Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs

Quarterly Peer Learning Call

September 22, 2026 | 2:00-3:00pm ET

Overview

Now that this grant period has passed the midpoint, sustainability beyond Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs funding becomes an increasingly important topic for all grantees. This peer learning call provided grantees with practical strategies to sustain their work, communicate program impact via storytelling, cultivate partnerships, and build support for future investment. The goals of the session were to:

1. Share practical approaches to sustaining workforce initiatives beyond the grant period.
2. Explore strategies for communicating program impact through data, participant stories, and real-world examples.
3. Facilitate peer learning around funding opportunities, partnership development, and long-term sustainability.

Following a brief welcome and framing, participants heard from a JFF subject matter expert on sustainability strategies and communicating program impact. Two Building Pathways grantees (Employ Milwaukee & City of Refuge) then shared real-world examples from their own work. Participants joined facilitated breakout discussions organized by the grantees' organization type to explore sustainability challenges, funding and partnership strategies, and approaches to demonstrating impact.

Guest Speaker Highlights

- **Farrah Farnese Roma (JFF):** Shared strategies for sustaining, adapting, and embedding valuable program components beyond the initial funding period.
- **Cindy Anderson (Employ Milwaukee):** Discussed diversifying public and private funding streams to align with program goals, target populations, and regional priorities.
- **Jeannie Ross (City of Refuge):** Highlighted the use of impact storytelling to demonstrate program value, including sharing a published impact book that paired participant experiences with program outcomes.

Themes

Nonprofits & Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

The discussion focused on prioritizing program components, adapting to changing resources, and using relationships and storytelling to support sustainability.

- **Program Adaptation:** Grantees discussed identifying the program components that deliver the greatest value for participants and employers and adjusting approaches as funding and partnerships evolve, rather than maintaining every program component unchanged.
- **Partnerships and Networks:** Maintaining strong professional relationships can create opportunities for future collaboration, funding, and continued program support.
- **Impact Storytelling:** Participant stories can demonstrate program value, particularly when paired with measurable workforce outcomes, such as credential attainment, employment placement, and career advancement and supported by consistent processes for capturing and sharing these experiences.

Colleges/Universities

The discussion centered on aligning programs with institutional priorities, employer needs, and regional workforce demand.

- **Institutional Alignment:** Employer advisory boards, existing institutional investments, and state initiatives can help programs become part of broader education and workforce systems, creating opportunities to sustain training pathways beyond individual grant investments.
- **Employer Partnerships and Industry Demand:** Grantees shared examples of developing training with employers to address regional skill needs and focusing on growing industries, including nuclear technology and HVAC. Ongoing employer engagement can also help ensure training remains responsive to hiring needs and leads to meaningful employment opportunities.
- **Transferable Skills:** Designing pathways around transferable skills can help participants remain prepared for opportunities across employers, occupations, and industries as workforce needs change, supporting longer-term career mobility and adaptability.

Workforce Development Boards & Government Agencies

The discussion focused on regional collaboration, changing labor-market needs, and leveraging public workforce systems to sustain programming.

- **Regional Collaboration:** One grantee highlighted an approach to engaging neighboring workforce boards as formal program partners to strengthen regional buy-in and shared goals. Regular communication and regional convenings can

further build trust and collaboration and support more coordinated approaches to meeting regional workforce needs.

- **Labor-Market Alignment:** Grantees emphasized periodically reassessing occupational priorities and training pathways to ensure they continue to reflect regional economic conditions and employer demand, including opportunities in emerging industries.
- **Public Workforce Systems:** Existing workforce funding and state investments may offer pathways to sustain successful programs. Aligning effective program components with existing workforce system services, funding streams, and employer partnerships may also help support longer-term sustainability. However, eligibility requirements, administrative processes, and short-term performance expectations can complicate sustainability for longer-term education and training models.

Tools and Resources

- **JFF: High Road Training Sustainability Toolkit:** https://www.jff.org/idea/hrtf-sustainability-toolkit/
- **Workforce GPS Grant Sustainability Action Guide:** https://etagranteeproducts.workforcegps.org/resources/2026/09/09/14/27/Grant-Sustainability-Toolkit