



ABA Quick Tips

Measuring Program Outcomes

The purpose of this **Quick Tip** is to offer ABA grantees promising strategies to measure program outcomes. Key objectives of ABA grants are to strengthen, modernize, expand, diversify, and promote RAPs as a workforce development solution. To accomplish this, grantees must measure the progress and outcomes of their efforts to strengthen, expand, and diversify RAPs in order to evaluate the effectiveness of their program and make changes as necessary to improve outcomes. Below are quick tips that offer strategies to measure program outcomes.

Measuring Program Outcomes

To ensure ABA grantees are providing impactful apprenticeship programs, they must consider the importance and relevance of tracking and measuring outcomes. In addition to the outcomes tracked by the Department of Labor (DOL), grantees may consider defining and refining specific performance outcomes they want to track for continuous program improvement. Systematic and frequent outcome reporting also aids in illustrating the Return on Investment (ROI) to employer partners and is important to maintaining and securing partnerships and funding. Additionally, tracking and reporting on program outcomes can help grantees strengthen and expand their workforce development strategies, including strategies for sustainability. The following are recommended steps for tracking outcomes:

1. Define program goals.
2. Set measurable objectives/outcome goals (short- and long-term).
3. Design system for accurately tracking data (e.g., # of placements, # of completions).
4. Collect and share client success stories.
5. Collect periodic feedback from staff, employers, and other partners to adopt a model of continuous improvement.

Define Program Goals

To measure program outcomes, grantees must have a picture of where they are going. Grantees should define their intended goals in advance of implementation. These goals are generally broad and overarching. Defining program goals is the first step to developing a road map to success.

Developing Short-Term Vs Long-Term Objectives

Grantees are tasked with setting short- and long-term *measurable* outcome goals for their apprenticeship programs. Short-term outcomes, generally determined by program services and related services from employers, may include skills and credentials acquired by apprentices, meeting apprentice registration targets, and launching RAPs in new occupations.

Long-term outcomes are often determined by factors including the labor market, prominent and growth industries, target populations, grantee and workforce system relationships with employers, and Federal, State, and local policies. Long-term outcomes may include greater employment in target occupations, improved wages and career progression for apprentices, and sustaining the apprenticeship program for grantees.

Create A Well-Organized Grant Tracking System

Grantees should setup an easy-to-understand system in advance for tracking the grant. This would include tracking all donor correspondence, grant documents, and deliverables. This system should be understood by everyone working on the grant and it

Quick Tips offer short, easy to use strategies, recommendations, and tips for Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) grantee consideration, exploration, and use. The tips and recommendations listed below draw from the expertise of ABA Technical Assistance Coaches, research, and grey literature (see references below).

Using the SMART goals model, grantees will be able to set *measurable* goals that are:

Specific – clear, defined, and unambiguous

Measurable – have metrics to measure progress

Attainable – achievable with the skills and resources available

Realistic – make sense, relevant to broader objectives

Timely – have a defined timeline



should be easily accessible so that designated staff can find grant materials with little effort. This will also prove helpful should there be staff turnover during the life of the grant.

Funding considered, grantees should consider developing a *long-term progress tracking system* to gather data from apprentices one, three, and five years after completion of apprenticeship (e.g. promotions and wages, additional credentials acquired, leadership roles). While maintaining contact with former program participants can be challenging, long-term outcome measures can serve as important tools to show employers the viability of apprenticeship and the successful results of investments in apprentices. One strategy to maintain contact with former apprentices and collect long-term data is to create an alumni network to connect old and new apprentices.

Quantitative data can't tell the whole story of a program's success. Grantees are encouraged to collect more robust data beyond numbers to capture the true essence of each apprentice's outcomes and experiences.

Success Stories

Qualitative data collection is an excellent way for grantees to present their program outcomes. Creating individual success portfolios for each apprentice that participates in the program allows each grantee to demonstrate real apprentice experiences. These portfolios may include:

- A written or recorded narrative from the client on their experience in the program
 - How they started: What is their story?
 - What steps they took during the program: What challenges and barriers did they overcome?
 - Where they finished: Are they salaried employees? Are they credentialed?
- Copies of completed certifications in specific industries
- Copies of resumes and/or offer letters for employment

These success stories can be used to 1) show successful program outcomes to funders, 2) recruit new participants into the apprenticeship program, 3) develop new partnerships with employers in varying industries.

Process Improvements

The success of any program is determined by its willingness to reflect on processes and receive impactful, critical feedback that can be used to improve the program. Process improvements are best determined by direct feedback from staff, apprentices, as well as stakeholders such as employers and other funding partners. Grantees should periodically (1-2 times per year) survey staff, employers, and apprentices on processes and experiences. This feedback should be used to inform and update strategies, policies, and processes.

Potential process improvements to consider from stakeholder feedback:

- **Staff feedback:** implementation improvements, staff retainment, sustainability procedures
- **Employer feedback:** partnership maintenance and development, addressing gaps in services and/or skills development, sustainability
- **Apprentice feedback:** process and impact improvement, apprentice engagement, support service gaps, skills gaps, sustainability

References

Association of Nonprofit Accountants & Finance Professionals (ANAFP). *Best Practices in Grants Management*.

<https://www.anafp.org/Best-Practices-in-Grants-Management>



Gardiner, Karen, Daniel Kuehn, Elizabeth Copson, and Andrew Clarkwest. *Expanding Registered Apprenticeship in the United States: Description of American Apprenticeship Initiative Grantees and Their Programs*. (2021) Report prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Abt Associates and Urban Institute.

https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/etaop-2021-23_aai_grant_program_description_final.pdf

H-1B TechHire. WorkforceGPS. *Utilizing Your Data to Maintain Program Success*. (2018).

[https://h1btechhire.workforcegps.org/resources/2018/04/10/14/51/Utilizing Your Data to Maintain Program Success Resource](https://h1btechhire.workforcegps.org/resources/2018/04/10/14/51/Utilizing_Your_Data_to_Maintain_Program_Success_Resource)
[s](#)

Sharp, Kristin and Ben-Jakov, Gabriel. *Tracking Outcomes Toward Better Apprenticeships*. (2021).

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/gradsoflife/2021/04/06/tracking-outcomes-toward-better-apprenticeships/?sh=703a13ae3252>

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. *Grantee Handbook: Effectively Managing Competitive Grants*. (2020). https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/grants/pdfs/ETA_Grantee_Handbook.pdf

This project has been funded, either wholly or in part, with Federal funds from the Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration, the contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.
