



Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Compendium of Promising Practices

November 2012



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES





DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
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November 14, 2012

Dear Grantees,

As the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program enters its third year, the Office of Family Assistance is pleased to share some examples of unique or innovative practices that are being implemented by grantees. This *Compendium of Promising Practices* includes interesting and diverse approaches identified by you that you feel are helpful for meeting the needs of participants and local employers in the healthcare community, expanding partnerships, building a foundation for long-term sustainability, and much more.

I encourage you to read these *Promising Practices* to learn about the common and unique challenges your fellow HPOG grantees are facing and how they are addressing them. We expect the sharing of these *Promising Practices* will stimulate discussion. They also provide you with approaches to consider and organizations to contact when looking for ways to strengthen your own program.

The Office of Family Assistance will host the *Compendium of Promising Practices* on the HPOG Community Website where supporting documents, examples, and related information about these practices can be found. We will also provide opportunities to share more information and ideas through the HPOG Annual Meeting, ongoing social media exchanges, and the upcoming roundtables.

Thank you for your contribution to this publication. We are looking forward to continuing to work together to help TANF recipients and other low-income individuals to begin careers in healthcare.

Sincerely,

Earl S. Johnson
Director, Office of Family Assistance

Introduction

Authorized by the Affordable Care Act, the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program is providing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals with education and training for well-paying, in-demand health care occupations. The HPOG program is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance.

First awarded in September 2010, the grantees are now entering the third year of a five year program. HPOG awards were made to 32 entities located across 23 states, including four State bodies, nine local Workforce Investment Boards (three of whom are also Workforce Investment Act One-Stop operators), 12 institutions of higher education (consisting of one university, nine community colleges and two community college districts), and two community based organizations. Five awards were given to tribal applicants, including one tribal council and four tribal colleges.

The HPOG program has incorporated some innovative practices since its inception. In addition to providing education and training, grantees provide multiple supportive services such as case management, child care, and transportation. Further, grantees are coordinating with state and local TANF agencies, State and local Workforce Investment Boards, the Federal and State offices of Apprenticeship, and other strategic partners.

This *Compendium of Promising Practices* captures some of the unique or innovative practices that are being implemented by grantees. The practices included are those that were identified by the grantees themselves as program components or strategies that they feel are important to the success of their local program. There is one *Promising Practice* for each of the 32 grantees. They were collected by the Office of Family Assistance's technical assistance provider, JBS International, Inc. This compilation will be used to help the grantees learn from each other and build a learning community.

The HPOG program is a demonstration project designed to build and share knowledge. Sharing *Promising Practices* and fostering a learning community is just one component of a broad strategy to build and share knowledge. A multi-pronged evaluation is also underway that will provide much more information on program implementation, systems change, outcomes and impact. The evaluation will grow the evidence base for improving outcomes for TANF recipients and other low-income individuals.

This volume organizes the *Promising Practices* by grantee, State, community, type of organization, and component of the HPOG program. To access this document and other supporting documents, examples, and related information about these practices electronically, please go to the HPOG Community Website at <http://hpogcommunity.acf.hhs.gov>.

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Promising Practices

Using Business Tools to Improve a Program

Alamo Community College District

As director of the Alamo Community College HPOG project, Ty Smith, like other HPOG leaders, seeks to continually improve the results of his program—to increase the number of participants entering, being trained, and finding employment in the healthcare field. With a variety of partners, subcontractors, interested parties, and participants involved, Ty Smith decided that the best way to approach his improvement effort would be to clarify for everyone exactly how potential participants were recruited into the program, assessed, and moved into occupational training.

Having been trained as an engineer, Mr. Smith often employed standard business tools like flow charts, process maps, and spreadsheets. He viewed the challenges of recruitment, assessment, and matching participants with appropriate occupational training as interrelated parts of a whole and not as separate problems. Viewing recruitment as an *intake process with a set of interrelated tasks that influenced one another*, he drafted a flow chart that graphically displayed the process from beginning to end. Team members provided input, and a current snapshot of this process emerged.

The resulting Intake Process Flow Chart shows everyone engaged in the process exactly how the program conducts outreach, whether with individuals or in groups; makes contacts and follows up; prequalifies potential participants as TANF or others; certifies wages; and then interviews participants for commitment and documentation. The decision made at this point in the process enables the potential participant to move forward or ends the process. Participants who are approved must then pass the TABE, drug tests, and background checks before moving on. In addition, the Alamo HPOG team reviews for employability any individuals who do not exactly fit employer guidelines before they enter time limited employment training at the employer's site. Lastly, participants receive immunizations and have panel tests verified before they start the occupational training program.

Ty Smith has determined that the entire process, from intake to completion of time limited employment training takes 31 to 35 days, depending on whether the participant begins individually or in a group. He has also identified the number of days each step should take and the specific materials, decisions, and documentation required at each stage. Applying this method for communicating the intake process has helped to reduce confusion and errors and more quickly react to special case challenges. A successful outcome is more likely because of this efficient and effective communication and standardization tool.

A similar approach was used to expand relationships with employers. While Alamo Community College District used traditional marketing materials to approach employers, Ty Smith also developed a "basic approach" to reach some business people who might be better persuaded to hire graduates of the program after seeing details about the training received by each participant. By knowing more about the details of a program, such as courses offered, hours, and books used, they can better judge how well the participant will fit in as an employee. As an outreach presentation aid, Ty Smith uses a Course Planning Worksheet, a section of a spreadsheet used by the colleges when performing the detailed costing of courses during the budgeting process.

HPOG grantees can implement the flow chart approach using the following steps:

1. Select a problematic process or activity area that can be addressed as a manageable chunk or grouping.
2. List the step-by-step activities and all related functions performed in this area.
3. Place these steps in a logical order with decision points. Eliminate, combine, or simplify those activities or steps as much as possible. Add timing or required documents if desired.
4. Select a standard type of flow chart and determine symbols commonly known to your team and management. Assemble a first draft of the flow chart, and refine it with team input and use.
5. Use the flow chart to standardize the process or activity and to identify problem areas.
6. Continuously improve your process or activity and update your flow chart accordingly. Identify other areas as needed and work to improve the general effectiveness of your program.

To offer a “basic approach” for concise marketing:

1. In addition to broad scope marketing materials and lengthy course descriptions, include appropriately assembled and simplified one- or two-page detail sheets.
2. Prepare specific, detailed materials about the training tasks and the HPOG program to be used with employers who seek a more detailed perspective.
3. Expect to engage with some employers and individuals in detail about the program and course or training content.

