



Expert Dialog

Measuring Employer Program Performance

Introduction

Measuring and disseminating employer-related performance outcomes are vital to the operation and sustainability apprenticeship programs. This expert dialog focuses on how to work with employers to collect apprenticeship outcomes data for the purpose of adjusting implementation methods and measuring program success.

While some of the data items you are encouraged to have employers collect are related to your U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) performance outcomes, this dialog may help you think about different ways to utilize employer data to inform implementation and engage employers. In a previous discussion, our experts, Dina Igoe and Paul Champion, emphasized the importance of measuring employer-related program outcomes for validating and improving the apprenticeship experience. Today, we delve into more details about how employers measure program performance.

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Meet the Experts

Dina Igoe

Dina Igoe is the Associate Director of Business Development for NIMS. Dina is also deeply involved in the development and execution of four large-scale NIMS' USDOL Scaling Apprenticeship Grants. She has worked in the field of manufacturing and logistics credentialing for several years and has extensive grant writing and project management experience. She provides apprenticeship, credentialing, structured job training, and employer engagement TA to large and small businesses and other stakeholders.

Paul Champion

Paul has worked in apprenticeships for the past 30 years and is an advocate for the global "Apprenticeship and Skills Revolution." He is focused on supporting employers, workforce agencies, States, and the Federal Government to develop and implement world class Registered Apprenticeships. Paul has advised several multi-national corporations and overseas governments on global workforce development issues and written many publications and blogs on apprenticeships. Outside of being CEO of TranZed Apprenticeships, he is Executive Director of Apprenticeships at Woz Enterprises and is a subject matter expert for various consulting organizations.

Grantees collect data for many reasons. Data collected by SA grantees is used to track their own success, to show success to their partners, including employer partners, and of course to report to funders such as USDOL. This expert dialog focuses on identifying, collecting, and analyzing employer outcomes data to inform program implementation adjustments, measure apprenticeship program success, and to engage employer partners through data informed dialogs.

While grantees are already collecting data for USDOL performance outcomes activities, this dialog is designed to help them see how they can use those data elements they are already collecting, in addition to finding other data elements that may be helpful to inform employers of grant program performance, the employer role in that performance, and how employers can improve their apprenticeship interactions for the betterment of their businesses.

Identifying and Measuring Employer Program Outcomes

Performance is interpreted in many ways. What outcomes will employers find important to measure?

Paul's Key Data Metrics:

1. Types of apprenticeship programs offered
2. Number of people participating in your programs
3. Types of people participating in and completing your programs
4. Effectiveness of program in helping completers get placed in jobs
5. Participant outcome achievement
6. Retention rate
7. Fund utilization

Paul (PC): First you must understand the purpose of collecting the data. Next, it is important to collect information on what is being done with the data. Many times, the belief is that data is collected because it has to be. Then folks do not know what to do with it. In my experience, having delivered apprenticeships in the UK and Europe, I found data is really important because you are driven and inspected on that data. A few things that are important to collect are data on diversity in offerings: collect information on the makeup of your programs and what kinds of people you are attracting to the program. Next, are you doing enough at the front end to attract enough people to the program, and are your systems and methodologies influencing those that get taken from that stage into real jobs?

Obviously, success is another point. You want to know if people entering your program are successful at achieving the outcomes of that program. In Europe, they measure timely success. If somebody is entering the program on a certain date, and the program is a year, the program collects data on if the participant achieves the expected outcomes during that period of time. That is a very crucial measurement. Retention is another important data point. Are you keeping the people in the program? Another area is funding, how is the money being used? Is the money being used as stated in the signed agreement?

We must realize that data, if it is used in the right way, is an important tool that can be used to track trends over time. Data can outline success and challenges. Data collection is not just about the collection process, it is about why you're collecting data, what you do with it, and how you use it. Though these areas of data collection are very similar to data grantees already collect, grantees can use the data to inform interactions with employers and apprenticeship program delivery.

“Data collection is not just about the collection process; it’s about why you’re collecting data, what you do with it, and how you use it.”

