanted to address was the phone issue as far as the suitability. Now I've had people direct concerns about other VR agencies direct concerns about this issue. And Desiree you did a good job explaining it but I think people are connecting all this to their own -- to work. And I finally realized after I got a state cell phone more my assist don't use that there was really no reason to use the state cell phone because if I leave tomorrow and I'm not working for the state anymore I still have to access my own ssa.gov. Since it uses the same verification process as I would be to get into my own personal account it's the same identical thing.

 So no one is ever going to know what that is or where that code is coming from. So Desiree is right when she says it really should be your own personal cell phone. It's not something -- the verification is not necessarily work related.

 They're just making sure that it's safe for you to go into that system. It's really not work related as far as the verification process. So as far as the concerns about using a state cell phone I would say -- I mean it really should realistically be your own personal cell phone. That's really all I wanted to say.

Michelle Laisure: Thank you for those comments and it's good to hear you're in the portal and using it and it seems to be working okay. And we would still go ahead and follow up with Washington State just to make sure they're understanding your comments there. So thank you for sharing that. It makes good sense. It does. Thank you. Operator do we have another call?

Operator: Yes we do. Our next question comes from Gina.

Michelle Laisure: Hi Gina.

Gina: Hi. How are you? I just have a quick question. Back in the last call Nate had said that he was going to send out the codes because the codes in the VR book were not current. So that when we do have to switch over to using the actual codes or the codes for processing claims that we could update those in our system. And I have not seen those come through.

Nate Arnold: That’s why they kicked me out of the job because I was getting senile. I guess we can send them out to everybody. I did send them out to a few people who either called in or emailed requesting them. Or we can attach them -- make them part of the minutes for this call. That might be the easiest. That way they would be posted to the website as well. So why don't we say we'll do that Gina?

Gina: Okay. That would be good.

Nate Arnold: And then, now is MOVEit going to be going down next month?

Michelle Laisure: Yes Gina, this is Michelle from OSM. Only when the Ticket Portal is fully functioning and the VRs are in. But at some point yes the MOVEit system will no longer be available.

Gina: Well I know it won't be available but it won't necessarily be next month. Correct?

Michelle Laisure: I don't have a date and time so you're correct.

Gina: Okay. Because I was going to say we have not been given the specifications as to how the data format would be for our programmers to be able to.

Michelle Laisure: Correct we have not provided that. Desiree do you have an update on that?

Desiree Fitzgerald: Well actually we expect the file upload feature is going to be in the portal on June 20th. So you would need to use the portal beginning in June after that release happens to upload your case opening and closure files.

Gina: Okay. Is somebody going to provide us the formats so that we know? Because right now all that happens pretty much after I put the file in, everything's pretty much automatic with our case management system on our programmers sort of need to know that information so they can make sure when it comes back it's talk to go our case management system.

Desiree Fitzgerald: Yes. The file format is supposed to be the same with some extra lines of data that you could program to receive or not program to receive. But everything that you were used to getting should be available with the same file format. But yes we will be working with the pilot participants to go over that information with them and make sure it's working right then one of them can come on a call and hopefully -- well I don't know if the timing of when we will have this available will allow them to come on a standard call but we will make sure there's opportunity for folks to understand the format and get the information that they need as part of the training that will be happening and the tools that will be available to you all.

Gina: Okay. Great. Thank you.

Operator: Thank you and at this time I’m not showing any further questions.

Michelle Laisure: We have one additional question from the chat line Desiree for you. Ana?

Ana Morales: Katie from New Mexico is making a comment dealing directly with social security and MAXIMUS is not going to be in the picture is VR going to have more staff to assist?

Desiree Fitzgerald: Well in general there will be new functions. There already is a new function, manage ticket portal users. So the folks who are enrolling you all and doing all of those things. That's a new function that we already are operating under then there will be a helpdesk where if there are problems with the portal you all will come to that helpdesk and we would be a liaison with the systems folks to address whatever is happening. We would first -- there are many sources of help. So we will be giving you as part of this roll out information for where to go for what because OSM will still be involved and in many instances they will be the first point of contact and they will be triaging things that need to go here at SSA to VR helpdesk or systems helpdesk or ENSB. We have various contacts points so they will route information around and they will be the first one of contact for many of the portal issues then it would come to us if it needs SSA systems expertise.

Regina Bowden: We've anticipated your needs and planned for the additional help that you would need. So don't worry.

Michelle Laisure: Tune in next month for our presentation from Joe Ashley, Virginia VR. Thank you everyone and that concludes our call for today.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen thank you for joining today's conference. Thank you for your participation. That does conclude the conference. You may now disconnect.

[Call Ended]