

H-1B TECHHIRE

RESOURCE BRIEF

Job Placement Promising Practices

INTRODUCTION

A TechHire grantee's success depends greatly on how effective their approach to job placement is as they work to find stable jobs in IT for individuals with barriers to employment. This TechHire Job Placement Promising Practices brief highlights the unique and successful ways current H-1B TechHire grantees have been approaching job placement to support both participants and employer partners. In this brief, we share the promising practices of three distinct TechHire grantees so that the larger TechHire community may consider them as they explore options for expanding job placement strategies to support participants to and through employment.

PROMISING PRACTICE: PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE INDUSTRY YOU ARE TRAINING FOR

Grantee: UAW-Labor Employment and Training Corporation, Los Angeles Valley College Workforce Training Program

Location: Los Angeles, California

Target Population(s): Youth and young adults ages 18 to 29

TechHire grantee UAW-Labor Employment Training Corporation, based in Los Angeles County, works closely with the Los Angeles Valley College Manufacturing Academy to offer training and job placement services to unemployed or underemployed youth and young adults in preparation

for employment in advanced manufacturing, with particular emphasis on computer numerically controlled (CNC) machine operator positions. The program manager of the LAVC Workforce Training program has worked with LETC and the larger manufacturing industry for 25 years, and understands the skills that employers need. He uses that knowledge and insight to work closely with TechHire students, prospective employers, and the larger community to ensure that job placements meet the needs of all parties involved.

Employer Involvement, Addressing the Needs of Employers, and Student Supports

From the very start, TechHire students, who range in age from 18 to 29, are introduced to the importance of starting their job searches early and building relationships with employers within the TechHire training program. LAVC incorporates employer participation into its Workforce Training program so that students become accustomed to interacting with employers, making the transition from training to the job search a little less daunting. Between weeks four and six of LAVC's TechHire training, students take part in tours of the facilities of local manufacturing companies to see what life on the job is like. Guest speakers and employers are invited to deliver presentations to students throughout the training period so that employers and students get to know one another. Finally, eight to 10 employers attend every TechHire graduation to celebrate the graduates and deepen connections with the program and participants—connections that will pay off in future job placement efforts.

To help students build their résumés, LAVC's Manufacturing Academy allows students to earn community college credit for its CNC training credential, which adds more weight to students' lists of accomplishments as they talk to employers. Additionally, the program has an adult education counselor who works with students one on one to help them map out academic and career-readiness plans. LAVC Workforce Training program staff understand that addressing the employability skill needs of the program's employer partners is an important element of preparing students for employment. The program specifically includes training to help students develop the employability skills that employers look for, including promptness, the ability to manage multiple tasks, and, most important, the ability to work as a member of a team. Additionally, TechHire students have been able to access stipends to help with job-placement transitions. Recently, the Gene Haas Foundation presented more than 15 of LAVC's TechHire graduates with \$500 stipends that they could use to defray the cost of buying tools, inspection instruments, or other equipment they will need for their jobs. In the long run, building that kind of support for TechHire students serves to make solid job matches and keep employers coming back to the program.

Understanding the Industry

To stay abreast with the needs of local employers and ensure that the Manufacturing Academy maintains a solid reputation, LAVC's program manager attends relevant meetings in the community. For example, he currently serves as a liaison to a local chapter of the [National Tooling and Machining Association](#), which helps him keep track of trends in the labor market and share updates about the skills that are in demand with his team. Additionally, the LAVC Workforce Training program hosts a [National Manufacturing Day](#) event every October in collaboration with the local congressional representative. This serves as an opportunity for employers to share career insights and announce openings for jobs requiring expertise in areas such as CNC machining, computer-aided design, and blueprint reading with Manufacturing Academy graduates and current students.

LAVC is always looking for opportunities to develop relationships in sectors related to manufacturing. Recently, the school formed a partnership with Walt Disney Imagineering, which is known for developing the innovative animatronics and other technologies featured in Disney theme parks. The jobs available at Disney Imagineering involve molding, fabrication, machining, operating programmable logic controllers, and developing composites—offering LAVC Manufacturing Academy graduates opportunities to use the skills they’ve developed and learn new ones. Jobs at Disney Imagineering are highly coveted among engineers, but the company also needs machinists to produce its creations. Like many employers, Disney is actively working to diversify its workforce, particularly with respect to gender. Several LAVC graduates have interviewed with Disney, and the Imagineering unit recently hired one of them as an audio-mechatronics trainee.

