

NGA Center for
BEST PRACTICES

Collaborative
ECONOMICS

Corporation for a
SKILLED WORKFORCE

promising practices abstracts

placement & retention

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introduction

This is the next installment of an ongoing series of promising practices abstracts prepared by the Technical Assistance Partnership (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, and Collaborative Economics Inc.) for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act High Growth and Emerging Industries (ARRA HGEI) grant programs, housed at the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment & Training Administration (ETA). This collection documents key strategies that ARRA HGEI grantees are pursuing to recruit, prepare, support, and place Americans into jobs in a wide range of occupations in the emerging green economy, the rapidly transforming health services sector, and other high-potential industries such as transportation and logistics. These abstracts have specific strategies that are immediately relevant to other ARRA HGEI grantees (as well as others in the workforce development field) as they address the many challenges of training and placing people in a difficult economic environment.

This specific installment of abstracts focuses particularly on key job placement and retention strategies, and was completed for initial use at the September 13-14, 2011 ARRA Grantees Technical Assistance Institute.

The abstracts are the product of a process that identified and winnowed a list of grantee candidates from four Solicitation for Grant Application (SGA) types—Energy Training Partnerships, Healthcare and Other High Growth Emerging Industries, Pathways out of Poverty, and State Energy Sector Partnerships. Candidates were selected based on their performance to date on job placement and retention, recommendations from the Technical Assistance Partnership and ETA, and interviews with grantee leaders. All the grantees profiled are still implementing and refining their approach; thus, the abstracts represent a current snapshot of selected grantees—those who are experiencing some success with strategies that might also be beneficial to other grantees who are on a similar journey.

The abstracts are purposely described as “promising” practices to reflect that they are strategies that may have experienced some success, but have not yet been the subject of a formal evaluation. They are also the first set of promising practices identified based on

the best information available at the time, and should not be considered a complete accounting of promising practices across more than 150 grantees. As you review these abstracts, please note that ETA has not evaluated or endorsed the specific strategies and activities in this document, and that the applicability of these strategies and activities will vary based on the focus of your individual grant, your timeline and period of performance, and other factors. You should work with your FPO, as necessary, to ensure that specific activities that you are considering pursuing are allowable and appropriate under your SGAs and within the scope of your grant's Statement of Work.

The abstracts typically have multiple promising practices—spanning several “success factors” that have been identified by the ARRA T.A. Partnership. Grantees are encouraged to use the Success Factor self-assessment framework to review their own strategies, and then examine the abstracts (and earlier profiles) for promising practices that could be useful in strengthening or supplementing those strategies. To access this document, please go to your SGA's Community of Practice webpage. The abstracts will continue to be used in the months ahead in the wide range of technical assistance offerings available to ARRA HGEI grantees—from webinars and learning networks to regional meetings and national institutes.

The abstracts are indexed according to SGA type, as well as key success factors. Each of the abstracts is approximately one to two pages in length, and structured to provide an overview rather than a detailed description of key strategies, with explicit reference to specific success factors. Grantees are encouraged to follow up directly with their peers, or participate in learning networks or other technical assistance offerings to explore these strategies in more depth.

As we continue to collect and document promising practices, we are interested in hearing your input on which strategies you find useful and whether you plan to adopt any of the practices described in these abstracts or earlier profiles. We invite you to send us your feedback at green.jobs@dol.gov.

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healthcare & other high growth emerging industries

bera children's home & family services

cincinnati state technical &
community college

governors state university

university behavioral associates

berea children's home and family services

Berea, Ohio

SGA Type - Healthcare and Other High Growth Emerging Industries

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Berea Children's Home and Family Services (BCHFS) has expanded its North East Ohio Nurse Assistant Training Program (NEO-NAT) through a DOL ARRA grant. The NEO-NAT program is a comprehensive training program providing high school completion assistance (GED), life skills and nurse assistant training, job placement and retention services, continuing education and career counseling assistance. The NEO-NAT program offers three training tracks, with the goal for students to gain employment as Nurse Assistants. Participants also take part in intensive job retention services for no less than six months after placement. All students participating in the NEO-NAT program have full access to the array of social and counseling services offered by Berea Children's Home and Family Services.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

The NEO-NAT program prepares graduates for future placement in the healthcare industry by providing content knowledge as well as life skills training. Employers strongly value the quality of the NEO-NAT program: 60 employers have hired multiple graduates, and several employers contact NEO-NAT before job fairs to interview top candidates.

The following strategies are integral to NEO-NAT's job placement and retention success:

- An intensive recruitment process ensures that participants are committed to success;
- Early involvement of job placement and retention staff builds trust among participants and improves outcomes;
- Wrap-around services help clients address barriers and challenges and stay engaged with training and transitioning to work; and
- Strong relationships with employers allow program staff to design and modify the program to meet employers' needs.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

INTENSIVE RECRUITMENT AND WRAP-AROUND SERVICES BOOST PARTICIPANT SUCCESS

Continuum of Participant Support, Industry Recognized Credentials & Basic Education and Career Readiness

The Northeast Ohio Nurse Assistant Training (NEO-NAT) program trains participants to work in the healthcare field. Most program graduates work as a home health aide or a State Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA) in a hospital, in home healthcare, or in a nursing home. The NEO-NAT program is the entry point into the healthcare field for most program participants, and NEO-NAT staff provide a broad range of services to support participants on their career path and in other areas of life. Staff members are committed to the success of clients and the overall program, and they make investments of time and effort to achieve this success.

As part of its effort to support students, the NEO-NAT program has developed an intensive recruitment and pre-screening process, initiating a dialogue with participants from the outset about the program expectations and the realities of working as a nurse assistant in the healthcare field. The goal is to ensure that participants who are selected are committed to the program and are strong candidates for future job placement in the healthcare field. The recruitment processes requires candidates to write a letter of intent about why they should be selected for the program, provide a character reference letter and also involves a final interview before a candidate is accepted. Candidates must also complete BCII background checks, physical tests, and provide character reference letters.

The main NEO-NAT training track offers five weeks of classes. The first two weeks provide all participants with basic life skills and job readiness training including team building, conflict resolution, anger and stress management, caring for the caregiver, budgeting, nutrition, and more. The remaining three weeks provide specific training in working as a Nurse Assistant. The NEO-NAT model surpasses the state minimum of 75 hours for Nurse Assistant Training programs. Throughout the entire program, program staff are available and engaged in supporting participants as they work toward their goals of securing employment. Job placement and retention staff are involved at the beginning of the program, during life skills, conducting classes on resume building, interviewing, personal skill identification and development, among others, illustrating how the NEO-NAT program is designed around the central concept of job placement. Some participants face transportation challenges to attend training classes, and program staff provide assistance through transportation vouchers, bus passes and gas cards to help participants overcome these challenges and complete the training program.

STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS IMPROVE PROGRAM DESIGN

Employer Engagement- Existing Employer Groups, Contextualized and Work-based Learning Strategies & Post Placement Services

Berea Children's Home and the NEO-NAT program have developed strong relationships with local employers, and these relationships have played a critical role in refining and strengthening the program's components and leading to graduates' success in job placement. NEO-NAT has regularly convened an employer roundtable session to discuss strengths and areas for improvement within the program, and all employers complete satisfaction surveys. This feedback from employers is critical and Berea Children's Home incorporates this information into the program design. For example, the design of the NEO-NAT program replicates the work environment graduates will experience on the job: during the five weeks of classroom training, classes meet from 9:00am to 4:00pm, with rules governing tardiness, break times, behavior, and more. During the three days of clinical experience training in a nursing home facility, the class hours change to 7:00am to 3:30pm, reflecting a typical shift on a nursing floor. This exposure to a work-like environment prepares program participants for the work world, and increases the likelihood of participant placement and retention in healthcare jobs. Further, the participant recruitment process was redesigned as a more intensive process in response to employer feedback. If questions arise during the recruitment process about an applicant's background (e.g. no work experience, but employers require at least six months of work experience), NEO-NAT program staff will contact employers to discuss the situation and determine whether a candidate would still be a strong recruit.

Employers feel strongly about the quality of the program and have found that NEO-NAT program graduates possess the skills and positive attitude towards work that makes them valuable employees. Employers also value their relationships with NEO-NAT program staff: if issues emerge with program graduates, employers feel comfortable contacting program staff to work through challenges rather than moving to terminate the employee immediately.

More than 100 employers in two counties have hired NEO-NAT graduates, and 60 of these have hired multiple graduates. Several employers contact NEO-NAT prior to job fairs held at graduation to identify the top candidates from that cohort and arrange for interviews at the job fair.

governors state university

University Park, Illinois

SGA Type - Healthcare and Other High Growth Emerging Industries

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Through the Healthcare and Other High Growth Emerging Industries grant, Governors State University (GSU) has designed and implemented a regional strategy to train participants for careers in high demand healthcare sectors. Students receive basic education and vocational training to prepare them for healthcare occupations as CNAs (Certified Nursing Assistants), EKG (Electrocardiogram) technicians and phlebotomists. Assessment, supportive and job placement services are also available to ensure the individual's training success. Participants served through the project are placed into various healthcare settings such as outpatient clinics, physicians' offices, nursing homes and extended care facilities.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

Key contributors to Governors State University's high placement rates include:

- Creating a position for a job developer specialist who exclusively focuses on developing and maintaining employer relations;
- Adapting training and responding quickly to the volatility of the healthcare market;
- A dynamic training program producing well-rounded individuals properly prepared to enter the healthcare profession – job readiness courses, clinical training, support services, boot camp, job fair;
- Clinical training apprenticeship programs transitioning students directly to employment; and
- Room for future improvement: incumbent worker training agreement with employers and nursing mentoring program.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

FOLLOWING THE JOB DEVELOPER'S LEAD – FORMING EMPLOYER RELATIONS

Employer Engagement- Individual Firms & Continuum of Participant Support

An integral component of GSU's placement success is the comprehensive role of the job developer specialist. In addition to seeking out home health agencies, extended care and alternative care centers, the job developer specialist attends community networking events such as the Southland Chamber of Commerce meetings, community service events and job fairs to promote GSU's training program and formulate employer relations. At these events, she schedules face-to-face meetings with employers where she can provide further details on GSU's program and discuss employer's individual needs. After learning more about the benefits of the program (improving individuals' soft skills and providing clinical training), employers notify GSU of their open positions and the job developer specialist matches trainees' skill sets to those desired by the employer. In some instances employers will come to GSU and interview trainees onsite for their open positions. Although grassroots employer engagement takes a great deal of leg work, GSU has had instant success with this method of employer engagement in placing trainees into employment. After hiring their trainees, GSU asks employers if they are satisfied with the caliber of participants and how they can vary their program to better meet their needs. By devising a position exclusively focused on developing and maintaining relationships with employers, GSU has been able to steadily increase their placement rates.

