

Rural Healthcare and One Workforce Grants

Peer-to-Peer Session: Partnership Development

Tips and Best Practices

August 16, 2022

Building Partnerships

Tips for Identifying Potential Partners and Beginning Those Relationships

- Utilize partnerships with business and trade associations, councils of government, professional associations, and chambers of commerce to **connect with larger nationwide corporations** as potential employer partners. These organizations are also in a good position to communicate the value of your program to potential employer partners.
- **Use your participants as an entry point into conversations** with potential employer partners. For example, if you notice that multiple enrolled participants work for the same company, that may be an opportunity to build a partnership with that company. Often participants are the biggest ambassadors for a training program!
- **Be clear with potential partners about what the grant can do** (and what it cannot do) to establish and maintain expectations.
- In your conversations with potential partners, **assess their organizational willingness, readiness, and ability**. If an organization is not ready, willing, and able to fulfill their commitments to the grant partnership, there will be little that the grantee can do to fix this.
- **Have a menu of options for potential partners that may fit their needs**— and be creative! For example, if employees live too far away from a training provider to go on-site for training, find a way to bring the training to the workplace.
- **Educate potential partners about the supportive services available** through your grant program that can potentially help their customers/stakeholders.
- **Use career fairs to recruit new partners** in addition to recruiting participants. Network and collaborate with employers who are participating.
- **Reach out to employers in the areas where your participants want to live and work** when they complete training, particularly if no partners are yet involved, using that interest to encourage them to participate. In addition, **reach out to colleges in those areas where connections have not yet been made**.
- Be of service to the potential partners by listening to their needs and potential issues in recruitment and turnover and frame a partnership discussion with them as a way that *you* can help them to resolve those issues.

Sustaining Partnerships

Tips for Maintaining Existing Partnerships

- **Keep your employer partners engaged through employer partner committee meetings**. Depending on the number of employer partners you are working with, you may want to break these committees into smaller groups by industry and involve other relevant industry stakeholders (i.e., include a transportation workforce coordinator from the Workforce Development Board into the transportation-related employer group).



- Try to have in-person meetings where possible to get everyone to the table to provide updates and to have real-time conversations with each other about what's working.
- **Solicit feedback from your employer partners.** Tailoring training to employer needs (to the extent that you can) is important in maintaining relationships and continuing to demonstrate value.
 - Work with your education and training providers to provide training that is not tied to an academic calendar—employers' timelines do not always coincide with academic semesters.
 - Help your employer partners get talent earlier by being proactive in a recruitment and training strategy with employers.
 - Tailor flyers and training recruitment materials to each partner individually using their feedback and collaboration.
- **Create workgroups that include representatives across all types of partners** to give everyone a voice and keep everyone united around a shared program vision.
- **Don't force partnerships that are not working or do not make sense.** Don't be afraid to re-evaluate partnerships if the entity is not able to deliver what they promised to the grant .
- **Be strategic in partnering with community-based organizations to ensure your program is embedded into and led by the community.** Think of your partners as the spokes on a hub, with the community at the center as the hub. If your program includes the community and is responsive to community needs, this will help your partnerships out-live federal grant funding.
- **Develop resources that each training partner can easily use in their own marketing materials,** such as:
 - Embedded web links
 - Toolkits with interest forms
 - Social media posts
- **Reach out multiple times per month** to keep partners engaged and maintain connections.

Utilizing Partnerships

Tips for Maximizing Benefits from Partnerships into Grant Program and Services

- **Leverage partnerships with organizations that work with specific target populations** (i.e., a college's veterans services office) to help recruit individuals from that target population (i.e., veterans, military spouses, etc.).
- **Partner with minority-serving institutions**, such as HBCUs and TCUs, to promote diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility within your program.
- **Build upon outreach and marketing efforts that your partners are already doing** to maximize reach and impact. Let them be part of your marketing strategy.
 - When working with a larger regional or nationwide employer, think about how to use their advertisements (i.e., billboards) to promote training opportunities.
 - When working with a local government entity with a prominent social media presence, think about how to promote recruitment events online.
 - When working with a local American Jobs Center, think about how to channel information through those offices.
 - When working with your local Workforce Development Board, cross-list outreach events on each other's calendars and find ways to conduct outreach events together.
- **Work with local high schools to host career fairs** to help recruit graduating high school seniors. Especially with advanced manufacturing, providing students information earlier about these opportunities can help correct false assumptions or perceptions about manufacturing as a lucrative and fulfilling career option.
- **Work with your education and training partner to identify eligible individuals** who are paying out-of-pocket for courses who could be receiving grant-funded services if they registered.



- **Develop a Quality Assurance team that stays in frequent communication with all of the grant partners** and works with them to review data for accuracy and report data efficiently.
- **Use career coaches to connect participants with partners in creative settings** to generate enthusiasm among participants. For example, offer a resume-writing class and involve employer partners by having them give presentations about their hiring processes.
- ***Rural Healthcare grant:* Get partners involved in the development and dissemination of a recruitment video** that highlights what it's really like to work in healthcare in a rural area. Describe to partners how the video helps to resolve some of their issues by dispelling stereotypes and attracting more participants into the field.

