



Scaling Apprenticeship

Emerging Practice Spotlight



H-1B Scaling Apprenticeship
Grantee (Healthcare
Industry)

You're Hired! Grant



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A Novel Approach to Meet Employers' Needs

Introduction

Dallas College strives to understand and meet the needs of healthcare employers, the Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council (DFWHC) Foundation, and other sector partners through workforce and learning solutions. When preparing to write the **You're Hired!** proposal for the H-1B Scaling Apprenticeship through Sector-Based Strategies (Scaling Apprenticeship) grant, Dallas College surveyed employers and associations to identify workforce needs and the best approach to address their issues. Once Dallas College won the award, they collaborated with employers and created customized solutions that exceeded employers' expectations.



DALLAS-FORT WORTH
HOSPITAL COUNCIL

Dallas College worked closely with DFWHC, who communicated the workforce challenges and strengths in healthcare, which helped define the standards for quality apprenticeship training programs across the region. DFWHC was an integral partner in developing apprenticeship programs. Through these discussions with hospitals and healthcare associations, Dallas College helped employers identify hard-to-fill positions, visualize a new pathway to sustainable wages for workers, and improve employee job retention. Employers and workers can achieve these successes through customized and flexible apprenticeship solutions, such as Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) or other apprenticeship programs.

Through the Scaling Apprenticeship grant, Dallas College supports the regional and national healthcare employment community by using RAPs and unregistered apprenticeships, depending upon the needs of the employers. There are benefits to having access to both approaches. Both are highly portable and provide high-quality educational and on-the-job learning components along with the structure, skill sets, and competencies that the sector demands.

In 2021, the team identified an employer who wanted to create an unregistered apprenticeship program for hospital culinary chefs. The menu and nutritional requirements are different for chefs in hospital settings compared with restaurants. The team engaged hospital human resource professionals and other stakeholders to discuss the clinical and educational components and started developing a program that would

"Dallas College fosters career pathways and careers that provide sustainable wages for families; it is not just a job, but a career," says Erin Salamon, Senior Executive Chef at Medical City Healthcare, who discussed ways to increase employee satisfaction and retention with the Dallas Team.

provide maximum flexibility for both participants and employers, including the scalability to any number of participants or locations. Healthcare employers wanted to pilot a new training approach before embarking on a full-fledged RAP.

Evolution

The greater Dallas community, like many communities across the nation, is experiencing a shortage of healthcare workers and professionals. As the team distinguished and assessed the challenges, they realized that traditional ways of recruiting and hiring were not effective. The Dallas College team identified employment gaps and explored solutions. They found that job seekers did not have the skill sets that the employers required. After extensive discussions with industry associations and experts, they developed an innovative approach that ultimately helped reduce the healthcare shortages in the workforce.

Because of the shortage of qualified workers, Dallas College offered apprenticeship programs as a new solution to find job seekers who fit the profile of what employers were looking for, even if they did not have all the training and required skills. This new hiring practice for the healthcare sector turned out to be a key element that addressed workforce shortages and employee retention in their region.

With this new practice, employers hired apprentices who received classroom training up front to learn the roles and responsibilities of the job. It was difficult to gain buy-in from employers at first, but they recognized that the skills gaps in their market would not change without a novel approach. Dallas College guided the employers through the benefits of apprenticeship programs and how they can address their needs. This approach expanded the job pool and prepared workers for many positions, including entry-level positions such as patient care technicians and certified nursing assistants. Employers needed to invest in future workers through “earn and learn” apprenticeship opportunities. Supportive services for workers were addressed during the training period, such as transportation

and/or childcare assistance, with minimal disruption once working on-site. Additionally, the apprentices participated in an orientation on Day 1 and completed all apprenticeship paperwork (including the U.S. Department of Labor’s required Participant Individual Record Layout [PIRL] elements) at one time.

The healthcare sector was a perfect choice for Dallas for the Scaling Apprenticeship grant due to the major healthcare needs that were catalyzed by the pandemic. The economy, partnerships, and infrastructure in the Dallas-Fort Worth area were well-positioned for the project’s success. The pandemic accelerated the Dallas College initiative and created new opportunities to explore, such as virtual classrooms and a respiratory technician apprentice occupation. Along with the pandemic, the college was in the middle

of a reorganization of the Dallas College system. This transition further helped the Dallas College team think outside of the box and introduce new processes. “When you think about apprenticeships, healthcare does not come to mind initially. However, the framework is all there. The nursing residency was what we really pushed; it was a low-hanging fruit,” said Sally Williams, the Workforce Center Director at Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council. Apprenticeship programs helped to create consistency and standards across the different hospitals.

Today, Dallas College is recognized as a subject matter expert in apprenticeship programs by other agencies in Texas. Agencies are coming to them for help and ideas (e.g., Texas Workforce Commission, county commissioners, the state). They have seen what Dallas College has accomplished with the Scaling Apprenticeship grant and want to establish similar models and approaches.

Charlotte Morris, Program Specialist at Medical City Healthcare, talked about her experience in developing and assessing curricula and competencies: *“I know people on both sides [clinical and educational], which helped me bridge [solutions] between both groups.”*

Dallas College sold this model as the **gold standard of apprenticeship**. *“You need a pipeline, and here’s how we do it,”* says George Laffoon, Executive Director of Solutions Development at Dallas College. *“The old way of hiring and training was not working, so why keep doing things with the old system? Hiring up-front would work to address the skills gap in the current workforce.”*

Essential Elements of the New Approach

Dallas College identified essential elements that have advanced their successful implementation of the **You're Hired!** grant and beyond.