Adapting to the changing demand for healthcare professionals has increased GSU's job placement rates and their resilience to external factors and varying conditions. Despite the growing demand for healthcare workers, the market is underfunded. Just last month, twenty people GSU placed into healthcare positions in March were laid off due in part to delays in Medicaid funding from the state. Although the healthcare market is volatile, with the help of their job developer specialist

and employer relations, GSU was able to find alternative jobs for these dislocated workers. Additionally, with backgrounds in healthcare and social services, GSU staff have learned to stay ahead of the curve and adapt to the fluctuating healthcare market. For instance, once the demand for DSPs (Direct Support Professionals) waned, GSU transitioned to training CNAs (Certified Nurses Assistants) as more job openings for these positions were available.

ELIMINATING BARRIERS – SUPPORT SERVICES, BOOT CAMP, JOB FAIR

Continuum of Participant Support, Basic Education and Career Readiness & Partnership Building

Governors State University's training program encompasses job readiness, hands on and didactic training, which produces well-rounded individuals prepared to enter the workforce. Employers are aware of the comprehensive training GSU provides and are more willing to hire individuals equipped with the soft skills and the clinical training required to successfully perform healthcare jobs. To ensure that a student is prepared for training coursework and ultimately for employment, GSU pre-screens individuals before enrolling them in the program. They must have a high school equivalent education and pass the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education), which distinguishes an individual's reading and writing equivalency levels.

Support services are provided to GSU students to eliminate barriers that may hinder an individual's ability to successfully complete the training program and enter employment. Since many students are single mothers, onsite day care services available for children from infancy to 13 years old are essential for them to complete the training. Other soft skill workshops are offered and include writing a resume, how to succeed in an interview, expected behavior in an office and how to dress for success. Additionally, YWCA, a sub-grantee, provides empowerment for woman courses including financial counseling, how to clean up your credit score and other

workshops to help remove complexities and increase an individual's ability to succeed at their job.

GSU coordinated an all-day boot camp earlier this year in which 80 participants learned valuable job preparation skills putting them one step closer to employment. Sessions offered included how to use social networking to find a job, how to utilize a job fair and how to write a resume and cover letter (a useful session as many individuals are unaware of what these documents should contain). The following day, GSU in conjunction with the YWCA and with support of local healthcare agencies, organized a job fair on campus in which 15 employers from the healthcare industry attended. At the end of the day, each employer left with a handful of resumes of individuals they were interested in interviewing and potentially hiring. These two events provided resources to prepare individuals for an interview and then actually apply these newly obtained skills with the prospect of securing employment with one of the 15 participating employers.

STRAIGHT FROM APPRENTICESHIP TO EMPLOYMENT

Apprenticeships & Contextualized and Work-based Learning Strategies

Clinical preceptorships, a mandatory hands on component of GSU's training curriculum, not only prepare individuals to enter the healthcare profession but oftentimes lead directly to employment. GSU has established ties with long standing organizations including a local integrated healthcare system which encompasses hospitals, nursing homes, outpatient care facilities, phlebotomy labs and health information technology centers. As a prominent healthcare system in the region, they are able to supply apprenticeships for many GSU students and offer employment opportunities. Oftentimes the apprenticeship process reveals to staff members at the healthcare facilities that GSU students have the skills to begin employment and they put forth the extra effort to hire them after training completion.

This is a testament to how valuable well executed apprenticeship programs can be in setting individuals up for longer term employment opportunities.

BUDDING PROGRAMS

Incumbent Worker Training, Continuum of Participant Support & Employer Engagement

GSU has begun to discuss incorporating incumbent worker training into their program, which will help increase placement rates. One side of GSU's incumbent training is taking a person who has a job with no potential for upward mobility and training them to be a healthcare professional. The other side is to seek out employers and inform them of GSU's soft skills training program available to their employees to boost their skills. In return, the employer formulates an agreement to hire GSU students after they complete training. This arrangement is advantageous to the employer; their current employees improve their skill sets and at the same time, GSU provides the employer with additional trained individuals.

Another program in the works is a nursing mentoring program. To enter LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) training, individuals must read at the twelfth grade level, which many are unable to do. To remedy this and to ensure training success, GSU is establishing a mentorship program which provides nurses in the region to aide nursing students through the pre-employment stage. Although this program has not yet been developed, implementation will lead to higher reading levels in job candidates and therefore increased job placement opportunities.

cincinnati state technical & community college

Cincinnati, Ohio

SGA Type - Healthcare and Other High Growth Emerging Industries

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Health Careers Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati (HCC) is a collaboration between Cincinnati State Technical and Community College's Health and Public Safety Division, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC), UC Health, TriHealth, Inc., Mercy Health Partners, Dress for Success Cincinnati, Great Oaks Career Campuses, and Mercy Neighborhood Ministries. Work among these partners has culminated in a comprehensive health career pathway for incumbent entry-level employees, unemployed individuals referred to the pathway, and new students who have self-selected. The career pathway is a system of connected educational/training programs and support services that prepare and enable employees and community residents to overcome barriers in the difficult transition to higher levels of education and employment. For this grant, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College (CSTCC) will work with the Collaborative's partners to further enhance its existing programs. This capacity building project will increase programming for nursing and allied health and expand courses for long-term care and health information technology, based on identified industry growth employment opportunities.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

The Collaborative has implemented several strategies that contribute to their placement and retention success:

- Their use of the National Career Readiness Credential provides employers with the assurance that candidates meet national standards for proficiency in personal skills and are a good fit for occupations in healthcare, and provides guidance for targeted skills training to bring candidates up to par;
- The Collaborative has four employer partners who chair monthly meetings of industry executives, serving as a direct resource for information on key skill sets that are in high demand. Employer-driven program development ensures that program graduates will have skills sets relevant to employers' current needs, which increases placement at the end of the training program;
- Employer-based job coaches work in conjunction with Cincinnati State Pathway Advisors and the Great Oaks Job Coach to discuss areas of improvement for their pathways' employees, like refining 'soft skills.' This assistance is especially crucial because it takes both hard and soft skills for an employee to succeed in a job and maintain their position; and
- The return-on-investment (ROI) model developed for each of the two pathways programs is proof that these strategies have helped to mold a program that trains individuals for relevant work in the healthcare field and provides them with resources to continue to succeed in their new employment.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

ASSESSING STUDENT APTITUDE FOR SUCCESS IN THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY WITH WORKKEYS

Data-Driven Decision Making, Continuum of Participant Support, Nationally Recognized Credentials & Basic Education and Career Readiness

The Collaborative is piloting the use of a National Career Readiness Credential (NCRC) to gauge core competencies and to refer participants into appropriate career pathways. The NCRC or Workkeys assessment system was integrated into the candidates' application process because it is a nationally recognized credential that is becoming the standard around the country. Pathway recruits from the community often have little to no work experience, have not completed any GED coursework, or are on public assistance. This certification assures employers that candidates meet national standards for proficiency in foundational and personal skills.

Six assessments are available to administer to applicants, depending on whether they are incumbent healthcare workers or from the community-at-large. The first three assessments benchmark an individual's capacity in reading, applied math, and locating information in the context of the Healthcare occupations. Scores on these exams also reveal if the candidate needs developmental or remedial training courses prior to entering a pathways program. Knowing specifically in which areas a candidate struggles assists the Collaborative in prescribing targeted courses and training to fill educational gaps as opposed to enrolling candidates in generalized remedial training courses. Working on specific skills saves the candidate course time as they will not waste time reviewing a broader range of topics than is necessary. This also facilitates more efficient use of training resources and personnel.

The remaining three assessments profile an applicant's unique talents, occupational interests, and potential for success in a certain field of work. Oftentimes, candidates pursue jobs in the healthcare industry because of the broad notion that it is a good field to enter but have not thought seriously about whether healthcare occupations are tightly aligned with their unique talents and interests. The assessments offer opportunities to guide participants towards career pathways reflective of their talents and interests, which may or may not be healthcare. This improves retention in the training program as well as job placement and retention.

EMPLOYER AND OUTCOME DRIVEN PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Employer Engagement, Partnership Building & Sustainable Systems Change

Central to the Collaborative's placement success is the pathways curriculum and the manner in which it is developed and maintained. The career pathways programs are linked to employer and labor market needs, ensuring there is a demand for the students who graduate from the program. Programs and course offerings are determined by ongoing labor market analysis, the supply of graduates entering the workforce, the availability of clinical work sites, and skill sets required by businesses. The Collaborative has four employer partners who chair monthly meetings of industry executives, serving as a direct resource for information on key skill sets that are in high demand. Employer-driven program development ensures that program graduates will have skills sets relevant to employers' current needs. This increases placement at the end of the training program.

An outcome-based approach is always maintained when incorporating employer expertise in program development. All curricula focus on what employers will expect from employees and keep the possibility of continued education in mind. Additionally, state academic standards, industry skill standards, certifications, and licensing requirements are linked to curricula as they are relevant, and they boost an applicant's marketability as an employee.

Although the Collaborative has made many crucial connections with their employer partners, there is room to expand those relationships and communicate through more levels of employer institutions. The Collaborative is focusing on this in its development of two new career pathways in Health IT and Long Term Care. Current strategies involve the use of employer focus groups to gather data about workforce needs as well as to disseminate information about the training programs and participants. Likewise, Collaborative leaders participate in various committee meetings convened by the regional Greater Cincinnati Health Council as a means to share and gather information.

JOB COACHES WITH EACH EMPLOYER PARTNER IMPROVE RETENTION

Continuum of Participant Support, Retention, Post Placement Services & Contextualized and Work-based Learning Strategies

Within the last year, the Collaborative has integrated job coaches that work with pathways' students at each of the four employer partners. Job coaches' responsibilities are quite expansive but focus on supporting incumbent worker participants while they engage in training, as well as after training completion and in their pursuit of career advancement. The main objective is to support professional, academic success and minimize turnover.

A common employer request has been for improved 'soft skills.' Employers say there needs to be reinforcement to what it means to be a professional in the workplace. The HCC pathways curriculum includes training in 'soft skills' through the Professionalism in Healthcare course. The Collaborative plans to use feedback from employer partners to revamp the Professionalism in Healthcare course and create occupation specific curriculum in 'soft skills.' This will emphasize work-appropriate behavior in areas like personal appearance, punctuality, cell phone usage, and dealing with last minute crises in the context of specific healthcare occupations. Job coach assistance with 'soft skills' and other areas are especially crucial because it takes both hard and soft skills for an employee to succeed in a job and maintain their position.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS: MEASURING RETURN-ON-INVESTMENT

Data-Driven Decision Making, Employer Engagement & Sustainable Systems Change

An employer return-on-investment (ROI) model was developed to help expand and sustain employer engagement over the long term. The analysis for the return on investment was performed by The New Growth Group, LLC and found a twelve percent ROI for the Associate Degree Cohort Program and a positive net benefit of \$2.6 million for the certificate program. These calculations are based on program participants prior to the implementation of job coaches and the NCRC work readiness assessments, which will likely improve the quality of workers produced by the program and positively affect the ROI.