Promising Practices

Innovative Use of Technology

Bergen Community College

Bergen Community College is the lead member of the Northern New Jersey Health Professions Consortium (NNJHPC), a group of 10 county community colleges working to train TANF and other low-income participants in healthcare occupations. The consortium's large geographic area makes it difficult for the 10 site coordinators to coordinate in person and also makes it challenging to disseminate important information to partners and students. NNJHPC has leveraged technology to address these issues, creating a public consortium website and an internal LinkedIn group.

The NNJHPC website (www.nnjhp.com), built using Microsoft's Sharepoint platform, allows the consortium to communicate with partners, employers, and current students. Information available includes health professions course descriptions, links to industry associations and career exploration sites, links to each county's One-Stop Career Center and Workforce Investment Board, and job opportunity listings from the consortium's employer partners. The site also offers subscription capabilities through Constant Contact, ensuring that consortium stakeholders receive the latest news and information. The website is fast becoming a means to provide partners with immediate access to relevant materials and updates.

For its internal communication, NNJHPC has established a forum Group through LinkedIn. LinkedIn Groups allow members to create or comment on discussions posts, providing a means for knowledge sharing and group problem solving. Membership in this Group is limited to grant leadership and the individual leaders at each of the 10 member colleges. The Group is restricted, or private, so members feel free to openly communicate with their peers. Consortium director Justin Doheny reports that members have thus far used the Group to request assistance and ideas from other Consortium leaders, and that they view it as a helpful addition to the various communication channels available within the NNJHPC.

For other HPOG grantees considering the use of Internet tools for communication or information sharing, Mr. Doheny recommends choosing a platform that's easy to design and easy to use. He points to the LinkedIn platform as an example of highly accessible software. Indeed, many of the site coordinators already had an account prior to the creation of the LinkedIn group. Mr. Doheny also encourages other grantees to make their Internet tools and sites look professional and suggests that grantees use the talents of their organization's Web designer, if possible. A site that is easily updated is also crucial, as effective information sharing requires frequent posts and uploads. To facilitate and encourage internal communication, Mr. Doheny suggests that project directors consider restricting access to Internet sites or groups by making them private.

Increasing Opportunities for HPOG Participants Through Partnerships

Blackfeet Community College

For the Issksiniip Project of Blackfeet Community College (BCC), strategic partnerships have been a key ingredient in facilitating participants' educational advancement and employment opportunities. The project has established valuable partnerships with several institutions of higher education as well as a number of community organizations.

Formal relationships between the tribal college (BCC) and a number of four-year colleges make it easier for BCC students to transfer from the two-year BCC to a four-year institution, thus allowing them to move up the career ladder. Partners include four state colleges—the University of Montana, Montana State University, Montana State University–Billings, and Montana State University–Great Falls—and one other tribal college, Salish Kootenai College. These relationships increase potential employment opportunities for students through a statewide approach.

Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) govern the partnerships and specify the roles and responsibilities of each group. The MOUs help build capacity for long-term sustainability between BCC and the four-year institutions.

Participants are able to maintain HPOG support as they move up healthcare career ladders. Each partner institution provides academic advisement, academic support, retention assistance, mentoring, and career support for HPOG students. The BCC Issksiniip Project provides case management and support for HPOG participants who may need childcare or transportation. HPOG provides gas cards or Blackfeet Transportation bus passes.

BCC also has cooperative working agreements signed between its HPOG program and a number of community organizations—Indian Health Service, Blackfeet Manpower, Blackfeet Care Center, Blackfeet Tribal Health Department, Glacier County EMS, Cut Bank Job Service, and Benefis Health Systems—to allow for transferability of information and recipients. As a result, Issksiniip Project students are able to formulate relationships with various employers and benefit from fluid transmission of job trends, job openings, internships, and job shadowing opportunities.

The partnerships create a mechanism for professionals to come to BCC and speak to students about health professions. The partners conduct workshops on various topics, including, but not limited to, professional development, soft skills, and resume writing. The partnerships help to create a smooth transition for students from academic setting to employment.

Promising Practices

Program Flexibility in Volatile Job Markets

Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium, Inc.

Demand-driven workforce development programs need to have the flexibility to adapt training and respond quickly to changes in employer needs and requirements. Local healthcare job markets can be volatile. To treat employers like customers, programs need to respond rapidly when changes in local economic conditions impact training needs. Programs and course offerings should be informed by ongoing analysis of occupational projections, the supply of graduates entering the workforce, the availability of clinical work sites, and the skill sets required by businesses. The Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium (WDC) uses employer input and labor market information (LMI) to adapt its HPOG program to changing conditions so that employers' needs are served and program participants can find jobs.

The WDC had relationships in place with major local healthcare employers at the outset of the HPOG program. These employers were surveyed on their workforce needs over the coming years. The survey results, along with LMI and input from program partners, were used to determine the six occupations initially targeted by the HPOG program:

Direct Support Professional	Medical Office Assistant
Medical Billing Clerk	Licensed Practical Nurse
Pharmacy Technician	Health Information Technician

As the program began, strategies were implemented to continue engaging with local employers. Project staff included a job developer who would focus on developing and maintaining employer relations by communicating directly with local employers about their needs and placing individuals in jobs. The program engaged new employer partners through letter announcements describing programs, internships to form relationships, breakfast clubs, and phone calls. The Project Advisory Committee was established to convene employer representatives, program staff, and program partners on a quarterly basis.

As a result of these efforts, relationships with employers were advanced in the opening year, and many successful job placements were made. However, several new challenges were emerging. The local economy was changing in ways that affected the healthcare job market, making placements for some occupations very difficult, and the program was having difficulty developing a strong relationship with some of its employer partners.

In the second program year, new strategies were developed to improve job placement rates, strengthen relationships with employers, and improve the overall effectiveness of the program. To clarify the current job market, local labor market information was reexamined and presented to employers. Based on an understanding of the new environment, enrollment targets for some occupations were reduced while new targeted occupations were added. The program added CNA/Home Health Aide training to better serve individuals on the first step of the healthcare career ladder. For the second program year, health-related Individual Training Accounts (ITA) were added to the training menu to give participants more flexibility in choice of training programs. Participants used ITAs for Registered Nurse (RN) and surgical technology training

among others. Overall, the program is now putting more focus on RN, which has the highest projected annual openings for healthcare occupations in New York's Western Region. In addition, the program continued to reach out to new employer partners, especially targeting new and small to medium-sized establishments.