Dina (DI): I think it is what you do with the data, especially in the Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Program (IRAP) environment, where the parameters and the constraints of the program are not as rigid as the registered model. In more flexible programs, the data component and how you use it becomes even more important because it also includes the competency component. For credentialing bodies, especially, it comes down to understanding and capturing the main benefits to the employers. You want to measure the effectiveness of program performance, the theory of your program, and your program methodology. Data used to evaluate instructional outcomes to student performance should give a detailed summary of programs, but it is not just about the apprentice, it is also about instructor performance.

Another big focus is training the trainers. Trainers are going to stay and train more people whether the apprentices move on or not. It is essential to have data on who apprentices receive training from and how they are performing, having received that training. That data can be used to make conclusions about which trainer's practices are most effective. The program can then train those trainers in using those effective practices so that apprentices can benefit from them moving forward.

Another data point focus is student and employee access to true job requirements. This aligns with sharing true performance needs of employers. This ensures everyone understands what the requirements are and what the needs are. Then, stakeholders all have a say in the way that data is collected and shared. Establish a range of performance-measuring aids to clarify and identify gaps in performance and then benchmark against other populations to assess how they are performing.

Dina's Key Data Metrics:

1. Effectiveness of program performance
 - Program theory
 - Program methodology
2. Instructor performance
 - Record of apprentices trained by instructors
 - Strategies used by effective instructors
3. Apprentice performance
 - Apprentice ability to perform job requirements

PC: Europe makes wide use of satisfaction surveys. There is a government inspection body that inspects training providers. The surveys go to employers, the apprentice, and the parents. They test the satisfaction data and observe the trends over time. It sets a standard of considering what needs to be done to provide high-quality training and adjusting training over time, if needed. Collecting and analyzing [data] helps programs figure out if they are doing what the employer wants and if apprentices have been engaged in the way that they want.

Deciding on What Data to Collect

How do programs decide which data to collect and which outcomes to measure?

DI: I think the best course of action is to ensure you are collecting data and disseminating it to those who can use it and that it makes sense for the stakeholders involved.

PC: The best course of action is to ask, "Does the data being collected have an impact on your program or provide information that can have an impact on your program?" Build good relationships with the funding agency, the employers, the apprentices, and your internal staff. If you do this, you will get a good sense of what data is not having any impact on your

program. To a certain degree, the benefit of the data that you are collecting dictates what to collect and what not to collect.

DI: You have got to remember that every company is different. They have different needs, areas, and localities, such as urban versus suburban areas. Each will have different things that they want to assess. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to data collection. Customize your data collection to the needs of the employer. When deciding on the data to collect, first figure out what information would be helpful to the employer and the operation of the apprenticeship program.

“There is no one-size-fits-all approach to data collection. Customize your data collection to the needs of the employer.”

PC: I think sometimes if you start too much with the end in mind, you will miss an opportunity to identify things that can affect your program and adjust accordingly. It is important to look at the internal formative data generated during program delivery. At times, an end focus approach does not allow a subject narrowed assessment and promotes a skewed data outcome.

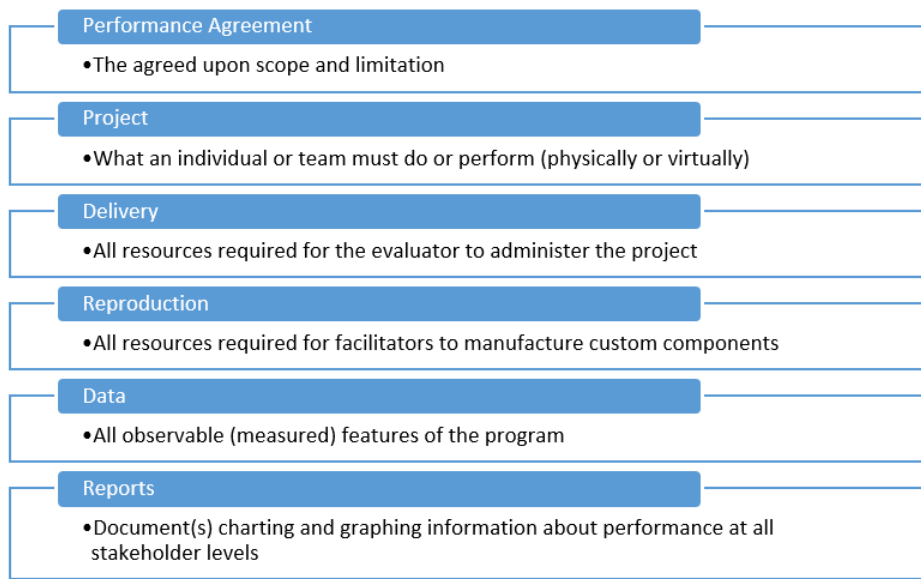
DI: I think the way to do that well is that you have got to be engaged through the entire process, see the trends, evaluate how people are reacting, gauge performance, and establish check points throughout the process. So that we do not look back four years later and cannot figure out what happened.