Costs and benefits for the Associate Degree Cohort are calculated based on past participants and extrapolated through the year 2013 – the year in which the current cohort of students graduate the program. The cost factors influencing ROI for the Associate Degree Cohort program included administration costs, tuition payments, increase in absences during training, and the cost of backfilling after participants are promoted. Benefits incorporated are reduced turnover during training and lower training costs of promoted workers compared to outside hires. Several assumptions are made in calculating the value of costs (\$1.82 million) and benefits (\$2.04 million), and the result is a net return estimated at \$216,137, and ROI of 11.9 percent.¹

Costs and benefits for the certificate program are based on the 525 participants from 2005 to 2010 that have completed the program qualifying them for entry-level healthcare occupations. There is a larger benefit to employers through this program as the majority of costs are absorbed by the grant. The approximate net benefit per participant hired is \$4,869, which totals \$2.6 million when multiplied by the number of program completers. Additional non-quantifiable advantages improved job performance and increased diversity in the workforce. These findings justify an organization's commitment to the Collaborative and can be used to attract more partners.

¹ All figures are from the *Health Careers Collaborative Return On Investment Report: 2011*, completed by The New Growth Group

university behavioral associates

Bronx, New York

SGA Type - Healthcare and Other High Growth Emerging Industries

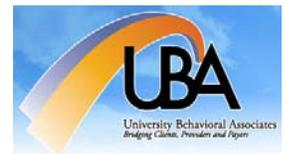
PROJECT OVERVIEW

University Behavioral Associates (UBA) is the behavioral health subsidiary of Montefiore Medical Center located in the Bronx, New York. UBA is leading a partnership to provide training to relatively unskilled, low income individuals in the Bronx borough for careers as Certified Home Health Aides (HHAs), helping them obtain employment in this high demand industry, and assisting in their career advancement in the healthcare sector. The 15-20 day short-term training program emphasizes placement retention and provides long-term case management and support services to address work barriers and the high turnover associated with the profession.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

A number of factors are helping UBA achieve placement and retention success. These factors include:

- Creative partnerships with employment partners;
- Contextualized classroom instruction and simulated work sites;
- Maintaining strong relationships and a shared vision with partners;
- Retention, education, and supportive services to help participants remain successful on the job; and
- Providing opportunities for peer interaction to help sustain participant motivation after placement



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PROMISING PRACTICES

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership Building, Leveraging Resources, Employer Engagement-Leverage Existing Employer Groups & Contextualized and Work-based Learning Strategies

One key element of UBA's placement success is credited to its unique partnerships. UBA partners with Montefiore Home Care, a division of Montefiore Medical Center, which contracts with 20+ local New York State (NYS) Department of Health (DOH) licensed home care agencies that provide training and employment for participants. UBA's Home Care training and employment partners have agreed to hire all HHAs completing the program during the three year term of the contract, resulting in an anticipated goal of 1,012 individuals being placed in a job after completing training and receiving an HHA certification. All HHA training is approved by the NYS DOH and provided to individuals at no cost to this grant. UBA has established strong relationships with licensed Home Care training partners. They work towards a shared goal of training and retaining a quality HHA workforce in New York City, specifically in the Bronx. UBA strives to augment their partners' services by helping HHAs address and remove barriers that may interfere with their ability to get and keep a job (i.e. assistance with government benefits, referrals to low cost childcare providers, transportation stipends), resulting in high participant placement and retention rates.

To address industry needs, all home care training partners deliver a curriculum that has been reviewed and approved by the NYS DOH. The approved HHA training program includes a combination of contextualized classroom instruction and simulated workplace clinics which participants must demonstrate proficiency prior to receiving their HHA certification. These applied learning approaches provide participants with authentic experiences they can relate to the actual work setting. In

addition to the HHA training, UBA has also established community partnerships with organizations that provide ESL, GED, and occupational skills training free for program participants. To maintain strong relationships and a shared vision, UBA meets monthly with their training partners to discuss program operations and review delivery of services. UBA believes that regular communication and strong working relationships with partners is one of the reasons for their program's success.

ADDRESSING SOCIAL AND WORKPLACE BARRIERS: SUSTAINING MOTIVATION

Continuum of Participant Support

The home care field can be fairly demanding and stressful. Coupled with not very high industry wages, personal/family obstacles, and an intense training schedule can pose some real barriers for participant training completion and employment retention. UBA augments the training program with six to nine months of case management and support services to assist participants through the training period and to help them maintain motivation once certified and employed. During the training phase, case managers maintain, at minimum, bi-weekly contact with each participant, and are available on-site at the training agency one to two times per week. This regular contact helps to proactively address problems before they develop in order to maximize participant performance. UBA believes that motivation is a key to successful completion of training and employment retention, and case managers use motivational interviewing techniques, which is a client-centered counseling style to address behavior change. By promoting this dialogue, participants are given methods to communicate clearly and constructively which help them to resolve workplace issues in a professional manner.

INCREASING PARTICIPANTS' INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

Continuum of Participant Support, Retention, Post Placement Services & Basic Education and Career Readiness

By conducting a thorough assessment at the outset, case managers are able to educate individuals about the nature of the job and appropriate behaviors including generalized workplace behaviors, as well as HHA-specific behaviors. The assessment specifically identifies interests and skills, obstacles to training completion and employment retention, employment and work history, criminal background, work orientation (i.e. attendance, punctuality, ability to follow directions, desire to work), personal issues and obstacles to employment (i.e. childcare, family needs, health concerns), education, and overall training and job readiness (i.e. personal appearance, hygiene and grooming). From this information, individualized comprehensive service plans are developed for each participant.

Once employed, case managers continue to provide retention, education, and supportive services to help participants remain successful on the job. These services are also offered in the Spanish language. Comprehensive service plans are reviewed and revised with participants on a monthly basis in order to identify new goals and objectives that will help them retain employment. Opportunities for peer interaction have also been created to help sustain participant motivation and to negate some of the isolation experienced in the work setting. Currently, eight job clubs have been created based on the needs expressed by the HHAs. Job clubs meet monthly and cover topics that include general employment information (i.e. Positive Attitudes, Problem Solving, and Budgeting & Money Management) as well as industry-specific content (i.e. Dealing with Difficult Behaviors in Patients, Dealing with Death and Dying, and Career Development). Additional job clubs are being added by request of the HHAs around issues such as cultural competency and understanding Alzheimer's disease.

energy training partnership

ecia business growth

central vermont community
action council, inc.

joint labor management
cooperation committee-ibew/neca

bluegreen alliance foundation

national ironworkers and employers
apprenticeship training and journeyman
upgrading fund

ecia business growth

Dubuque and Northeast Iowa

SGA Type - Energy Training Partnership

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Green Industries Training Initiative (GITI) has developed three career ladders to connect 392 participants in the Dubuque and Northeast Iowa region to jobs in renewable electric power, energy efficient assessment and energy efficient building industries. These paths include AAS and diploma technician programs in Wind Turbine Repair, Solar Thermal Installation, RESNET Home Energy Rater and Building Performance Institute (BPI) training and Green Building Professional certifications for residential and commercial construction. The program is targeting the unemployed and underemployed, dislocated and incumbent workers, and women and minorities. GITI offers varying levels of entry based on skill needs from new individuals entering the market as well as experienced incumbent workers. Courses typically range from one week to two years. Recruitment, placement, retention and supportive services are offered to assist participants with successful training completion and subsequent successful employment.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

The following elements play a principle role in GITI's high placement and retention rates:

- Partnering with employers and the local economic development office to learn about business needs;
- Offering different levels of entry points to better meet the individual skill needs of participants; and
- Long-term case management support including funds for equipment purchases.

ECIA
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PROMISING PRACTICES

POWERING BUSINESS GROWTH

Employer Engagement- Individual Firms, Partnership Building, Long-term Unemployed, Contextualized and Work-based Learning Strategies, Alignment with Economic Development & Nationally Recognized Credentials

Working in a community that supports a culture of collaboration made it easier to get the support of employers from the start. Some of GITI's greatest placement successes have come from partnering with employers and the local Economic Development Office to learn about business needs. GITI has become a resource for employers, by working directly with them to find their specific current and future needs, and training people to meet these needs.

Early on, the program engaged with local business owners of solar companies that were in need of staff training. The training includes a mix of classroom learning and hands-on demonstration in the field. By the second class, participants are building a solar thermal system. After attending the training and providing feedback, these businesses saw the value in the training and found that the skills taught met their employment needs. The businesses began to send new employees to the training and now refer interested jobseekers to the program. Participants receive a certificate of completion from the partnering college, Northeast Iowa Community College. This certificate serves as the educational requirement if the individual decides to take the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) certification. It also allows them to apply for a license within the City of Dubuque for Solar Thermal Installation. Once jobseekers complete the solar energy training, these companies intend to hire them.

In another example, program staff have worked with a local construction company looking to quickly hire 20 workers to deconstruct homes and recycle the materials. Staff met with the employer to learn more about their specific skill needs. To enroll participants into GITI's energy efficient building program, Sustainable Deconstruction, staff reached out to its network of community partners and were able to draw from a pool of individuals at one of the local homeless shelters. The Sustainable Deconstruction program is designed in a contextualized way in which learning components are applied directly in the field. Participants receive a national sustainable deconstruction credential through The

ReUse People, a nationally recognized deconstruction trainer. Individuals who completed the program were hired and about 50 percent of these individuals have been employed with the company for more than one year. Those who did not stay with the company were able to establish a work history and develop valuable transferable skills.

ESTABLISHING WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIPS FOR WORKER SUCCESS

Continuum of Participant Support, Post-Placement Services & Retention

GITI made a strategic change early on to create different levels of entry points to better meet the individual skill needs of participants. Participants are able to audit portions of the training curriculum by demonstrating proficiency. Matching participants to the right entry point helps to support participant training retention and placement success. During the training period and after completion, GITI partners with the local workforce center which offers comprehensive follow up services to support participants in the job search and while on the job.