Finally, relationships are key to meeting the needs of both students and employers, and thereby ensuring that job placement programs are successful. LAVC leaders understand that forging relationships with employers is about more than filling seats at meetings and events with passive attendees. Employer relationships help LAVC faculty, staff, and students maintain a consistent understanding of the industry, and even of the workplace cultures of specific companies, inside and out, so they can be sure that job placements will be beneficial and long lasting.

Understanding both the industry and individual companies helps LAVC better ensure that placements will work out for students. For example, small “mom and pop” businesses may be better for younger TechHire graduates who may benefit from building experience as part of a small team that offers them more flexibility. LAVC TechHire students are able to gain a lot of this insight themselves from the employers who make an effort to visit the program and talk to students about their work and how it might appeal to them. Building strong relationships with employers is equally important to LAVC. When it comes to building these relationships, LAVC Workforce Training staff urge employers to remember that “We are as important as your accountant, supply chain, and banker.” In doing so, employers view LAVC as a prime location for recruiting local talent. Ultimately, LAVC’s approach to placement is industry-, employer-, and student-driven, which has helped the college prioritize all relevant parties’ needs mutually and respectfully.

PROMISING PRACTICE: JOB READINESS, INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS ENSURES QUALITY JOB PLACEMENTS

Grantee: Montgomery College, TechHire Montgomery College

Location: Rockville, Maryland

Target Population(s): Individuals with limited English proficiency

TechHire Montgomery College (TechHire MC), hosted at Montgomery College in Maryland, focuses on training participants for gainful employment in IT support, services, and networking roles through certifications like CompTIA A+. For TechHire MC, quality job-placement efforts involve robust student support services to ensure that both the employer and the participant are satisfied. An emphasis on job readiness is woven into every aspect of the training, from orientation through the conclusions of the coursework. Specifically, TechHire MC has benefited

from a job-placement approach that focuses on mentors and job developers who prepare participants in key elements of job readiness and work with employer partners to help participants better understand the IT field and its unique job landscape.

Preparing Participants for the Job-Search Process

TechHire MC understands that the IT industry is a highly competitive field, and that TechHire jobseekers must therefore understand the job interview process and be prepared to communicate with potential employers effectively. The training program includes classes, workshops, and one-on-one coaching to help guide participants through the job-search process to prepare them for interactions with future employers. Additionally, TechHire MC's on-site job developers conduct interview prep exercises to ensure that participants are ready for both phone and in-person interviews. They hold mock interviews several times during the course of the program so that participants receive ongoing feedback and have an opportunity to improve over time. When participants land face-to-face interviews with potential employers, job developers work with them one on one to prepare them for their live interviews.

TechHire MC coursework emphasizes that securing a position in IT requires individual effort, and instructors tell participants that they must play an active role in the job-search process. For example, participants are trained to understand how to comport themselves when they meet with employers who take part in a TechHire MC job fair. This approach has proved to be successful because the IT hiring managers and organizations that attend are often looking to recruit individuals who convey an air of professionalism, exhibit key employability skills, and appear to be ready to hit the ground running.

Working with Industry Professionals to Build Awareness and Interest

In order to enhance student supports, TechHire MC takes advantage of its relationships with IT employers and recruits volunteer mentors from companies like IBM, Oracle, CACI, Westat, and Amazon to work directly with their participants. The mentors help teach participants about résumé development, interview skills, and other aspects of the IT job search. Hearing directly from IT professionals gives participants a keener sense of what employers are looking for and helps them better understand the IT employment landscape. Most notably, engaging with employers gives TechHire MC participants direct access to IT job opportunities. Industry partners who volunteer with TechHire MC have hired many of the students, and thereby tangibly develop talent within the community and expand TechHire's footprint.

TechHire MC also works with small IT businesses that may only have hiring needs on an occasional, and perhaps contractual, basis. They have noted that TechHire MC students have the flexibility, credentials, and overall professionalism they're seeking. Even though those roles may be temporary, students who are prepared to handle them will be more likely to be ready for full-time positions that may open up within one of those companies or elsewhere. TechHire MC notes that many students who participated in its programs have entered the industry that way.

Tapping into the Community to Understand Industry Needs

TechHire MC also works with the [Maryland TechCouncil](#), a technology trade group serving Maryland's advanced technology and biotechnology communities, to stay abreast of the local IT industry's talent needs. TechHire MC also collaborates with their local Workforce Development Board, [WorkSource Montgomery](#). WorkSource Montgomery helps them by promoting their

training opportunities to reach more potential participants, as well as helping them connect to local employers.