1. Understand the community and industry needs
 - a. Create win-win solutions to challenges and hurdles faced by employers, job seekers, and apprentices
 - b. Develop and maintain strong relationships in the community to support the program
2. Set lofty goals that reach beyond the grant outcomes
3. Staff the program with a strong, collaborative team and defined roles
4. Establish a comprehensive infrastructure to guide and document the work

Approach

Understanding the Community and Industry Needs

Dallas College is a liaison between industry, academia, and the community. They interpret the needs and perspectives of all sides and bring instructors to the table to hear their desires and concerns. They bring together stakeholders and build alliances for a united voice. The team recognizes that setting up apprenticeship programs takes time and resources. For this reason, Dallas College helps employers complete the paperwork whenever possible. They also upload monthly on-the-job learning information, competencies, etc. Dallas College now requires partners and employers to upload information quarterly (instead of monthly) to reduce the burden. Also, they created a self-reporting progress report option for apprentices. This information is then validated by the team.

"The grant changed how Dallas College thinks about apprenticeships and their importance and impact on the workforce and the communities," says Dr. Pyeper Wilkins from Dallas College. This change in thinking was partly due to the challenges employers have reported in finding and hiring skilled workers, but also due to long-term planning for the college system. The workforce shortages have made it challenging to match students and job seekers to employers, and there is more of a need for career-based preparation. Dallas College and the other institutions will not stop advancing apprenticeship programs once the Scaling Apprenticeship grant expires; in fact, the vision for national strategy and partnerships at Dallas College would not have been possible without this grant funding.

Apprentices often use apprenticeship programs as a springboard to advance their careers. For example, a worker may start as a patient care technician, a hard-to-fill entry-level position. This program then creates a bridge for employers to screen for registered nursing candidates. The patient care technician position fills an immediate need, but it also creates a talent pool for an employer's succession planning along a career pathway.

Set Lofty Goals That Reach Beyond the Grant Outcomes

The previous Chancellor and Vice Chancellor at Dallas College set the stage for innovative programming and planning to address community needs and advance apprenticeships. Mr. George Laffoon, Executive Director of Solutions Development, and Dr. Pyeper Wilkins, Vice Chancellor of Workforce and Advancement, currently provide leadership and direction for the **You're Hired!** grant at Dallas College. They established a lofty goal of 50,000 apprentices by 2030 for the entire college. By the end of March 2023, this program added 4,500 apprentices toward the college's goal.

Staff the Program with a Strong, Collaborative Team and Defined Roles

Institutional support and staff capacity are valued as a true investment and integral to this grant's success. College leadership is informed and engaged in the program, which has also contributed to its success. The leadership team allows for flexibility to do what is needed to be successful, including developing and maintaining partner and employer relationships within the community. The college has expanded its network to select partners that provide support services and elements of the program that Dallas College does not offer. "We don't want to just help

companies build apprenticeships; we want to do it as a college, too. ... Human resource issues are tricky for any big company, including our own,” stated George Laffoon.

Each member of the project team has been placed in key roles that focus on distinct aspects of the work, and this team has been integral to the success of the **You're Hired!** program and their goal to advance apprenticeships throughout the state.

Establish a Comprehensive Infrastructure to Guide and Document the Work

The team has worked extensively with project partners and developed a sustainable infrastructure to support the work moving forward. The 50,000-apprentice goal would not be possible without the comprehensive infrastructure the team has developed. For example, Dallas College's unregistered apprenticeships are validated and recognized by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and its ANSI National Accreditation Board and culminate in industry-recognized and validated certifications that are highly portable and stackable. “Dallas College's work in this area has provided employers with additional training options in the healthcare space, options that can easily convert to RAP. The ANSI recognition is just the cherry on top,” says Cynthia Brink, a Relationship Management Project Lead at Dallas College. Having the flexibility to design programs that work for employers, as well as the processes and procedures in place to develop programs efficiently and effectively, will allow stakeholders to recognize the value Scaling Apprenticeship grantees bring to the table.

Key Project Roles:

- Director of Experiential Learning
 - Develops pipelines of skilled workforce candidates
- Project and Data Managers
 - Prepares, tracks, and ensures grant progress, milestones, reports, and compliance
 - Designs and maintains tracking tools
- Senior Director of National Strategy Partnerships
 - Builds visibility and relationships to scale apprenticeships nationwide
- Employer Relationship Managers and Apprentice Navigators
 - Provides one point of contact and support for employers and apprentices
- Administrative Support and Logistics Team
 - Manages all student, course, and apprentice transactions throughout the project
- Finance and Contract Manager
 - Oversees successful budget and grant outcome practices
 - Liaises with U.S. Department of Labor representative
- Executive Leadership
 - Provides overall strategic direction for current and future grant goals

Tips and Strategies

- Document and develop processes that are easy to maintain, track, and complete by all stakeholders.
- Identify the obstacles and brainstorm out-of-the-box solutions to overcome the challenge over the long-term. Allow the team to develop innovative solutions.
- Provide holistic support for students, job seekers, and incumbent workers that will lead to high retention rates. Dallas College has reported an 86% retention rate for employers. Apprentices will not stay with the program if they do not have a support system to stay in training.
- Present apprenticeship programs in a different light. Remove old stigmas about unions, paperwork, and resistance to apprenticeships in your state. Show employers that the training they provide employees may already be comparable to an apprenticeship program.
- Find strong partners. Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council Foundation was a large part of Dallas College's *secret sauce*. A consortium brings competitors and partners together for a common purpose, and the community college system can help facilitate that effort.

To learn more about Dallas College's **You're Hired!** healthcare program or other apprenticeship programs, please contact Patricia Corley, Project Lead for Apprenticeship Programs, at patricia.corley@dallascollege.edu or Solutions Development at solutionsdevelopment@dcccd.edu.

Find more information about the program, visit the **You're Hired!** website.