The Iowa Workforce Development Center conducts follow up with participants at one, three, six, and nine month intervals. Supports include assistance with resume development, interview skills, career counseling including skill/certification application and transferability, information sharing about job announcements and job fairs, and equipment borrowing. Since RESNET and Building Performance Institute Certified Professionals are typically independent contractors, the Center provides small business development referrals and resources. In addition, for those participants who meet certain financial guidelines, the Center provides assistance with transportation and childcare while attending the training program. The Center will also provide funds for training and job related equipment such as work boots, hardhats, etc. This support is important, particularly for GITI programs that require equipment for training and certification examinations. For example, the RESNET national certification involves a written exam, and acquiring three residential home audits called RESNET probationary ratings, before certification is awarded. Obtaining these probationary ratings require the use of equipment and tools that can cost over \$1,000.

joint labor management cooperation committee-ibew/neca

California

SGA Type - Energy Training Partnership

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The California Advanced Lighting Controls Training Program (CALCTP) supports the training of electricians in the design, installation, and maintenance of advanced lighting controls (ALC) to improve energy efficiency in commercial facilities across the state. The program is run through a partnership between the California State Labor Management Cooperation Committee for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the National Electrical Contractors Association (IBEW-NECA), the California Community College System (CCCS), the California Energy Commission (CEC), the California Lighting Technology Center-University of California-Davis (CLTC), the California Investor-Owned and Municipal Utilities (IOMU), the National Lighting Manufacturers Association (NEMA), ICF International, and 13 local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). The training occurs at 28 sites across the state, including Joint Apprenticeship Training Centers and community colleges.

The project aims to integrate energy efficiency and demand response programs as mandated by California energy policy, increase the installation of advanced lighting controls, and provide industry and trade organizations with a high-value training opportunity for members.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

The CALCTP program prepares graduates for increased success and placement as electricians by training them to install and maintain advanced lighting controls and, at the same time, by providing information and training to the contractors and top management of contracting companies to enable them to find projects that will provide ongoing jobs for the newly trained electricians. CALCTP's placement and retention success is a result of:

- Policy alignment driving demand for training;
- Training not just electricians but also contractors and upper management in order to boost company participation;
- Contextualized learning that speeds trainee skill acquisition; and
- A strong practice of advertising certified electricians who have completed the CALCTP program.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

POLICY ALIGNMENT DRIVES DEMAND FOR ADVANCED LIGHTING ELECTRICIANS

Policy Alignment & Alignment with Economic Development

CALCTP's success in placing electricians trained to install advanced lighting controls is partly a result of the alignment of state policies that aim to reduce energy use, and in particular, energy used for commercial lighting. Due to the large amount of energy that can be saved through increased use of advanced lighting controls (ALC) in commercial buildings, California investor-owned and municipal utilities and the California Energy Commission (CEC) are pursuing the wide-spread adoption of ALCs as an energy efficiency and environmental protection strategy. This strategy was partly prompted by the electricity crisis that occurred in California in 2000 and 2001, resulting in widespread blackouts. The California Energy Commission determined that large industrial commercial spaces were one of the largest users of energy. In fact, commercial lighting accounts for 40 percent of electricity use in California.

In order to reduce energy use related to commercial lighting, the CEC put incentives in place for utility companies to be paid for energy that they conserve. The utilities came together and created a program to provide incentives for businesses to have a lighting retrofit done by a CALCTP-trained electrician. Retrofitting lighting can reduce a business's electricity use by 40 to 60 percent. It is important that the electricians be trained to install advanced lighting controls properly -- in the past, many advanced lighting controls were not installed correctly and did not achieve the expected energy savings. These incentives for businesses to retrofit their lighting systems created a demand for electricians who are trained to properly install ALCs. The California Advanced Lighting Controls Training Program (CALCTP) was created to meet this demand.

TRAINING ELECTRICIANS AND CONTRACTORS BOOSTS COMPANY PARTICIPATION

Employer Engagement & Partnership Building

The DOL-supported training is primarily focused on unemployed and underemployed electricians. One of the strengths of the CALCTP program is the breadth of its training program, which is targeted at training electricians, contractors, and the top management of contracting companies. The training for top management focuses on marketing, sales, finance and creating an advanced lighting system brand. This allows top management to go out and sell the retrofitting opportunity to companies, which then boosts job opportunities for electricians.

In order for companies to benefit from the incentives that the utilities have established, they have to use contractors and electricians who are CALCTP-certified. Requiring that contractors be trained and certified has also boosted contractor interest in the program and willingness to push for ALC work. Training the contractors has also ensured a higher quality of electrician work. Certifications for both contractors and electricians are state certifications rather than national certifications.

HANDS-ON LEARNING SPEEDS TRAINING

Contextualized and Work-based Learning Strategies & Continuum of Participant Support

CALCTP's training for electricians consists of a 50-hour course divided between classes and lab instruction. A number of pre-requisites for the program can be completed online. Trainings are held at flexible hours including day-time, evening, and weekends. The lab instruction is very hands on and takes place on a lab board, which allows participants to perform the actual work in a controlled environment. According to one CALCTP-trained electrician, this hands on element is invaluable:

"The CALCTP program connected the dots for me. It would have taken me six years in the field to cover what I learned. This program is a must for all electricians."

STRONG MARKETING BOOSTS PROGRAM PARTICIPATION, TRAINEE PLACEMENT

Continuum of Participant Support, Partnership Building & Post-Placement Services

The CALCTP partners use targeted marketing to enroll participants into the program. Because the majority of potential trainees are union members, the partners have directed marketing at union members by attending union meetings, distributing brochures, and providing training graduates with a certified sticker for their hardhats.

The CALCTP partners have also developed a strong practice of advertising certified electricians who have completed the CALCTP program. In addition to their public website, CALCTP has a website with separate portals for WIBs, utilities and placement services. The portal includes a database that is searchable and sortable and allows WIBs and utilities to locate contractors and electricians who are certified, contributing to faster, smoother placement of trainees.

national ironworkers and employers apprenticeship training and journeyman upgrading fund

Washington, D.C.

SGA Type - Energy Training Partnership

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Ironworkers Progressive Action Cooperative Trust (IMPACT) is a labor management partnership designed to provide a forum for union ironworkers to address mutual concerns and encourage reasonable balanced solutions. The IMPACT mission is to expand job opportunities through progressive and innovative labor management cooperative programs. The National Ironworkers and Employers Apprenticeship Training and Journeyman Upgrading Fund (NITF) with support from IMPACT, is focused, under the DOL ARRA grant, on increasing the competitiveness and market share of the union ironworking industry through new training and certification of over 500 ironworkers to work for wind turbine erection contractors.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

IMPACT is a non-profit, labor-management organization that seeks to support the ironworking industry and is the funding mechanism for the NITF. Both the NITF and IMPACT work to meet industry needs in part by seeking out new and innovative ways of placing and retaining ironworkers. Recently this has focused on wind turbines training programs. Efforts include:

- Emphasizing demand-driven workforce training;
- Identifying key partners to support development of training program, training centers and credentials; and
- Ensuring training-locations maximize placement and retention opportunities.

NITF's grant will result in certification training available at five training centers offering advanced credentials to ironworkers. The five local union training centers, selected based on industry projected demand for wind energy resources, are located in: Buffalo, New York; Salt Lake City, Utah; Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas; Los Angeles, California; and Joliet, Illinois.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

LINKING TRAINING TO DEMAND

Employer Engagement, Partner Building & Policy Alignment

NITF's grant is focused entirely on wind turbine training. IMPACT took note of increased interest from wind developers for trained workers and then looked to build a partnership with a proven training institution which had training and industry-recognized certificates. This led to the development of one training center in Oklahoma that NITF and IMPACT are now replicating in five other locations. The program has been given a boost from the improving economy.

The training program will support placement and retention of jobs. This is expected to occur both through reduced periods of unemployment for ironworkers, as well as from expanded and new partnerships between union training centers and employers. In addition, NITF's grant will help ensure safe conditions at turbine erection sites and also position ironworkers to take advantage of state policies that support wind power.

HELPING TO ENSURE PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Data-Driven Decision Making

The idea was germinated from the large number of calls IMPACT received from wind turbine contractors who needed ironworkers on the job with certain training certifications (e.g., bolt torque, tower rescue and climbing, etc.). In their Energy Training Partnership Grant, NITF and IMPACT used turbine projection data from both the American Wind Energy Association and McGraw Hill industrial information to identify demand for Ironworker jobs. The use of local training centers with the greatest likelihood of having wind turbines being built was a key decision in selection locations. Further, the use of union training facilities also offered NITF access to local ironworkers that were in need of increased knowledge and skill training to become more marketable in the changing job environment.

Nationally Recognized Credentials, Work-based Strategies and Contextualized Learning

Each of the five training centers has been provided with the tools and equipment to conduct wind turbine certification training for ironworkers. There is also a mobile training trailer that can be used at wind farm sites or other local training centers to conduct training. These courses are comprised of training in two major areas: tower climbing and rescue, as well as bolt torque and tension. Each training center (and onsite via the mobile training kit) ensures workers have:

- information on wind turbine erection;
- a training package focusing on bolt torquing and tensioning (for wind turbines and other ironwork);
- a training package teaching safe climbing as well as rescue techniques

Once participants complete the 36 hour training, ironworkers are issued an advanced credential. These credentials, as well as a complete record of the training course, are uploaded into the NITF's Apprentice Tracking System (ATS). The ATS is a web-based secure system, allowing any local union to not only upload information about local training courses and training certifications but also ensuring that they can verify that an ironworker has the necessary certifications to support the needs of wind turbine contractors.

Employer Engagement

Ironworkers typically work in spurts – either a job-by-job basis, seasonally etc. – employment patterns that lead to periods of unemployment. NITF's grant will help support green jobs for ironworkers; the local courses train ironworkers to be ready for jobs at wind turbine erection sites. The grant does this in part by requiring that each training center coordinate with employers. One approach is requiring them to send a letter of support to potential employers (contractors helping to erect wind turbines) touting the new crop of workers with sparkling new wind turbine credentials. The centers also partner with the state and/or local Workforce Investment Boards and communicate with the One-Stops in their respective areas.

These methods aim to ensure that each training center will be able to provide 102 trained ironworkers by the end of the grant period; a total of 510 ironworkers will be trained and certified ironworkers.

central vermont community action council, inc.

Burlington, Vermont

SGA Type - Energy Training Partnership

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Vermont Green is focused on private regional job development and retention efforts statewide in alignment with the state's emphasis on "green" initiatives including clean energy. These collective efforts are meeting success in employment placements and retention, including opportunities across a diverse set of green job sectors.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

Vermont Green focused on placement and retention by:

- Providing funding assistance for green job training for both new and incumbent workers;
- Seeking to continue to improve communication and coordinating with employers and state agencies; and
- Collecting data to help better align job seekers with green industry positions.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

JOB PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

Employer Engagement, Partnership Building & Policy Alignment

Vermont Green has a key goal under its Department of Labor grant to support green job growth across a range of green trades. This has involved several collaborative efforts and promising practices. One example is in the growth of entrepreneurs in Vermont. The alignment of policy and workforce job training to focus on green has helped build up this relationship. For example, Vermont Green can work with the state to offer training services, microbusiness development programs and Small Business Administration (SBA), planning, counseling and access to capital. All of these efforts align with state activities in the green sector.