Data Measurement Methodologies and Tools

What are some of the best methodologies that you have seen or used to measure performance on apprenticeship grants?

DI: We use the Smart Performance Measurement (PM) System. This system is a collection of resources and digital tools that identify key metrics required for true validation of program performance. The key features in the system include components that assist users with performance agreements, project development, delivery, reproduction, data, and reporting. There are some key benefits to using the Smart Measurement System. Employers get the opportunity to share their true performance needs. Because the system collects and stores data across projects and programs, stakeholders have a wide range of performance measurement data from past and current projects they can use to clearly identify gaps and benchmark against other participants.

Smart Performance Measurement Components



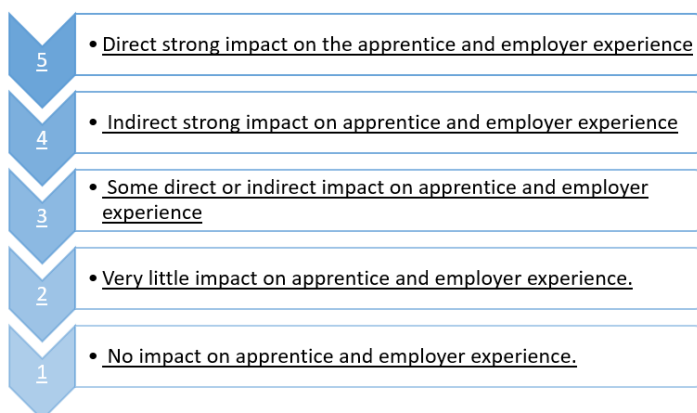
Can you give an example of how you would use the Smart Performance Measurement components?

DI: Here's an example of how the performance agreement, project, delivery, and then reproduction are approached. An apprentice on the plant floor must simulate a piece or part—that's the project. The task includes all work instructions, information, material, and any digital data provided to the performer. The apprentice uses the reproduction documentation and instructions to create the components for project delivery. At the project delivery phase, the apprentice demonstrates they can perform the required action and their performance is validated and measured.

What about you, Paul? What are some helpful tools you have used?

PC: A useful tool in the UK is the Learner Impact and Employer Impact Factoring within a development plan (see Appendix # for an example development plan with factoring). This

Learner Impact Factors



factoring is a rating system that focuses on continuous improvement and self-assessment. When completing the tool, practitioners assign factors to objectives on a scale of one to five. After the rating factors have been assigned, users color code the objectives based on level of impact. The use of this rating system is vital in the planning process and also ensures clear focus, presentation, and assessment during each stage of

apprenticeship development. Using this factoring system helps all parties focus on what matters most, ultimately helping to improve the quality of outcomes and service provided to employers and apprentices.

Continuous Improvement and Implementing Best Practices

When people talk about continuous improvement, what does that mean?

PC: Self-assessment and continuous improvement must be used if programs are receiving federal funding. Programs are required to continually look at parameters around recruitment, retention, the quality of teaching and learning, and the physical buildings. Also included in this are the qualifications of your staff to lead the apprenticeship. From this, a quality improvement plan is created and the process begins again.

Is this driven externally by the funders, the people who are providing the resources, or should it be driven internally?

PC: I think programs have got to drive this process internally. I mean, most people out there might not have a formalized, ongoing quality-improvement system.

Can you talk about the best ways to turn small successes into programmatic best practices? How do you scale a good thing?

PC: To identify best practices, you have to constantly examine what things worked and what things didn't work. After you identify those things, you have to do the work of figuring out why it worked, or why it didn't work. We have to look at programs that have been successful and figure out what they did, and then put a plan into place to roll out those things that have data that prove that they are successful.