Program staff knew that even when the right occupations are targeted for training, it takes well-rounded training programs for individuals to be properly prepared to enter the healthcare profession. The program convened roundtable sessions with employers that addressed not only what jobs are in demand, but also what expectations employers have for the workers in those positions and what competencies and credentials are required. Educators and other partners were brought into discussions about how the HPOG program can provide value to the employer partners. As a result of employer feedback and insights from these sessions, the program is now giving more attention to soft skills training and workplace readiness.

As the Buffalo HPOG program looks to the future, it continues to emphasize the comprehensive role of the job developer as critical to placement success. Lessons applied include using LMI with the most specific geographic area possible and engaging with all types and sizes of healthcare employers. Programs need to work to ensure employers understand the support services provided to participants, such as transportation and childcare, as well as the many additional benefits of working with the program. The program continues exploring new ways to work with employers to ensure participants can find jobs. Upcoming plans include a seminar for new employer partners and an update of marketing materials that directly target employers.

Mentoring Model

Cankdeska Cikana Community College

Cankdeska Cikana Community College has partnered with the RAIN (Recruitment /Retention of American Indians into Nursing) program from the University of North Dakota College of Nursing to provide support for its HPOG participants. The RAIN program is recognized for its support strategies to recruit and retain nursing students. The RAIN mentoring model is designed to address concerns, issues, and the needs of each individual student so that an educational plan can be developed.

A crucial part of the mentoring model is RAIN's essential advisement strategy. All students enrolled in the program are assigned to one of two advisors. Ms. Anderson, the RAIN program assistant coordinator, is the pre-nursing student advisor, and Ms. Wilson, the RAIN program coordinator, is the nursing student advisor. All new participants in the RAIN program complete enrollment interviews with their advisors. Assessment tools are utilized to determine specific individual needs and develop a plan for each student's success. There are regular meetings with mentors and continuous monitoring of academic progress. Students meet with their advisors each semester to review current status and ensure continuous progress towards graduation.

The mentoring model has a nurse mentor, and student tutors are available. The nurse mentor is available to both undergraduate and graduate nursing students, advising prospective students, reviewing individual academic records, and providing individual academic and career advisement. The nurse mentor assists students in setting up study groups and works with students individually or as a group, reviewing their papers for nursing content and assisting them with practicing nursing skills and procedures. The nurse mentor also helps students to organize their syllabi, review their ATI (Assessment and Technologies, Inc.) test scores, develop study strategies, and set up review sessions for the NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examinations-RN or LN) exam. The mentor assists students with scholarly communication skills, teaches role-playing for presentations, and serves as a liaison between faculty and students.

This mentoring model can be replicated or adopted by other grantees that have nursing students in the career ladder and people available to serve as mentors and tutors. It can help the HPOG program to track the success rates of the students and improve program outcomes.

HPOG grantees can adopt the practice by implementing the following steps:

1. Consider the instructors who are assigned as academic advisors at the institution of higher learning or community college to be part of the mentoring team.
2. Recruit nursing students in the career ladder to serve as mentors and tutors.
3. Build mentor compensation into the budget, or use academic work study students to serve as mentors.
4. Meet with students and advisors on a regular basis to track student success and monitor program outcomes.

Student Binders

Central Community College

The three main goals for Central Community College Project HELP (Health Education Laddering Program) are to recruit, empower, and enroll students; give students the tools to be successful in their training; and assist students with securing jobs. These three goals are the guideposts for determining which materials should be included in the student binder, the central repository for educational and employment information for students. One of the most critical components is the one-page student contract or action plan. This document outlines what is expected of the students. The binder contents help to frame discussions between the case managers and students. Anything related to college and career information can be entered, organized, and maintained in the binder. The binder teaches students organizational and record keeping skills.

For other grantees to create student binders it would be necessary for a program team to brainstorm the items that are important to include. The Central Community College student binder model originated from IBEST and VESL learning and was developed through monthly team meetings held with community liaisons, case managers, and program management staff.

When students begin the HELP program, career assessments are completed. These assessments show students their top interests and skills and help to guide them toward career choices that would be good matches for their abilities and interests. The case manager presents each incoming student with a student binder and reviews the binder components with him or her. As the student progresses through the program, the case manager can revisit sections of the binder that are relevant to a student's current stage of development in the program. New information can be added as the student progresses through the program. The binder is a resource students can take with them and refer back to in the future. The sections of the binder include:

- I. Nebraska career connections information
 - a. Nebraska career education model
 - b. Instructions to login to Nebraska Career Connections and instructions to complete Kuder Career Search assessment
- II. Attending college tips
 - a. Dealing with stress
 - b. Time management
 - c. Dealing with depression
 - d. Reducing text anxiety
- III. Job search
 - a. Sample employment application, including background check and drug screening information
 - b. Writing a resume, cover letter, and thank you letter
 - c. Interviewing: Questions, sample rating sheet, dos and don'ts, common reasons people aren't hired, illegal questions, preparing for an interview
 - d. Workplace skills: Communication, organization, computer, interpersonal, analytical/critical thinking, leadership, time management, mathematical, professional

Promising Practices

IV. Personal development

- a. Career choices
- b. Work styles and values
- c. Work ethic
- d. Privacy and confidentiality
- e. Culturally competent
- f. Professionalism

V. Tips for keeping your job

- a. Try and make the job work
- b. Work hard
- c. Be on time
- d. Be a team player
- e. Be flexible
- f. Don't complain
- g. Offer to help
- h. Keep your thoughts to yourself
- i. Be positive
- j. Accept that sometimes things aren't going to go the way you would like them to go
- k. Prepare your departure

VI. Education quest

- a. College planning services
- b. College planning for adult learners

Some of the information contained in the binder is general and applies to all students. For example, it includes general information on time management and handling stress effectively. Also included are resources relevant to getting a first job, such as sample job applications, resume information, tips on interviewing effectively, post- job interview considerations, material on developing a good work ethic, and suggestions for how to keep the job.

Other information in the binder is more specifically related to the career interests indicated through the individual assessments. Individualized binder sections include a career path document, a program map for classes that are needed to complete a particular course of study, and financial aid information. The binder includes information relevant to the particular career choice of the individual. For example, someone in a Registered Nurse program of study would have information describing what an RN job might be like, the wage range for this position, and the length of time needed to complete this course of study.

The binder is an evolving document. Students maintain it over the course of their studies and can always add materials to it, making it a useful handbook that they can continually refer to as they progress through the program and into the workplace.

Career Coordinators in Rural Communities

Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit

The Work Attributes Toward Careers in Healthcare (WATCH) program serves HPOG participants in a rural, ten-county region. A key to the program's success is how its network of strategically-placed WATCH Career Coordinators (Coordinators) serves participants in the region's communities.