LOOK EVERYWHERE FOR SYNERGIES AND COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

Partnership Building & Policy Alignment

Vermont Green is focused on sustainability and participation of partners which will help drive demand for green jobs. For example, they are hosting a Summit/Expo this fall that will emphasize how to further establish green industries, thereby promoting the growth of green jobs. The Summit will include a full suite of state stakeholders focused on both energy and economic development. Vermont Green is also excited about possible synergies with the development of Vermont's first Comprehensive Energy Plan, being developed concurrently and to be released in mid-October 2011.

Beyond efforts to build demand, Vermont Green has embarked on specific strategies that played a role in their high placement rates. A big part of this was their focus on workforce and training, which is expected to continue to improve worker placement and retention. One specific strategy includes developing union partner efforts, including new solar installation training to advance the availability of new apprenticeship programs to complement ongoing basic education and career readiness training.

DATA, DATA, DATA

Data-Driven Decision Making & Employer Engagement

A big part of Vermont Green's placement and retention success is its collection and use of data. Data utilization has helped inform decisions, including where to focus resources: an internal monitoring exercise to see where people were in terms of outcomes and spending helped identify that all but one sub-grantee was on track in terms of spending and outcomes.

Vermont Green is also working collaboratively with a group of partners, most notably Vermont Department of Labor, to develop an online data tool to identify where training, as well as job opportunities exist so that the organization has a better ability to interact with a wide range of possible employers. They are helping with an analysis of green workforce in Vermont, in collaboration with the state Workforce Development Council (WDC) and the regional Workforce Investment Boards. The WDC has done a series of studies to identify training around workforce sectors that have led to a snapshot of industry clusters and common training needs across multiple sectors. The goal is to have more quantitative ideas around where the green sector is headed to better focus their training efforts. While not directly related, salient training can help improve placement and training.

FLEXIBILITY AND DIVERSIFICATION STRENGTHEN TRAINING OUTCOMES

Incumbent Worker Training

Vermont Green places emphasis on the need to diversify its strategies to place and retain workers. Based on the latest data, they have served a greater number of incumbent workers which has impacted RAD numbers. However, because they are working across a range of green job types and sectors, they are insulated against reduced job demand for certain green sectors, such as construction. In other words, in some green areas they do not have strong performers but in other areas they have experienced greater success. However, they are really only just getting traction in terms of getting retention data and expect numbers to improve.

bluegreen alliance foundation

Minneapolis, Minnesota

SGA Type - Energy Training Partnership

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The BlueGreen Alliance Foundation's Minnesota Green Partnership of Worker and Employer Resources (GreenPOWER) program is uniting Minnesota's employers, labor unions, educators and service providers in a program targeted at training 1,650 incumbent workers and jobseekers across 53 counties in the manufacturing sector to fill and succeed in the jobs being created in the clean energy economy. GreenPOWER provides current and future manufacturing employees with the skills they need to save manufacturers time and money by "greening" their operations. GreenPOWER's training addresses a variety of sustainability improvements companies can make including waste management, energy and water conservation, air pollution control, green chemistry and the development and implementation of sustainability plans. Specific groups targeted by the program are traditionally underserved communities, veterans, inner city residents, women, chronically underemployed workers, and dislocated auto and steelworkers. GreenPOWER training is designed to achieve two goals: increase participants' skills to the level needed to find employment, and teaching participants green manufacturing techniques and processes to make them employable in the green economy.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

Key factors leading the way to GreenPower's placement success include:

- Meeting participants at the appropriate level of training they need to find employment or advance in the green economy;
- Providing participants with knowledge, principles, and concepts of sustainability that can be used for self marketing;
- Utilizing apprenticeship program opportunities; and
- Targeted communications that speak to the needs of key stakeholder groups.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

BUILDING THE PARTICIPANT TOOLBOX: NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED CREDENTIALS

Partnership Building, Nationally Recognized Credentials & Leveraging Resources

GreenPOWER training, available during the weekday, weekend, and evenings is offered at different levels to meet the skill needs of workers and to accommodate what training skills participating businesses are looking for in their employees. To help ensure accessibility, the program holds training in a variety of locations including union training centers, college and university campuses, community agencies, and on-site at participating manufacturing employers. GreenPOWER is available as a one-day green generalist training workshop, a six-module, or a 48-hour green specialists training program. The green specialist modules combined with long-term hard skills training courses are offered at Minnesota area technical colleges and universities.

In addition to technical skills, all training tracks provide participants with knowledge, principles, and concepts on how companies can save money by incorporating green practices, as well as how participants can use this knowledge to market themselves. The 48-hour green specialist program curriculum, developed by Purdue University, targets skilled workers who are employed or employable at their current skill level. This program has been particularly successful at providing training that is attractive and usable by manufacturing workers at all levels of a company's team (whether they are a line worker, welder, quality assurance technician, human resource manager, engineer or company manager) and has helped individuals determine ways they can implement the program's lessons immediately at work. Once participants complete any of GreenPOWER's eight hour workshops, they receive a certificate of completion, and all participants who complete the 48-hour green specialist training program are eligible to take the challenging and industry recognized Society of Manufacturing Engineering (SME) exam in order to receive certification as a Green Manufacturing Specialist. The program is currently holding a SME exam pass rate of 70 percent, demonstrating the quality of the GreenPOWER program.

CREATING A CLEAR RESONATING MESSAGE: ENGAGING BUSINESS, LABOR, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Employer Engagement, Partnership Building & Contextualized and Work-based Learning Strategies

One key reason GreenPOWER has experienced placement success is due to their focus on communication and messaging from the start. Communication outreach to community and labor partners focuses on providing credentials, tools, and knowledge that can be placed in the jobseeker's toolbox to get them back to work. The communications strategy includes targeted outreach to the business community with messages related to employer leadership and championing, taking lean manufacturing to another level by going green, benefits to the bottom line, and opportunities for incumbent worker training. To catch the ear of manufacturers and potential participants across the state, the program provides the opportunity to receive subsidized training dollars for long-term hard-skills training. For example, GreenPOWER combined its green specialist training with the manufacturing industry's required OSHA-10 certification classes. Together this put GreenPOWER graduates ahead of other job seekers who did not already have either of those credentials and helped increase their attractiveness to potential employers. Leveraging existing relationships with the labor community is another key factor for GreenPOWER's placement success. The program also utilizes apprenticeship program opportunities available to them. Labor partners taking advantage of this are the IBEW in Minneapolis and St. Paul and the Sheet Metal Workers.

The program is experiencing greater training and placement success in the metro areas of Minneapolis and St. Paul than areas up north in Minnesota's Iron Range. Members of the GreenPOWER team feel that along with a greater availability of courses and leveraged relationships from a prior grant, clear messaging from community partners is playing an important role in the Metro Area success. Regional cultural differences, beliefs, and perceptions in the Iron Range regarding the green economy has made GreenPOWER increase its messaging and work to ensure that the regional value and benefits of the program is communicated in a way that can achieve increased buy-in.

LISTENING TO EMPLOYERS AND FOCUSING RESOURCES

Employer Engagement- Individual Firms & Partnership Building

By engaging employers and taking time to listen to their specific needs, the GreenPOWER team has been able to maximize limited time and resources. For example, initially, the team tried to engage multiple colleges and universities to discuss partnering and packaging the GreenPOWER training program with their existing courses. This approach took a lot of staff resource time. The team changed its approach and developed a targeted strategy with the guidance and recommendation of employers. The team learned that by going to the business community and finding out their needs in terms of skill requirements, they were also positioning themselves to form strategic educational connections. These strong employer relationships created a forum for information exchange that allowed

businesses to share recommendations for colleges and universities with whom they had a good rapport. This led to partnering between GreenPOWER and the recommended institutions that already had well formalized curriculum. By doing this, the GreenPOWER team was able to leverage employer relationships and focus staff time on a targeted set of schools.

A key partnership that came out of this new approach is with Anoka Technical College. The college provides precision sheet metal training that has strong support from the manufacturing community. GreenPOWER found that once their green specialist training was partnered with Anoka Technical College's precision sheet metal coursework, graduates became highly sought after and employers wanted to hire them. There have been 32 placements - approximately 65 percent of the GreenPOWER-Anoka Technical College unemployed graduates - that are now working in training-related employment. Some participants are being placed within two days of training completion.

pathways out of poverty

city of minneapolis

west hills community college district

mi casa resource center
(denver green jobs initiative)

goodwill industries international, inc.

city of minneapolis

Minneapolis, Minnesota

SGA Type - Pathways Out of Poverty

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Led by the City of Minneapolis Employment and Training Program and Ramsey County Workforce Solutions, Renewable Energy Network Empowering Workers (RENEW) is a comprehensive partnership designed to ensure that low-income communities are strategically connected to the job creation and environmental returns of the emerging green economy. RENEW creates training pathways and support networks leading to high-quality, living wage jobs. Minneapolis and St. Paul residents who are military veterans, unemployed or underemployed, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders or high school dropouts qualify for services. RENEW embraces a dual customer service strategy to successfully address the job training needs of core city residents, while ensuring that the Twin Cities' expanding green business community has access to a skilled workforce. The RENEW flexible "à la carte" training programs open opportunities at varying career entry points, ranging from short to long-term educational options, based on participant skill level, interest areas, and industry demand for recognized training credentials. The program helps to prepare participants for careers in construction, building systems management, manufacturing (including industrial recycling and waste reduction), and renewable energy with a focus on solar power.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

Key contributors to RENEW's high placement and retention rates include:

- Contextualized learning opportunities that provide hands-on experience in real work settings;
- Flexible entry points with customized options along a continuum of learning needs;
- Thorough screening of participants at the start of the program;
- Training instructors that possess in-depth industry and green policy knowledge that connect participants to job networking opportunities;
- Constant presence of Employment Service Providers along the service continuum; and
- Leveraging communication resources and creating strategic workforce partnerships to connect with a broader set of employers.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

HANDS-ON LEARNING

Contextualized and Work-based Strategies & Nationally Recognized Credentials

One example of a strategy that enhances job placement and retention is hands-on learning. Several RENEW training courses offer skill-building components for participants with limited work experience in target industry sectors. Numerous credentials include contextualized learning opportunities that give participants hands-on experience in real work settings. For instance, participants training for a solar site assessor certification engage in instructor-supervised site design field experience. This includes a mandatory sales component during which participants conduct and “close out” three residential or commercial customer sales prior to testing for their North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners national certification. Participants who elect the manufacturing route have opportunities to conduct real-time learning events and exercises such as participating in lean manufacturing Kaizen events at local employer sites. The Guadalupe Alternative Program and Goodwill Easter Seals construction/deconstruction training incorporate technical skills demonstrations and training on-location at the training program site. Participants practice their skills by building and deconstructing a house. Program participants take these on-site learning opportunities back into the classroom, demonstrate how they apply directly to classroom training modules, and learn how to perform these new skills in the workplace. Hands-on learning provides future employers with a firsthand look at the skills and abilities of these newly-trained jobseekers.

PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY

Basic Education and Career Readiness & Nationally Recognized Credentials

A key element of RENEW’s job placement success is the flexible design and participant choice components. The training approach is customized and offers flexible entry points along a continuum of learning needs. Individuals select from 12 employment service agencies, choosing a provider to meet their needs in terms of location, culturally-specific service offerings, and providers’ areas of industry expertise. With the assistance of a well-informed employment counselor, participants select training in one of the four green industry areas. Training decisions are based on work background, education level, job targets, industry trends,

and participants’ individual interests and aptitudes. The range of training ensures that participants access coursework that is appropriate for their skill levels and for the amount of time they can dedicate to training completion. Training programs are scheduled at times and locations convenient to participants. RENEW offers remedial education in conjunction with skills training for those who need it, as well as skill building for those who need to augment current skills. Certificates can be combined to meet specific occupational profiles or employer training requests. Complementary credentials are earned and applied across job-function areas within RENEW targeted industries. Because of this flexibility, individualized training programs vary from 12 months to 1 week or less. At its peak, RENEW featured 70 different training programs, offered by 14 training partners.

PARTICIPANT EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Continuum of Participant Support & Post Placement Services

A critical element of RENEW’s placement success is its thorough screening of participants at the start of the program. Employment Service Providers (ESPs) possess a great deal of experience in recruiting, assessing and counseling participants. As a part of their responsibilities, they provide clear communication and education to participants about their training options and the sector-associated occupations available to them. RENEW offers an orientation at each of the 12 training provider locations, providing clear information about programs and certifications. With this information, participants are able to make informed choices about training selection. ESPs provide participants information on various industry associations available for them to join to learn more about the industry and for networking opportunities. ESPs arrange job fairs specifically for RENEW jobseekers. Training instructors possess in-depth professional, industry, and green policy knowledge. They refer participants to job networking opportunities. Professional associations in the RENEW participant network include BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association), local chapters of the US Green Building Council, LEED and MN Green Star professional groups, the Chamber of Commerce, Association for Manufacturing Excellence, the MN Renewable Energy Society, trade unions, and many more.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDER CASE MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE

Continuum of Participant Support, Retention & Post Placement Services

ESPs are a constant presence for the participant along the service continuum, assisting them with job search, career guidance, self-marketing, and job positioning. ESPs develop a customized plan to assist participants to attain and retain employment. Typical work supports come in the form of transportation assistance and tools for the job. ESPs are available to participants for the duration of the program; they meet at least once a month to discuss employment plan progress, and to identify career advancement interests. In addition, ESPs lead workshops on a variety of employment-related topics, including completing job applications, writing resumes, interviewing, and workplace communications. Participants learn to promote their green job training and competencies, differentiating themselves in the job market through their credentials, skills, and business and industry knowledge.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND CREATING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO WIDEN THE EMPLOYER REACH

Partnership Building, Leveraging Resources, Employer Engagement- Individual Firms and Leveraging Employer Groups

RENEW's leveraged up-front marketing assistance, supported by local area foundation dollars, to get the project's promotional message into the business community, jump-starting outreach initiatives. As a result, the program aligns with regional support of green business development initiatives, carries a well-recognized name, and conveys a clear message that speaks to value-added business benefits in terms of sustainability and bottom line savings, which has attracted employers.

RENEW involved employers from the very start. Employers advised on the development of the grant and training curriculum. To connect with a broader set of employers, the City of Minneapolis partnered with neighboring St. Paul workforce service area administrator, Ramsey County Workforce Solutions. The partnership leverages both St. Paul and Minneapolis Business Services Specialists, the Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board, and the Minneapolis Workforce Council. Together, this outreach team connected to more than 200 employers, identified 305 RENEW-related job openings, and engaged businesses in dialogue specific to the valuable training participants were receiving from the program.

Outreach also focused on matching job candidates to the skill needs companies were seeking. This business engagement provided Business Services staff with direct, "on the ground" intelligence about available occupations, employer perceptions regarding green jobs, and employers' current and future hiring trends. This data was captured and transferred by the RENEW project manager, to the employment service counselors, in order to manage program training options, to specifically meet employer skill and competency needs, and to better-inform participants' training decisions. By collaborating with the City of St. Paul, through Ramsey County Workforce Solutions, the City of Minneapolis Employment and Training program designed an innovative, regional approach to employer engagement. Connections to business ensured RENEW training was based on current industry information, scheduled according to participant training demand, and positioned for strong job placement outcomes.

mi casa resource center

(denver green jobs initiative)

Denver, Colorado

SGA Type - Pathways Out of Poverty

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Denver Green Jobs Initiative (DGJI), with Mi Casa Resource Center as the lead organization, focuses on a particular neighborhood in Denver with high unemployment and high poverty, providing training and job placement services in green jobs. DGJI provides life skills, job readiness, technical and non-technical training in the areas of Energy Efficient Building Construction and Retrofits, Renewable Electrical Power, Deconstruction Materials Use, and Energy Efficiency Assessment. Courses are provided for entry, middle, and high-level jobs. Clients go through an intake and assessment process to determine skills, aptitudes and interests. Case managers work with the client to design a career plan that is customized to their needs. Job developers work with employers to identify appropriate job placement opportunities. Case managers continue to support clients once placed into a job or apprenticeship to encourage retention and career advancement.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

The Denver Green Jobs Initiative (DGJI) helps individuals from a high-poverty and high-unemployment neighborhood access training and job placement services in the energy efficiency and solar industries. The program has seen strong success in helping participants secure and maintain job placements, in part because the program has provided job training that meets needs and opportunities in the local market. The following strategies are integral to DGJI's job placement and retention success:

- Program staff have responded to market needs and developed training for available jobs and jobs that will be available in the near future;
- Active and well-connected job placement and retention staff work with both employers and participants to effectively prepare and match participants with jobs; and
- Case management and other supportive services allow participants to address other needs in their lives and stay focused on the ultimate goal of securing employment.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

MONITORING THE LABOR MARKET PROVIDES NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLIENTS

Data-Driven Decision Making, Employer Engagement, Partnership Building, Industry Recognized Credentials, Contextualized & Work-based Strategies

DGJI's job placement staff learned from their network of employer contacts that there was a growing need in Denver for asbestos and energy efficiency workers. The local Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Union (Local 28) was not providing training in this area, so DGJI stepped in to fill the gap in the training market and developed a training program for asbestos and energy efficiency workers. The week-long training program includes scheduling students to take the State of Colorado certification exam, and provides students with a basic tool kit as many employers require new hires to have basic tools to use on the job.

Since launching the asbestos/energy efficiency training three months ago, approximately 50 students have been trained for jobs and approximately 75 percent have been successfully placed in employment. DGJI's asbestos trainer is extremely active in the job placement process, developing strong relationships with both employers and students in the program to ensure that job placements are a good fit. Overall job placements in the asbestos/energy efficiency industry have been high as a result of the growing demand for trained workers and the quality of DGJI's training program. In addition, this training program provides strong opportunities for DGJI's ex-offender population: employers will hire ex-offenders since the work is not in residential areas.

In an effort to provide training that meets employer needs and prepares students for available job opportunities, DGJI keeps a close eye on the labor market and adjusts its training programs accordingly. While DGJI has had a strong solar installation training program for participants, demand for these jobs has dropped off because several state tax credits are coming to an end. Several significant public works projects are on the horizon in Denver, including a light rail line, a VA hospital and a new airport terminal. Hiring is not expected to begin until 2012, but DGJI is already beginning to prepare a pool of trained students who can fill these jobs when they become available. To do so, DGJI is connecting with partners including community colleges, community-based organizations, and the Workforce Investment Now consortium (WIN) to respond to some specific needs for the public works projects, such as forklift training, to improve the job placement prospects of graduates in these new job opportunities.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS IMPROVE CLIENT SUCCESS

Continuum of Participant Support, Partnership Building, Basic Education and Career Readiness & Post-Placement Services

DGJI recognizes that supportive wrap-around services play a critical role in achieving high placement and retention rates by helping students maintain their motivation and their dignity. All DGJI program participants are required to complete two five-day modules that provide life skills and career readiness training; both of these courses are taught by staff from the Denver Institute of Urban Studies (DIUS), a DGJI partner organization. The Personal and Professional Development course educates students about money management, positive work attitudes, self-esteem, working through conflict, and professional goal setting. The Career Readiness and Computer Literacy course covers resume writing, job search techniques, interview skills, time management tips, and basic Microsoft Word and Excel skills. Another DGJI partner organization, Charity's House Ministries, provides other supportive services to participants in the training program including securing transitional housing, phone bill assistance, utility payment assistance, ESOL education, basic math tutoring, and more. As participants successfully address challenges in other areas of their lives, they are able to focus more fully on securing and maintaining a job.

Once participants have secured jobs, DGJI continues to provide support including transportation to help graduates meet other needs in their lives, allowing them to be more productive employees and improving their job retention outcomes. DGJI works with a large population of ex-offenders who often have specific requirements with their parole officers and residences. Once ex-offenders are placed in jobs, DGJI works with half-way houses and law enforcement to ensure that graduates can get to work while still meeting their obligations.