TechHire MC harnesses connections with other community organizations to maximize the number of employment and training opportunities it is able to share with participants. For example, the organization recently partnered with IT security training provider Baltimore Cyber Range to give participants access to hands-on training in technology skills that Maryland-based employers are seeking. This partnership has allowed TechHire MC participants to make connections with employers that are looking for local talent to fill entry-level cybersecurity roles. Overall, when it comes to job placements, TechHire MC's goal is to not only help participants find employment today, but also equip them with the skills and expertise they will need to navigate the IT career landscape well into the future.

PROMISING PRACTICE: CUSTOMIZED TRAINING TO PREPARE PARTICIPANTS FOR EMPLOYMENT

Grantee: Westchester Department of Social Services, Hudson Valley TechHire Partnership

Location: White Plains, New York

Target population(s): Youth and young adults ages 17 to 29 who face barriers to training and employment. Target subpopulations include social services recipients, veterans, and people with criminal records.

The Westchester Department of Social Services, a Workforce Development Board based in White Plains, New York, offers several training options, including programs that prepare TechHire participants for IT jobs in CNC machining, manufacturing, and production, as well as courses that lead to Certified Nursing Assistant and Apple Certified Technician credentials. Through customized boot camp training, WDSS's TechHire participants not only earn credentials that have value in the labor market; they also develop soft skills that help make their transitions into the workplace smoother for both themselves and their employers.

WDSS and its partners (consortia liaisons, training providers, career center staff, and representatives of local businesses) have found that conducting thorough assessments of prospective participants prior to enrollment is critical to ensuring that the grantee will be able to successfully connect participants to employment. Assessments allow staff to identify participants' needs and barriers so they can begin addressing them from the start of enrollment. WDSS training also includes a job-readiness component, which is offered as boot camp training at the beginning of each participant's enrollment. The job-readiness boot camp takes place prior to the employment- and skills-focused training, and it helps ensure that participants (who often face barriers to employment, including lack of work history, criminal records, and homelessness) are prepared to enter the workforce.

A five-week program that takes place in a simulated work environment, the boot camp focuses on employability skills, professional dress, team building, interview preparation, and résumé writing. It includes wraparound supports to help participants deal with any barriers they may face. WDSS works with three third-party training providers—STRIVE, READI, and Platform to Employment, which is provided by [The WorkPlace](#), a local Workforce Development Board in Connecticut. Each bootcamp is customized around the specific needs of participants. Boot camps led by [STRIVE](#) are designed for recipients of social services who have limited job

experience. The [Platform to Employment](#) boot camps are for young people ages 17 to 29. The READI program focuses on employability skill development, and its material can be presented on its own or incorporated into the STRIVE or Platform to Employment courses. WDSS has found that participating in boot camps sets participants up for success and equips them with the skills they need to get and keep a job. Moreover, since the boot camps are cohort-based, participants develop camaraderie in the classroom, and then they form relationships and propel each other forward.

Before the boot camp ends, WDSS holds a job fair that often leads to employment for many participants. The grantee has strong relationships with several employers that are looking to fill their employment pipelines with the help of programs like those offered by WDSS. Some participants who complete the boot camps enter further occupational training programs offered through WDSS, such as certified production technical training, CNC machining training, manufacturing and production training, and Certified Nursing Assistant training.

Participants in WDSS TechHire programs are matched with career coaches who work with them one on one to help them identify appropriate employment opportunities. If participants are able to set up job interviews, their coaches work with them to ensure that they are prepared and ready to land the position. WDSS provides ongoing coaching throughout the job-placement process. Additionally, the organization's success with job placement comes from strong management at the center of its network of partnerships. A focus on quality and outcomes among all subgrantees is critical to ensuring that participants not only complete their training, but also find and retain jobs.

CONCLUSION

Whether they're offering customized boot camp training, providing robust student supports, or developing in-depth understandings of their target industries, TechHire grantees are exploring a multitude of ways to ensure that the people who participate in their programs are able to access employment opportunities. While the three approaches featured in this brief are varied and detailed in their own ways, each one emphasizes the importance of preparing students for the work world, weaving employer participation into training programs, and developing courses designed to meet employers' needs through the training period and beyond.

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