Cross-trained for multiple roles, Coordinators serve as case managers, job developers, mentors, and all-purpose participant advocates. To effectively cover all communities in this geographically large area, Coordinators are located at different types of organizations, including post-secondary institutions, Department of Public Welfare offices, libraries, and adult basic education providers, depending on what is the most accessible and practical location in a particular county. By focusing on a specific community, Coordinators are able to develop close working relationships with the key partners in the area, such as college staff and the human resources staff of local employers, and leverage these relationships in the service of participants. Once a week, all Coordinators meet at the WATCH main office to share their challenges, get advice from each other, and leverage the knowledge of the team.

In their case management role, Coordinators verify eligibility and assist participants in the intake process, refer participants to support services as needed, and coordinate enrollment processes. Working together, the participant and Coordinator create an Individual Service Plan for every six months they are enrolled in the program, outlining long- and short-term academic, career, and personal goals. Participants identify potential barriers to meeting their goals and discuss strategies to address these barriers. If the WATCH participant has children, the Coordinator works with the participant to create a childcare plan. Once enrolled in the WATCH program, participants meet with their Coordinators face-to-face at least once a month and communicate by phone, email, or text messaging on a weekly basis.

Coordinators monitor participants' progress in educational programs and assist them when they need additional tutoring and other support services. The unique relationship Coordinators build with their participants supports school persistence and completion. Participants know they can approach their Coordinator about academic problems early in the semester or program so that tutoring or additional support services can be provided in time to ensure success. Education providers appreciate how the WATCH Career Coordinators support the academic success of their students. These partners can contact Coordinators when students demonstrate signs of trouble such as absences, tardiness, rule infractions, poor performance, as well as personal issues that may affect academic success.

In their job developer role, Coordinators contact area employers to explain the WATCH program, its procedures, and how its support services help participants succeed. Coordinators arrange meetings with employer representatives to discuss their specific employment needs. Through these interactions, WATCH staff and participants have learned what employers are looking for in a potential employee and regional employers have learned the value of the screening, case management, and support services WATCH provides.

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Once placed in jobs, WATCH participants receive three to six months of employment transition support depending on their occupational track. During this period, participants continue to meet regularly with their Coordinators and participate in a minimum of quarterly cohort meetings. Through these frequent contacts, WATCH participants are mentored and supported by their Coordinators, as well as their peers, as they begin their new careers. Coordinators keep in close communication with human resource personnel and direct supervisors to monitor a participant's job performance. By working with participants from recruitment to post-placement, and developing and leveraging relationships in the community, WATCH Career Coordinators provide the mentoring and support that helps HPOG participants succeed.

Nursing Career Ladder Boot Camp

College of Menominee Nation

College of Menominee Nation utilizes “boot camps” to address academic readiness (time management skills, *test-taking* skills, study skills, critical thinking skills, financial literacy, team building, etc.) among its HPOG participants. Participants are divided into groups conducted at the time of orientation at the beginning of the semester, and boot camps consist of two days of intensive workshops. During the boot camp participants are introduced to the program, and expectations from the participants are outlined. The purpose of the boot camp is to get all enrolled participants prepared for the next semester, thus increasing their chances of being successful. Each step on the career ladder has parts of the boot camp specifically designed to address the challenges participants will face at that step in the ladder as well as general sessions that are motivational or more universal.

The College of Menominee Nation HPOG participants come from diverse backgrounds and face multiple barriers. Enrolled are students who are traditional—right out of high school—and non-traditional—older with various backgrounds. Some students are single, some married; male and female; some with children, some without; some students come from stable backgrounds but others who have experienced homelessness, living in shelters or their cars. The HPOG team has looked hard at what are the barriers to success and what can we do to alleviate these barriers. Barriers include poverty, childcare issues, lack of support systems, finances, academics, and process problems which result in students not having books or ATI (Assessment Technologies Incorporated) codes at the start of classes. After barriers are identified, boot camp/orientation is tailored to working toward eliminating these barriers to facilitate student success. The development of the boot camp/orientation was designed to facilitate learning for each level of student, from the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), to the bio-science student working toward nursing, to the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and the Associate Degree Nurse (ADN).

This intensive approach involves pairing participants with mentors and HPOG program staff to enable participants to focus and develop their individualized training/career plans, eliminate barriers to employment, and link participants to supportive services. The purpose of the boot camp is to provide clear expectations and requirements and demands of the Nursing Career Ladder Program.

HPOG grantees can adopt the practice by implementing the following key steps:

1. Identify locations for boot camps in their geography.
2. Create shared materials to address barriers and experiences that each participant will undertake.
3. Share case management notes to ensure that retention goals are shared and pressed by case managers to participants.

Promising Practices

Use of Cohorts

Community Action Project of Tulsa County, Inc.

The Community Action Project of Tulsa County uses cohorts for training under its CareerAdvance program. The CareerAdvance project has been a collaboration involving many partners, including Tulsa Community College, Workforce Tulsa, Family and Children's Services, Union Public Schools, Community Education Program, Tulsa Technology Center, and the Northeast Oklahoma Area Health Education Center (AHEC).

The use of cohorts is important because the interpersonal relationships that peers develop in the cohort make a critical difference to their academic learning, emotional and psychological well-being, and ability to broaden perspectives. Cohorts provide active, interactive, and dynamic settings for students to grow their knowledge and skills. They also build community, foster creativity, build leadership skills, and encourage greater progress. Students are likely to experience mutual care and shared purpose in the program. Administrative motivators or benefits are reducing attrition rates and increase in completion and graduation rates.

The improved academic success found in cohort model members translated into improved success in the member's chosen field (Ross, 2001). Thus, cohort model members are more successful as they make their way through their individual program, and graduates are more successful once they begin to practice their craft.

Cohort models, whether intentionally or otherwise, come with logistic and administrative ease. That is, it is easier to schedule and track members as a group. In addition, members have more clarity in the knowledge of courses and timeframes, especially in closed models where there is no room for course choice.

The cohort approach is used to identify a group of participants who are all following the same set of occupational training and has a "core class" that is 4 weeks long. The core class covers basic computer literacy, study skills, conflict resolution, writing, time and stress management, as well as soft skill work-behavior issues. The core classes are important because they prepare participants for entrance exams, help them learn college readiness skills, and set the stage for higher completion rates. Cohorts meet weekly during the first semester of training, twice monthly during the second semester, and monthly after the first year of training. Cohorts are effective because they foster collegiality and support participant retention among students who share a common thread of training experiences.