When the training portion of DGJI's grant period wraps up in late September, DGJI will transition to providing post-placement support services to continue to meet the needs of its client population. Staff will focus on working with program graduates who are unemployed or are not happy with their current jobs. DGJI plans to offer a "job club" format including peer sharing and problem-solving with facilitation from staff, as well as continued career counseling and job placement services for graduates. By providing these services, DGJI will help participants find the most appropriate job placements and improve their overall success.

west hills community college district

Coalinga, California

SGA Type - Pathways Out of Poverty

PROJECT OVERVIEW

West Hills Community College District, comprised of two community colleges and two satellite sites, works with various city and county agencies including the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the Workforce Investment Board (WIB), and local and potential employers to effectively recruit, train and place rural disadvantaged adults into growing industries in the region (mainly solar). West Hills works closely with Westside Institute of Technology, a partner organization who has formed relationships with the surrounding school districts to provide the vocational training for the college district. West Hills utilizes vocational ARRA grant funds to modify and expand training curriculum allowing them to place more individuals in green employment in the short term but also strengthening their training system structure in the long term. By successfully placing numerous individuals into green employment, West Hills has strengthened the community and the economy of this region of rural Central California.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

Key contributors to West Hills' high placement and retention rates include:

- Dynamic training program (basic education, soft skills training, contextualized coursework) that is constantly being adapted to meet changing employer needs – tight time frame, various skill sets;
- Broad-based employer engagement strategy – grass roots recruitment, pre-employment discussions, site visits, follow up meetings;
- Monthly community collaborative meetings leading to advanced information dissemination among all partners;
- Pre-screening trainees for job readiness and delivering employer requested support services to eliminate potential employment barriers and to ensure successful placement;
- Providing employers with first class treatment – interview space, pre-screened/trained employees, tax credit incentives; and
- Retention specialists follow-up with trainees for a year after employed.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

PRACTICAL TRAINING – SOFT SKILLS AND CONTEXTUALIZED COURSEWORK

Continuum of Participant Support, Contextualized and Work-based Strategies & Basic Education and Career Readiness

Basic education and career readiness preparation is a vital component of West Hills' training curriculum and has broadened their ability to directly place students into jobs at the end of training. Many of the students who enter the program are dislocated or incumbent workers or seasonal farmer laborers who lack the necessary skills to successfully obtain and retain employment in the solar industry. A range of courses, including interviewing skills and job readiness workshops, are incorporated into West Hills' training curriculum, while other courses, including additional GED and computer introduction classes, are offered outside of the program to heighten an individual's marketability. In addition to soft skills coursework, case workers are attuned to each individual's training progress and take this into account when pre-screening trainees to enter employment. If a student is not prepared to enter employment, West Hills' suggests they enroll in remedial classes or retake a basic level course to sharpen their skills. To this effect, West Hills ensures that their students are equipped with the necessary skills to properly apply for a job and succeed in the workforce before they begin the employment process.

West Hills' training program includes applied English and math curriculum related to the solar industry. By teaching students the basic math formulas needed in the field and their practical applications, West Hills is able to save valuable time and training resources while providing students with the essential knowledge to successfully carry out their job. At the end of training, West Hills supplies students with a pocket book "cheat sheets" with important formulas, so they can easily access this list and perform calculations on the job site. Since training is focused in the context of future employment, students are given the tools to succeed in the workplace.

A WIN-WIN

Employer Engagement- Individual firms & Alignment with Economic Development

A key ingredient to West Hills' job placement success is broad-based employer engagement; relationships West Hills form with employers create a direct link from training to employment. In order to ensure there are jobs available after completing training, West Hills attends monthly community collaborative meetings where school districts, established employers, the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), and county agencies convene to discuss employment opportunities in the region and how to supply a qualified workforce for new businesses (which is where West Hills steps in). While West Hills does much of the employer engagement ground work on their own, either by seeking out and meeting with potential employers or visiting the county office to determine project proposals in the region, only as a cohesive unit of organizations, is the community collaborative able to bring green jobs and businesses to the region and strengthen the regional economy.

Once West Hills is aware of potential jobs, both David, the director of the Westside Institute (the training arm of West Hills), and Robert, the Director of WIA DOL support services, sit down with the employer to determine what skills employees will need to have. It is a joint effort; this way both parties know the needs of the employer and can modify their portion of the training program accordingly. Many times employers will request trained employees as quickly as possible so they can meet their deadlines. West Hills will adapt their training model to suit the employers' tight time frame and desired skill sets. In other instances, West Hills will extend the training courses if employers have ample time, to assure employees preparedness for open positions. Employers appreciate West Hills' flexibility and their ability to provide well-trained employees under various time restraints.

West Hills assists employers throughout the hiring process, leading to grateful employers and higher placement rates. This includes case managers pre-screening trainees to ensure their employment success. Case managers review the individual's experience against the employer's needs, examine the individual's completed coursework and performance, determine if they have child care available and if they have transportation to the job site. Through support services (further described below), West Hills is able to help individuals overcome these barriers and will not recommend they apply for a job beforehand. West Hills also provides space at One-Stops for employers to conduct interviews, giving their students priority in the application process while simplifying logistical decisions for employers. In addition, information on enterprise zones and Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) eligibility is made available to employers. Common past practices include paying a temp agency to find and gather this information, but West Hills does this for free, further improving collaborative spirit and encouraging companies to locate in the region. Employers appreciate the united effort, especially when a local well trained workforce has been pre-screened to fit their needs and are ready to work.

PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

Continuum of Participant Support, Leveraging Resources & Retention

Through leveraged WIA funds, West Hills is able to provide their students with support services to help them find and retain employment. Services include apparel for interviews, funds for mileage reimbursement and car repairs, clothing for employment (hard hats, steel toe boots, gloves), tools and childcare. Supplying students with these services, including transportation assistance, are immensely important in this rural central California region as most jobs are 30 to 60 minutes from

an individual's home. This assistance is critical as those individuals unable to make it to the job site, won't be able to maintain employment. If employees ask for specific tools, West Hills will first confirm needs with the employer and have them send over a recommended list. Tool purchases for students are made on an individual basis after confirming they are required for employment. These WIA support services are a critical piece in West Hills' retention success as the college's funds only go so far.

Entering employment is only half the process, maintaining employment is the important piece that can often be overlooked. A West Hills' retention specialist calls trainees every quarter for a year to see if they are still working and if so, how they are doing at their job. If the Employment Readiness Specialist is unable to get a hold of them by phone, they will go to the individual's house to follow up with them in person. Although West Hills usually doesn't offer support services throughout the retention process as the individual has exited the training program, they will offer whatever assistance they can, this can include additional training, remediation classes, or additional employment leads.

West Hills follows up with employers after they have hired their trainees either with a phone call, a survey, or a site visitation, if a number of their trainees are employed there. They discuss how they can better improve their program to ensure they have addressed the employer's skill sets needs. This strengthens West Hills' relationship with employers, enhances the vitality of their training program, and increases the likelihood that this employer will continue hiring West Hills trained individuals.

goodwill industries international, inc.

Atlanta, Georgia; Austin, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Phoenix, Arizona; Washington D.C., and Grand Rapids, Michigan

SGA Type - Pathways Out of Poverty

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Goodwill Goes Green (G3) will serve 1,300 individuals with multiple barriers, in the Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy industries of energy-efficient building construction and retrofit; renewable electric power; and energy efficiency assessment. Goodwill Industries International (GII) is targeting six diverse communities in urban and rural areas: Atlanta, Georgia; Austin, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Phoenix, Arizona; Washington, D.C.; and Grand Rapids, Michigan. The program model moves job seekers from intensive individual assessment through to job placement and includes career planning, transitional jobs, contextualized pre-employment training (with subjects such as soft skills, environmental literacy, financial literacy and occupational basic skills), and occupational skills training. Once placed, workers are supported by local Goodwills and their local partners to help them retain their jobs and advance within their chosen industry, along clear career pathways.

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

Key components that are contributing to G3's high placement and retention success include:

- Transitional job and pre-apprenticeship opportunities;
- Providing long-term placement services by connecting them to workforce and increasing their network;
- Using creative techniques to find the hidden job market; and
- Proficient early use of assessment and screening tools and holding high participant expectations.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

AUDITIONING FOR THE JOB: TRANSITIONAL JOB AND PRE-APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Contextualized and Work-based Learning Strategies, Employer Engagement- Individual Firms & Apprenticeships

One of the major strategies that G3 attributes to its participant placement successes across all of its national sites is their ability to offer transitional job opportunities. Transitional jobs provide part-time, time-limited, supportive vocational coaching while a person is on-the-job. The transitional job allows a person the opportunity to job search and go on interviews or address barriers to full-time employment while earning a modest income. These job experiences give them more confidence in what they can do, provide experience that can be placed on their resume, and wages for transportation and tools needed for a successful job search, while at the same time allowing them to work where there may be no position with more permanent employment.

Having a transitional job at the end of vocational training complements the training and is a great way to audition for the potential employer. For the employer, the transitional job allows them a chance to vet the worker and helps G3 to develop important employer relationships. These job experiences are yielding some great results. Transitional jobs are a great motivator for participants. Within the Grand Rapids area, most of the participants who have had a transitional job have been successfully placed with an employer.

Washington, D.C. and Atlanta have strong pre-apprenticeship relationships. In Atlanta, the Georgia Trade Up training partner provides an eight week pre-apprenticeship training curricula in the construction trades including: weatherization, green construction, and deconstruction. Participants who complete this training have experienced high levels of placement in apprenticeship programs and are frequently placed in jobs right away. Successful placement is due in part to the established relationships with labor unions and the hands-on, contextual learning that takes place where participants are practicing weatherization skills by doing such things as installing insulation, and deconstructing walls and ceilings.

USING INNOVATION TO CONNECT TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Employer Engagement - New Employer Groups & Continuum of Participant Support

Many of the sites have experienced soft local economies resulting in a high rate of unemployment and underemployment of participants. To help respond to this growing problem, G3 shifted more resources to job development via dedicated employment specialists who provide participants with long-term placement services by connecting and re-connecting them to the workforce and increasing their network.

Employment specialists are using creative techniques to find the hidden job market. Specialists pull city permits to find out where construction jobs are taking place, train participants to make calls to industry associations and contractors to find out who is hiring, locate First Source Employment Agreements, convene business advisory councils, and host program open houses for participants and employers to communicate the value of the curriculum and green economy.

At the Charlotte site, employment specialists are licensed in Building Performance Institute (BPI) skills and are also instructors. When they develop employer relationships, they are speaking as peers to licensed professionals. The Charlotte staff possesses a considerable amount of knowledge and experience within the construction industry and has created their own building and construction social enterprise to help train participants. The company, Goodwill Construction Services, recently won two construction bids for weatherization projects in the City of Charlotte. The entity has hired three G3 participants and after only a few months on the job, one has been hired at a higher level position by another established weatherization company.

SUPPORTING PARTICIPANTS' NEEDS – FROM EX-OFFENDERS TO RURAL JOBSEEKERS

Ex-offenders, Long-term Unemployed & Continuum of Participant Support

In the Grand Rapids area, the program has three training facilities located in Greenville, Big Rapids and Montcalm. Training here is focused on weatherization specialization and energy audit certification. This 200-240 hour training program had fairly low placement results in the fourth quarter due to dips in the local economy, criminal background status of most participants, long distances traveled by participants in more rural areas, and harsh inclement weather in the winter months. To mitigate these barriers, GII applied new approaches. To assist ex-offenders, the Grand Rapids staff utilized their relationships with the corrections community and resources through their Prisoner Reentry Initiative grant. To help connect participants with local employers, particularly those who travel long distances, G3 increased the employment specialists who focus on developing and maintaining relationships where rural workers live. G3 also made a decision to focus its industry targets and concentrate on the energy efficiency industry rather than construction, to more greatly align with area needs and regional weather conditions.