Do you have any parting words for the audience about how to identify and measure employer-related outcomes?

PC: Change your relationship with data, change your relationship with the outcomes of data. Change that relationship now before you are compelled to change it in the future.

DI: Don't be afraid of data; data is your friend. Don't be intimidated by the data collection systems and the reporting requested. The information will ultimately help you understand your program and what is needed to make it the best program it can be for apprentices and employers. Set up your data collection structure at the beginning, and then use the information you collect to inform program operation.

APPENDIX 1: Example Development Plan (with Factoring)

Development plans can be used by organizations to help employers and apprentices focus on what matters most. Embedded in development plans are factoring elements designed to collect information from employers and apprentices that will ultimately help apprenticeship providers improve the quality of outcomes and service to both employers and apprentices. Factoring is a rating method that focuses on apprentice continuous improvement and self-assessment. To complete a factoring development plan, practitioners assign a rating to objectives, on a scale of one to five. After rating the objectives, users color code the objectives based on the level of impact. The use of this rating system is vital in the apprenticeship planning process and also assists apprenticeship providers, employers, and apprentices to develop clear program focus and helps with assessment during each stage of apprenticeship development.

- GREEN TEXT – STRENGTH
- AMBER TEXT – OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED
- RED TEXT – WEAKNESS

B-Skill Development Plan

2005-2006

November 05

Reference No.	Issue/Area to be addressed	Actions Required	Milestones	Review dates	Responsibility	Impact / Success Indicators	Target Date	Monitoring Arrangements	Person Responsible	Learner Impact Factor (1-5)
1	Some inconsistencies in completion of ETP reviews on time every time. & Signatures not always dated.	More effective use of tracking database across ETP Programme to ensure consistency	New 'tracking system' to be introduced and forwarded to ETP staff	Dec 05	Loma, Rutherford Faye McKenzie Assessors	Higher number of learner reviews completed on time, and in sufficient detail.	Complete Jan 06	Staff appraisals Monthly quality & performance management info to SMT	SMT Paul Champion Faye McKenzie	5
2	Low profile of WBL across South Tyneside. Construction Centre in partnership with South Tyneside College.	Set up new company to develop learning centre in South Shields	Company Set up Company Branding Building Completed	Complete Complete July 06	Paul Champion Paul Wileman Julie McKenzie	High quality work based learning centre with all of the main providers being part of the company. And purpose built construction centre with very clear and progressive routes to learning.	Sept 06	Monthly consortium Board meetings Meetings with South Tyneside College.	Paul Champion	5 5
3	Learners & employers are not consistently challenged with equality and diversity issues and targets.	Ensure that all employers/learners are given guidance around the E&D issue. Work with employers /learners who may need some assistance in this area using various resources and services that are available to us.	Every learner to complete 'E&D what's that then' across all programmes. Introduce equality and diversity toolkit to employers. Develop links with equality North East. Introduce E&D Forum	Dec 05 Jan 06 Jan 06 Jan 06	C Watters J Jackson P Champion Assessors C Watters P Young P Young	Clear understanding and re-enforcement of the EDIM targets and principles of E&D that B-Skill works to.	Feb 06	SMT agenda item E&D Forum	Paul Champion	5
4	Robust strategic, business and development planning.	Bi-Monthly evaluation of development plan based on statistical information derived via our MIS and feedback from staff, learners and stakeholders.	Issue development plans Amend when necessary	Bi-Monthly	SMT	Current relevant and widely disseminated strategic and development plans.	Bi-Monthly	Team meetings Staff training SMT	SMT	4
5	Sub- contract monitoring and audit processes are strong and embedded.	Continue to develop our systems to improve what we deliver across all our programmes, while taking good practice and benchmarks from other providers and the ALI websites. Implement actions from relevant funding documents and training received.	Set up Q schedule ▪ Qbs of review & training ▪ Surveys ▪ Links to perf rev. ▪ Data sets ▪ Structured learner and staff interviews ▪ Sub contractor training	Dec 05	C Watters	Robust quality and performance monitoring systems of sub contractors	April 06	SMT Audit reports LSC performance review ALI inspection results	P Champion	5