Other Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG) Programs can adopt the cohort model for their participants as they move up the career ladder in nursing. They can set up similar classes for a cohort and track them as they move from Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) to Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and Registered Nurse (RN). Providing tutoring and group study for the cohort as supplements to their regular classes can build more group support.

Wrap-around Service Delivery Model

Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.

Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. (CITC), implemented their wrap-around service model to provide an array of services to Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG) participants. The CITC HPOG program is unique because they are housed under the umbrella of employment and training services department where the HPOG participants can receive additional supportive services to alleviate barriers to success that once prevented participants from enrolling in higher education and training programs in the healthcare field. The focus of the CITC programs is to provide a holistic approach of wrap-around services to participants to ensure they are successful in completing their training and in securing employment. To achieve this goal, CITC has organized many of their core services so they are in one location.

CITC is a designated satellite One Stop Job Center in Anchorage, Alaska that offers a job center to provide an array of resources to HPOG participants who complete training. In addition, municipal and State services are located in the same facility to better serve participant's needs. The wrap-around concept helps streamline processes and deliver services more quickly to participants and also helps prevent the silo effect in service delivery. HPOG receives referrals from TANF and provides joint case management and support services for HPOG participants.

Another way CITC has streamlined services is through the establishment of a central intake process, data system, release of information, and assessment of needs. This allows a participant to access services they initially need and makes available the other services they potentially need to be successful. The services CITC offers include Tribal TANF, childcare assistance, drop-in childcare, One Stop Center, youth services, Tribal vocational rehabilitation, life skills/ subsidized work experience, and crisis intervention. CITC's onsite partners are the State's Food Stamp agency, Medicaid, Alaska Department of Labor, and Cook Inlet Housing Authority. The CITC and particularly the HPOG staff are trained to help the participants move forward in all aspects of their lives.

Other grantees can replicate this model by exploring the option to invite a partner to co-locate to their facility or place a HPOG case manager in the One Stop or TANF location. This type of service delivery helps to track a participant's progress, identify potential challenges and successes, and make needed services more easily available.

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“Early Warning” Case Management

District Board of Trustees of Pensacola State College

When asked what the strongest element of their program is, Pensacola State College’s HPOG staff agreed that it was the intensive case management provided to all students. According to the staff, this case management is the reason many of the program’s participants have successfully completed their trainings.

Pensacola’s case management services are provided by program partner Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida. Catholic Charities is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3), charitable organization that aims to effect social change by helping individuals and families remove barriers to self-sufficiency, unlock potential, and build up personal dignity. The Northwest Florida branch is one of hundreds across the county and serves residents of Florida’s 18 most northwest counties.

Catholic Charities’ case managers initially meet with every HPOG participant to complete an assessment, identify barriers, and review the HPOG success plan. Following this initial meeting, students meet with case managers at least twice a month to identify barriers, identify emergent needs, monitor academic progress, and promote job readiness skills. For students who need support services, case managers provide quick and easy referrals which are recorded in the student’s file. In addition, case managers refer students to other community service providers to assist with additional resources.

Project director Inger Barnes attributes the success of Pensacola’s case management to the program’s “early warning” strategy. With this approach, case managers take note of any potential barriers a student might face—through discussions during their twice monthly meetings, through tracking of academic performance, or through conversations with other program staff—and attempt to preemptively eliminate them. This task is made easier by weekly meetings where Catholic’s case managers and Pensacola’s HPOG staff share information on a student’s progress and challenges. This ongoing communication keeps both parties aware of students’ needs and ways they can be addressed, and it helps students receive truly “wraparound” support.

Ms. Barnes also credits the dedication of the case managers, as well as their willingness to be flexible and available to students. Furthermore, the case managers’ passion and ability to establish rapport with the students leads the latter to feel a sense of accountability to their case managers, which helps them accomplish the goals set by both parties. By partnership with an organization that is well versed in case management, the Pensacola HPOG program can focus on other program elements, all while students receive high quality services.

Project HOPE Rewards Program

Eastern Gateway Community College

Eastern Gateway Community College's Project HOPE has developed an incentive program designed to address student retention and course completion issues. This program rewards students with "HOPE rewards" for excellence in areas like participation, attendance, and academic success, and allows students to redeem their "rewards" for specific items.

Developed with input from Eastern Gateway's federal project officer, the Project HOPE incentive program is introduced to students during their orientation to the HPOG program, and is further discussed in the students' policy and procedure manuals. The program is structured using a system where different accomplishments are associated with specific "HOPE rewards" values. For example, perfect attendance for one week of classes is worth 20 points; a 4.0 GPA is rewarded with 100 points; and self-sufficiency (i.e., a student does not utilize any financial support services for an entire academic term) results in 400 points.

Among the items that a student can purchase with their points are educational program supplies such as scrubs, stethoscopes, and duty shoes. Other items include: dry goods, personal hygiene items, health and beauty products, baby products, and household supplies. Students must sign a tracking form to verify receipt of their items.

Project Administrator Shari Prichard reports that the incentive program has resulted in a marked improvement in class attendance rates. She attributes this success specifically to the program's policy of having students submit attendance sheets signed by instructors, and the fact that students can redeem their points for gas cards.

For other HPOG grantees looking to implement incentive programs, Ms. Prichard recommends talking with students to identify commonly needed items that can be offered as rewards. It is especially beneficial to students when the items offered by the incentive program are those which cannot be purchased using other means of assistance. For instance, Project HOPE students typically redeem their points for diapers or utility vouchers, as these items cannot be obtained using food stamps. Similarly, Ms. Prichard suggests that grantees confirm with their federal project officers the items they can or cannot offer as rewards according to grant regulations. She also encourages HPOG directors to prepare a well-articulated and thoughtful point value system to ensure that the HPOG program has the funds necessary to purchase all the items offered as rewards.

Finally, Ms. Prichard recommends other grantees be prepared to handle students' requests to redeem points for unallowable items. For instance, Project HOPE experienced a large number of students wishing to redeem their points for gifts during the holiday season. As the project could not use grant funds to purchase these items, Ms. Prichard's team implemented a used toy exchange for students, allowing them to keep their earned points while still obtaining gifts for their families.

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Using Students' Success Stories to Build Community Engagement Edmonds Community College

John House had a vision of what could be possible in helping low-income TANF students overcome tremendous odds and break countless barriers if Edmonds and Everett Community Colleges' faculty and administrators could work in partnership with like-minded people from the Department of Social Health Services, Employment Security Department, Workforce Development Council, TRAC Associates, Housing Hope, Snohomish County Refugee and Immigrant Services, Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council, Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, and Business Access, a company that specializes in building in-home learning communities. Low-income TANF students would have the academic training they needed to secure good jobs and appropriate wraparound services while they were in school to enable them to stay there.

