

Research and Evaluation Notes

March 2023



To support the public workforce system's research and evaluation efforts, these notes share:

- Select research and evaluation initiatives, reports, and resources relevant to the nation's workforce development system, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, and select populations; and
- Technical assistance (TA) efforts to support positive customer and program outcomes through research, evaluation, and evidence-based program design.

Highlights from this issue:

- Two briefs focused on regional workforce partnerships designed to prepare workers for middle- to high-skilled industries and occupations.
- A report that explores the existence and complexities of skills gaps.
- An employer engagement framework from a brief that illustrates the value of partnerships between employers and workforce programs.

SELECT READING

Evaluation of the America's Promise Job-Driven Training Grants

Twenty-three grantee sites across 28 states utilized \$111 million in America's Promise grant funds to create and expand regional workforce partnerships to prepare workers for careers in middle- to high-skilled industries and occupations. The [Implementation of America's Promise Job-Driven Training Grants](#) report examines the approaches America's Promise grantees used to establish regional partnerships and provide services to unemployed and underemployed individuals, as well as incumbent workers. Two issue briefs also focus on grantees' experience with employer engagement and perspectives.

The [Employer Engagement Strategies in Regional Partnerships](#) brief offers valuable insight on employer engagement across partnerships drawn from interviews and survey data. Grantees reported an average of 21 employer partners, with 58 percent of employer partners newly established as part of the grant. Across all 23 partnerships, grantees noted that nearly half of employer partners participated in advisory boards. Employers advised on program strategies and goals, the occupational focus of training programs, and the design of training curricula.

The [Employer Perspectives on Regional Workforce Partnerships](#) brief draws on 31 interviews with employer representatives. Key findings describe the reasons employers participate and the multiple roles played in regional partnerships, perceptions of the partnerships as successfully supporting high-quality training, improved employee retention, industry growth and collaboration, and a stronger and more diverse pipeline of skilled workers; the need for additional training funds, further tailoring of training to industry needs, and childcare and transportation supports for participants; and employers' intention to continue collaboration to advance workforce development in their regions beyond the grant.

EVIDENCE IN ACTION

A Report on Measuring Skills Gaps and Misalignments

In response to congressional requests for the Congressional Research Service (CRS) to identify, synthesize, and explain the core components of the skills gap discourse and explore and clarify evidence on the existence of skills gaps, the CRS issued the [Skills Gaps: A Review of Underlying Concepts and Evidence](#) report. The authors tackle the difficulties with the lack of skills measures and provide helpful background information for future inquiries into skills gaps. "The report presents a limited review of indicators that are commonly cited as evidence of the existence of skill misalignments. These broad indicators examine job openings and hires, employer wage responses to unfilled jobs, educational credentials possessed in relation to those required, and the adequacy of measurable foundational skills among current and future workers."

SPOTLIGHT

New Events:

- [Participatory Evaluation in Workforce Development Practice](#) webinar offers technical assistance on participatory research methodologies for state and local workforce development programs; recorded March 1, 2023.
- A series of equity webinars commences on March 28, 2023, with the first one focusing on work-based learning opportunities for Native American students. Future webinars will address [dual enrollment](#), [Second Chance Pell](#), [digital literacy](#), and [career pathways](#).

It also notes that these indicators do not clearly suggest that widespread misalignments exist. This report is a good read for state and local workforce agencies interested in understanding the evidence on the existence of skill gaps and potential solutions to address complex and multi-faceted skills needs in their regions.

RESEARCH IN LIVING COLOR

A Visual Framework for Deepening Employer Engagement

The [What the Evidence Says About Employer Engagement](#) brief includes an insightful framework adapted from the Urban Institute's [The Goals and Dimensions of Employer Engagement in Workforce Development Programs](#). Changes in the framework enhance the organizational structure, employer engagement goals, workforce program goals, and employer services provided. The framework may also inform research and evaluation of such partnerships.



Patterson, M. & Carson, M. [What the Evidence Says About Employer Engagement](#), Safal Partners, 2021.

Share research and evaluation questions, suggestions, and resource needs with the Employment and Training Administration's Office of Policy Development and Research at workforcepractices@dol.gov. Archived [Research and Evaluation Notes](#) are available at the [Evaluation and Research Hub](#) in WorkforceGPS.

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