ASSESSING PARTICIPANT COMMITMENT

Basic Education and Career Readiness & Contextualized and Work-based Learning Strategies

The G3 green construction and weatherization program in Charlotte, North Carolina is located at Goodwill's headquarters and classes are taught by an instructor from Central Piedmont Community College and a licensed G3 staff member. One of the key methods attributing to their placement success is the involvement of employed participants and business community members, and the staff's enforcement of a code of professionalism. Former trainees visit program staff and new trainees to share their experience. The employed trainees give G3 staff updates on their jobs and even job

leads with their employers. One employed participant tipped off program staff to several opportunities with his employer that led to almost ten more hires from the program. G3 staff is supported by other members of the organization who consistently reinforce messages related to the competitive nature of the jobseeker world and "putting forth a great first impression." The preparation in the classroom and hands-on training prepares participants for external competition. Business advisory members attend hands-on training opportunities and visit the classroom and give participants detailed, candid feedback during mock interviews and career planning.

In Atlanta, the G3 renewable energy and energy efficiency program also intentionally built in very high standards. As a part of their screening and selection process, they have an evaluation week to determine if participants are suitable for the work. The evaluation includes a hands-on component where participants go through simulated work areas, like crawling in small spaces, and climbing tall ladders. This upfront assessment gives people an idea of the actual work, prior to coursework. This process also provides an opportunity for the program to refer out to other programs that better match the individual's interests and abilities.

state energy sector partnership & training

colorado department of
labor & employment

colorado department of labor & employment

Denver, Colorado

SGA Type - State Energy Sector Partnership & Training

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Colorado Department of Labor & Employment (CDLE) provides information and tools to help businesses and workers in Colorado stay competitive. The scope of assistance provided by CDLE includes: connecting job seekers with jobs; providing economic data for decision making; assisting workers injured while on the job; ensuring fair labor practices; providing temporary wage replacement through an Unemployment Insurance Program; providing consumer protection and safety programs. CDLE implements the State Energy Sector Partnership to ensure the state has a qualified workforce that allows Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency and conservation firms to prosper and grow. The partnership also prepares workers in Colorado to qualify for jobs in the new energy economy through several activities: the Energy Sector Entrepreneurial Pilot Project; Statewide Apprenticeship Partnership program; a Green Training Curriculum to create hands-on training in Energy Efficiency Audits, Wind Turbine Safety, and Solar Energy and other related occupations; Energy Scholarships for participants; Youth Conservation Corps; and a Youth Outreach campaign to train student ambassadors to educate parents and peers about green practices and career opportunities

KEY PLACEMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

The Colorado SESP has focused on a business driven approach with flexibility and adaptability in executing their grant which has helped them to succeed in placing individuals in secure positions. This adaptability is evident when looking at their strategies on employer engagement and being cognizant of policy changes and other factors that alter job markets. This enables them to hone in on actual and current workforce needs. Their focus on training incumbent workers has allowed them to help individuals perform additional job duties based on their new skills and competencies, which results in them retaining their jobs amidst tough economic conditions with frequent layoffs. In addition, they have invested in apprenticeship programs that often lead to long term employment.

Key factors that contribute to their high placement rates include:

- Engaging employers, maintaining contact and recruiting new employers are crucial components to uncovering businesses' evolving needs and targeting training efforts to specific requirements for positions that actually exist;
- Colorado's incumbent worker strategy has allowed them to be flexible with resources and not allow external factors, like the poor economy, to hinder their ability to find employers with training needs. Training incumbent workers expands the skill sets and certifications an individual possesses, which opens up new business opportunities for employers and sometimes prevents workers from being let go;
- Awareness of changes in regional, state and federal policy, as well as changes in the demand for certain types of labor are crucial to inform meaningful allocation of training resources and succeeding in placement; and
- Supporting registered apprenticeship programs that have added energy efficiency or renewable energy curriculum to their program.



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PROMISING PRACTICES

THE BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL: THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Partnership Building & Employer Engagement- Leveraging Existing Employer Groups, Individual Firms, New Employer Groups

Engaging employers, maintaining contact with those employers and recruiting new employers are all crucial components to uncovering businesses' evolving needs and targeting training efforts to specific requirements that will help them grow. Colorado treats the SESP as an employer-driven grant and has adopted a "grow business first" approach to employer engagement. Instead of creating marketing campaigns to reach out to unemployed workers, they actively seek out businesses, and find out what can enable, or what holds back, their growth. They start with the businesses and then work backwards from there. Vital to this process was the creation of a Business Advisory Council (BAC) to help guide business related policy. Colorado SESP asked BAC members how best to get information about what they would need to grow their businesses. Employers responded "stop surveying us about what new people we need. We need our existing workforce to have new skills so we can survive and grow." As a result, the focus has been on elevating the skills portfolio of incumbent workers based on information directly from employers to fill immediate needs, a direct route to placing trained individuals.

To keep the circle of employer engagement continuously expanding, the Colorado SESP team pursues an ongoing process to reach out to multiple industry associations (i.e. Colorado Cleantech Industry Association), to understand priority training needs and find potential placement opportunities. They explore all available avenues for recruiting new businesses, from reading about relevant companies in newspapers or journals to seeing business advertisements on the streets and following up with those businesses. To maintain membership, they keep the employers involved and active, rather than engaging them once on the front end. To facilitate this continuing engagement, the SESP team is purposeful in ensuring that every meeting with employers has something of value for them (e.g., learning more about their industry, touring a local laboratory, finding out about financing options from the state energy office, etc.), in addition to completing the immediate

work at hand. Council members are also responsible for evaluating training program curricula to ensure they meet industry needs. Once Colorado has demonstrated their added value, they encourage employer members to peer recruit companies at industry association meetings they attend. Engaging employers through peer recruitment works because there is a high level of trust between businesses within an industry cluster. Expanding and maintaining the BAC is crucial for both obtaining industry expertise and securing placement opportunities.

WORKING THROUGH THE RECESSION

Incumbent Worker Training & Nationally Recognized Credentials

It is important to be flexible with resources and not allow external factors, like the poor economy, to hinder the ability to find employers with training needs, whether those needs are for new positions or for incumbent workers. There are several uncontrollable factors that limit the availability of new jobs: limited access to financing, collapsing construction markets and high electricity costs. Instead of training workers for jobs that do not exist, Colorado SESP decided to focus on training incumbent workers. Bolstering the skills of incumbent workers increases their productivity and equips them with new skills, competencies, and knowledge that open up business opportunities for their employers.

As an example, the Colorado Legislature passed a law requiring that the performance of all photovoltaic (PV) electrical work, the installation of PV modules and the installation of PV module mounting equipment, would be subject to on-site supervision by a certified PV energy practitioner, as designated by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) or another nationally recognized professional organization determined by the Colorado State Electrical Board by rule. After talking with local contractors, Colorado SESP discovered that businesses would benefit from incumbent worker training to help employees attain PV energy practitioner certification. Obtaining this certification made contractors more competitive in bids for solar projects. As a result, contractors have been able to successfully secure a role in these projects, and have stabilized their employment or grown as a result. This success strengthened SESP relationships with employers, who will likely reconnect when they have

employment openings. Without improving employers' current workforce, they would only be eligible for a subset of project opportunities, and might be forced to resort to lay-offs. Strong communication with the business community and staying abreast of legislative changes enabled Colorado SESP to focus their efforts on incumbent training opportunities.

STAYING ABREAST OF LEGISLATIVE AND MARKET CHANGES

Policy Alignment & Employer Engagement

As mentioned above, awareness of changes in regional, state and federal policy, as well as changes in the demand for certain types of labor are crucial to inform meaningful allocation of training resources and succeeding in placement. To this end, Colorado SESP benefits greatly from feedback from their BAC. The BAC shares first-hand observations of shortages or surpluses for specific occupations and insider industry knowledge on new positions. This helps to direct training efforts towards jobs that actually exist.

Oftentimes, labor markets shift in the middle of implementing a training program. For example, the BAC alerted the Colorado SESP after a collapse in the solar installation industry due to the local energy provider slashing solar rebates. The BAC recommended that all solar installation training be put on hold. This insider knowledge helped to divert training resources that would have been poured into an industry with limited job prospects. Recently, at a BAC meeting, members mentioned that there was an oversaturation of energy auditors for residential work. Colorado SESP's program allows them to be flexible in response to these changes. To adjust, they began to train individuals in peripheral skill sets that could benefit green companies. This way, individuals gain valuable skills that are applicable to a broader range of jobs, but training still aligns with SESP requirements.

There has been a recent surge of requests by Colorado businesses for sustainability managers, another lead from the BAC. Training programs for sustainability managers were not available, so Colorado SESP partnered with the University of Denver and Natural Capitalism Solutions, a national sustainability management training company

based in Boulder, Colorado, to meet employers' training needs for this position.

The BAC provides labor market updates with less of a lag and with more granularity than traditional resources for similar information. Equally important, by requiring businesses to approve all training providers and programs available for SESP scholarships, Colorado SESP ensures job seekers are being trained by reputable training providers that offer classes and skills demanded by businesses. In short, when businesses ask "would I hire someone with these skills from this training provider?" the answer for business is a solid "yes." Colorado works with 50 BAC approved training providers that collectively provide 332 courses. They have found that a selection of these providers and courses are repeatedly instrumental in meeting business' training requirements, and plan to make a master list of those courses from which employers and job seekers most frequently choose. This practice will provide employers and the workforce system with a list of most frequently used resources that have been proven to be successful in training individuals to meet business demand.

APPRENTICESHIPS: BUILDING FROM EXISTING PROGRAMS

Apprenticeships & Leveraging Resources

A registered apprenticeship program provides individuals with a chance to obtain valuable on-the-job training while getting paid and is more likely to lead to long term employment. Apprentices are paid to work 40 hours a week and attend classes on week nights or Saturdays. Most workers retain employment at the close of their apprenticeship and the businesses feel they are better equipped to perform at the job. Colorado SESP offered to fund the last 18 months of an apprenticeship through a public procurement looking for existing apprenticeship programs that were interested in adding green training to their programs. Over 200 requests were sent out and five programs were selected. For example, the Independent Electrical Contractors program partnered with the US Green Building Council to develop and deliver the G PRO Fundamentals of Green Building and G PRO Electrical Systems courses.