This HPOG program director created a plan to help students to succeed by providing excellent training through dedicated faculty and digital technology tools, but also planned to capture the energy, excitement, and pure joy in the faces and the hearts of students who were able to succeed and use their healthcare training to move from poverty to a living wage, from TANF to "a job, a better job, and a better life." From the beginning, John House and his colleagues fostered a story-sharing culture by listening carefully to students and partners, eventually hiring an independent firm to conduct in-depth ethnographic interviews that would help them gather compelling stories and anecdotes to continuously improve the program.

The plan was strategic. Shared anecdotes and stories were balanced with hard data to engage college leaders in the fledgling program. CATCH strategies were tied to broader initiatives underway at the college, such as Achieving the Dream (AtD), dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. There was a conscious effort to build a community of support throughout the college so the senior leadership would hear about the success stories of the HPOG program not only from its director, but also from others.

Mr. House convened multiple meetings with faculty and administrators from across Edmonds and Everett Colleges as well as professional staff from state and local organizations and businesses that cared about student success and were willing to contribute time and effort to it. During these meetings, which continue today, participants are asked to roll up their sleeves and work on ways to make a difference in the students' lives. Whether the plan is mentoring, acting as preceptors, or serving as a sounding board, these groups focus on new ideas, new ways of reaching students, and new plans for the colleges.

Whenever John House meets with any potential partners, from inside or outside the college, he brings success stories to influence social change, engage partners, and foster the adoption of new ideas and strategies. Undaunted as many attempts to set up meetings fell through, he persisted, and he always made the case by relating the personal stories of students. Everyone he spoke with was touched. After all, who would not be excited and impressed when a low-income, immigrant

family moves from living in their car to affordable housing in a nice neighborhood because the mother has graduated from the CATCH program and is able to help support her family in a way she always dreamed?

To build a story-sharing culture requires the following steps:

1. Begin by doing an excellent job for your students. By helping them to succeed and capturing their stories along the way, you can bring in new partners who want to be a part of building something important in their communities.
2. Listen to those impacted by your work to help build a story-sharing culture. Students are busy, staff are busy, and programs are designed to move the unemployed to work and advancement rapidly, but in this fast-paced environment, listening with the goal of engagement both fosters trust and reveals students' experiences and qualities faster. CATCH uses 16 phrases and questions to facilitate engagement and story sharing.
3. Identify shared interests, of which the most powerful is student success. Despite differences, most staff and partners agree that student success is the priority. Using compelling student stories and anecdotes can foster trust across a wide range of partners.
4. When students display the attributes that will help make them succeed in the program, reward them, sometimes on the spot. If CATCH students work hard and help their classmates, they may be invited to a special reception to receive a certificate from the college president and CATCH staff. If students in the clinical or lab setting show reliability, dependability, timeliness, and professional demeanor, they may be rewarded with a free lunch. If they earn excellent grades throughout their college experience, they may be asked to be a keynote speaker at graduation.
5. Deliberately capture everyone's story and put many stories on the program website in a very engaging way, with the students' pictures.

As Edmonds Community College faculty increasingly meet CATCH students in class, many are amazed at the level of digital literacy, the manner, and the professional attitude displayed by these students, who are very serious about getting a job. The reality of faculty and administrators' experience with the students trumps their expectations. This year the college president asked a student from the CATCH program to address a college-wide convocation ceremony, and she did an excellent job.

John House involves CATCH students representing various points within the program to participate in community and college partner meetings. He creates panels of students to share their classroom, lab, externship, and new job experiences, always meeting with the student speakers in advance to walk through the questions and discuss the audience. It's often a great learning opportunity for students!

Promising Practices

Just-In-Time Training Full Employment Council

The Full Employment Council (FEC) is a business-led, private nonprofit organization that provides skills training and employment services to the unemployed and underemployed residents of the Greater Kansas City area. Through the 21st Century Healthcare Works HPOG program, FEC provides healthcare training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and low-income individuals. The program is focused on using real-time information from local employers, in concert with labor market information, to help participants make informed choices about their chosen training program.

FEC calls its training strategy the Just-In-Time approach, referring to how the training is customized to meet an employer's immediate workforce need. The approach recognizes that due to expansion or technology changes, employers can have sudden, immediate job openings for workers with the right skills and preparation. FEC guides participants into appropriate workplace skills and occupational training programs, so graduates are positioned just in time to fill these openings. Just-In-Time training is also customized to meet the needs of the job seeker in several ways.

FEC uses labor market information and real-time workforce intelligence from local employers to determine the most appropriate training course to enroll clients in or develop. The program uses a training menu that covers a wide variety of healthcare occupations by utilizing all local community colleges, vocational schools, and 4-year institutions. The training menu uses an industry panel to determine the training course most likely to meet the real time job openings. Programs on the menu have lengths ranging from 6 weeks to 24 months and lead to a variety of credentials. The strategy is designed to be as market sensitive as possible to ensure high rates of successful job placements.

The Just-In-Time approach is also designed to meet the needs of students. Counselors work with students to create plans that balance the student's goals with the realities of the job market. FEC's approach employs stackable credentials systems when appropriate. For example, when employer input showed a need for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) with specializations in mental health and dementia care, the program developed CNA Plus programs, which include training for the CNA certificate, Medication Aide Level I, CPR and Basic Life Support (BLS), and Insulin Injection. The CNA Plus program also contains career readiness modules, including workplace readiness, computer skills, resume preparation, interviewing preparation, and financial literacy.

FEC's approach recognizes that each participant's situation is unique. FEC only recommends that students seek additional credentials when it is appropriate for the individual. Some students can be intimidated by the length of certain programs. Many participants want to be employed immediately. For some occupations, students can be discouraged when they learn that entry-level wages are lower than expected. The program addresses these challenges by helping participants find some form of employment immediately and providing support with mentors. Career ladders are used to demonstrate the value of taking the first step in a healthcare career and to reinforce the likelihood of long-term wage gains. The program uses certificates or other recognition to mark steps and milestones in students' lives and congratulate participants on their successes.

Program staff continue to work with students during the placement transition. FEC provides biweekly monitoring onsite at the employer's location to mitigate any issues that may arise during the employment training period. Counselors conduct monthly follow up to assess the participant's need for supportive services during the first few weeks of employment. Once the participant has completed training, follow up is provided at 30-, 60-, 90-, and 120-day intervals to monitor retention.

FEC has found that this market-sensitive, customized training approach results in at least a 30 percent success differential, when compared with the completion rates for training courses that do not utilize workforce intelligence. FEC will continue using the Just-In-Time training approach, combined with a diverse training menu through varied educational institutions. Just-In-Time's diverse training intensity maximizes job placement success while meeting the workforce needs of local employers.

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Incentives Program

Gateway Technical College

The Gateway HPOP offers several mutually reinforcing approaches to help participants along “the HPOP journey”: helping students meet program requirements; recognizing and rewarding excellent participation, attendance, and academic success; and enabling students to earn points redeemable toward valuable supportive benefits through the incentive program. Students beginning on the HPOP journey initially receive the student handbook, which describes the program requirements that participants must meet, such as the meetings and workshops they must attend. Through attendance at these meetings and workshops or achievement of specific benchmarks, participants accumulate a specified number of points for each completed activity. These points can then be utilized monthly to purchase incentives. Gateway’s incentive program and policy were reviewed and approved by the awarding agency before implementation of the program. The grantee gained approval by: working closely with the awarding agency; providing a clearly outlined policy with incentives closely tied to programmatic goals and student support; and identifying incentives that were allowable and reasonable.

Students are eligible for this program while they are enrolled in the school program, and eligibility terminates once they obtain employment. A point list of incentives is provided to students so that they are aware of the incentives available (items such as diapers, hygiene products, school supplies, cleaning supplies, gas cards, etc.) and the cost of each of these incentives in points. In order to apply points toward a specific incentive choice, a student fills out an incentive request form and submits that form to his or her HPOP program specialist. The program specialist fills the student order and the student returns later to collect the incentive.

To make the incentive program relevant and meaningful to students, HPOP director Stacia Thompson says, “It is imperative to interview students to determine which items they would most like to earn. Recently, a popular incentive has been energy cards that can be redeemed with local energy providers. Some students have found it difficult to meet rising energy costs, and the energy cards have helped them pay their household energy bills.”

For other grantees considering starting an incentive program, in addition to surveying students to determine which items they prefer as incentives, it is necessary to determine the budget allotment needed to cover the program. For example, Gateway had to factor into its budget the \$50 price of the energy cards and the months of the year in which they would receive greater numbers of requests for the cards. During seasons other than winter, Gateway tends to receive more requests for energy assistance because then local energy companies have more leeway to shut off a customer’s power during this season than they do during the winter months, when consumer protections are in effect.

Once budget considerations have been addressed, it is imperative to set guidelines about the process through which incentives are obtained. For example, Gateway specifies in the student handbook that the student must participate in certain meetings and workshops, complete an incentive request form, and submit this form to the program specialist. Reward points can only be redeemed for items on the menu list and cannot be redeemed for cash. Also, the handbook specifies that incentive requests must be made during the first week of each month.

As a result of the incentives offered in the Gateway HPOP journey, student participation at workshops has increased dramatically, and students have given positive satisfaction scores on workshops attended. A recent positive outcome noted is that 30 percent of the HPOG participants had attended a workshop series. Many students indicated they enjoyed the workshops they participated in because they not only earned points toward valuable and necessary products but also obtained a wealth of information by attending workshops that they might not have attended if incentives hadn't been offered. In addition, they made social contacts with the other participants during these events, resulting in an informal cohort of HPOG participants.

The courses students are required to participate in include subjects such as diversity, resume writing, dressing for success, interview skills, and nutrition. A sample of the Gateway incentive program follows:

100 percent attendance/week	10 Reward Points
2.0 GPA per academic term	20 Reward Points
3.0 GPA per academic term	30 Reward Points
Complete Strengthquest assessment	10 Reward Points
Attend HPOP workshops	10 Reward Points
Attend face-to-face meetings with HPOP specialist	10 Reward Points
Successful completion of Health Care Occupations Certificate	200 Reward Points
Academic success (recognized by Dean's List)	100 Reward Points

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Using Facebook

Gateway Community and Technical College

Gateway Community and Technical College's HPOG program has recognized the potential power of social media and created an HPOG Facebook group. Open only to program participants and staff, this Facebook group facilitates the two-way communication that is necessary for HPOG to successfully meet the needs of its target population. For instance, staff can share information about upcoming events, alert students to scheduling changes, point students towards employers that are hiring, keep in touch with program graduates, and answer questions. Students can ask for assistance, share the news of a successful test session or internship, celebrate a life event, and give and receive peer encouragement. The accessibility of Facebook (it can be accessed from stationary computers as well as cell phones and mobile devices) allows students to get the assistance or information they need without having to be on campus.

Gateway's HPOG project director, Terri Green, explained that the Facebook group was set up a few months after the program launched, with a staff member from the college's public relations team assisting in the design of the page. Program staff inform students about the group during HPOG orientation workshops, encouraging them to sign up for an invitation to join. This invitation comes from program staff, thereby ensuring that only HPOG students have access to the page. However, Ms. Green noted that the privacy concerns inherent in social media apply to the HPOG Facebook group, leading her to recommend the creation of "professional" Facebook accounts for staff interacting with the HPOG page. Rather than containing a staff member's full name and personal information, a "professional" account usually contains only the staff member's first name followed by HPOG, e.g., "Jennifer HPOG." The program's case managers and career specialists all have accounts, as does Ms. Green.

By leveraging the power of social media, Ms. Green and her team have helped strengthen the sense of community for Gateway's HPOG participants and increased the accessibility of the supports needed for their success.

Registered Apprenticeship

Kansas Department of Commerce

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is a combination of on-the-job training and related technical instruction that prepares workers with the practical and theoretical aspects of a high-skilled occupation. RA programs can be formed by employers, employer associations, and labor organizations. These stakeholders design and manage programs under a set of standards, which include an on-the-job training outline, related technical instruction curriculum, and the program's operating procedures. As a training strategy, RA has the potential to help address some of the critical workforce issues in healthcare, including recruitment and retention, cost-effective training, wage increases, and improved patient care.

The Kansas Department of Commerce KHPOP program uses the RA model to prepare HPOG participants as Health Support Specialists (HSS). Apprentices can enter the employer's HSS program from a variety of positions and work under the direction of the facility's Mentor and Licensed Nurse (an employee identified as skilled by the participating facility and approved to instruct) to increase skills and knowledge through additional on-the-job training. HSS apprentices are trained as a Universal Worker who uses a person-centered approach to work together as a team with the residents. The training program includes 386 hours of required related technical instruction through the long-term care facility, community college, or technical college. Technical instruction covers medical terminology, dietary/food services, environmental services, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), CPR and first aid, advanced dementia care, person-centered care, Rehabilitative Assistant, and Certified Medication Assistant (CMA). Apprentices benefit from earning advanced skills, stackable credentials, the Completion of Apprenticeship Certificate, the Health Support Specialist pin, and a progressively increasing wage.

The HSS RA was established and implemented in response to a local workforce challenge. Employers were trying to address a high level of employee turnover. The culture of long-term care delivery was changing, and employers wanted to develop customized training for a new kind of healthcare worker. RA is a solution because it increases job satisfaction and retention among the workforce; provides a career ladder for frontline workers with standardization and recognition that still allows for customization; and applies the expertise of experienced employees, through facility-identified mentors, to pass on their knowledge to apprentices.

For the KHPOP program, strong established partnerships with employers made the development of this opportunity possible for HPOG participants. The KHPOP program had identified the value of RA training early on and the training structure was already in place. The program found that the employer's entry-level staff were often eligible to fit the HPOG income parameters, and they had already demonstrated an interest in healthcare. They therefore represented the best fit for this type of training program. As in this case, the RA model may be best suited for healthcare occupations that do not have entrenched, traditional education and training models. Many RA programs have been emerging in the long-term care sector of the healthcare industry.

RA program sponsors (employers, employer associations, and labor organizations) vary from small, privately owned businesses to national employer and industry associations. To begin developing a healthcare apprenticeship program, start by finding out if any programs are active

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in your area. If not, you may still have national employers in your area that have RA programs in operation in other parts of the country. It may be easiest to work with existing programs or employers that already understand the benefits of RA.

When planning the development of RA programs, employer engagement is critical. Local employers may have workforce problems that can be solved with RA programs, but they may not know how this training model can help them. HPOG programs can include discussion of RA with their regular employer engagement strategies. Employers must see how RA programs will address their human resources challenges and support their short- and long-term goals. Programs can survey employers about their workforce needs to determine if their needs are suited to the benefits of apprenticeship.

These questions can be used to help evaluate the appropriateness of RA for addressing a workforce need:

- Are local employers having difficulty finding skilled staff to meet their workforce needs?
- Do employers have a need to up-skill current staff? For which occupations?
- Are the occupations appropriate for an on-the-job training based model?
- Are RA programs for this occupation currently operating?
- Will RA address the particular workforce challenges of these employers?

There are other important partners that can be involved early in the process. RA includes two components: Employment and Related Technical Instruction (RTI). RTI may be provided in community colleges, through correspondence, on-line, and distance learning, and by contract vendors. Programs can begin identifying which educational institutions can provide the classroom training (RTI) and involving these partners in the planning process.

There are published standards of apprenticeship for many healthcare occupations, and these can be invaluable when developing a new program. Apprenticeship and Training Representatives (ATRs) from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship or from State Apprenticeship Agencies are ready to assist in the development of programs, can help you find information about RA in your area, and share valuable resources.

Employer Coaches

Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, Inc.

The Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, Inc. (MAWIB) is committed to providing TANF and other low-income incumbent workers in the healthcare industry with the continuous and relevant training, personal and career supports, and motivation and guidance to pursue career opportunities in healthcare. Through its HPOG program, MAWIB partnered with the Milwaukee Area Healthcare Alliance (MAHA) to create the CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute (HTI), a one-stop training and education center for people seeking work in the healthcare field.

A challenge facing many HPOG participants is that their first, entry-level healthcare jobs may not provide family-sustaining wages. However, these jobs do place them in career pathways leading to better opportunities. It is essential that participants receive continuous coaching to give them information and encouragement and to identify training that will provide the skills and certifications necessary for advancement and higher wages in healthcare careers.

To provide this essential support, MAWIB expanded the HTI's partnerships with key local employers to establish employer coaches. These coaches help qualified and motivated workers succeed and advance on a healthcare career ladder while helping employers build a sustainable talent pipeline to meet their workforce needs.

Employer coaches collaborate with the HTI director and staff to identify needs and provide all appropriate and relevant services for incumbent workers who enroll and become active participants in the HTI programs and services. Employer coaches are often human resources or other healthcare supervisory or management employees. MAWIB compensates the employer for the time coaches spend on HTI activities with participants as specified in formal agreements.

In collaboration with MAWIB and CareerWorks HTI, employer coaches work with, and on the behalf of, incumbent workers who are enrolled participants in CareerWorks HTI. Specific activities of the employer coach include:

- Acquire knowledge of HTI programs and services.
- Conduct individual and group coaching sessions for incumbent worker program participants.
- Coordinate career transition training designed to help participants develop a career advancement strategy.
- Refer and assist participants in the support services application process.
- Communicate with the HTI management team regarding any concerns that may impact a participant's progress toward stated career goals.

The employer is a registered user of the HPOG Performance Reporting System (PRS) and enters HTI participant activities, outputs, and outcomes based on uniform data collection guidelines for monitoring program performance. Employer coaches provide HTI coach staff with updated progress reports and copies of relevant documentation and other forms for participant files

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maintained at the CareerWorks HTI. MAWIB provides the employer coach with initial user training, manuals, and guidelines to enter participant data into the required data reporting systems and insures each coach receives ongoing and continuous system support, service, and technical assistance.

Build and Coordinate Infrastructure to Support Youth “Aging Out” of Foster Care

New Hampshire Office of Minority Health and Refugee Affairs

In February 2012, New Hampshire issued an RFP for Capacity Building projects in four topic areas and the best practice highlighted here is a result of work done in one of the four areas. Capacity building and infrastructure development are intended to be system-level interventions to support the work at an individual level in the recruitment, training and employing of participants served by HPOP. They are also intended to do the following:

- Support sustained practice changes in education and training programs and in healthcare settings that endorse inclusion and diversity,
- Support economic development activities in support of HPOP graduate employment,
- Engage, recruit and support youth within child protection and juvenile justice systems who will or have “aged out” of State care to seek post-secondary education in healthcare.

Youth in this situation are a target population for NH’s HPOP because they face serious challenges to their future success. Their challenges include significant barriers to accessing and achieving post-secondary education. The social and financial costs of failing to provide access to and support for additional education opportunities can be tremendous. Targeted infrastructure development by HPOP will help promote needed change and may inform policy and practice changes that will be to the benefit of this very vulnerable group of young people.

Prior to New Hampshire issuing the RFP for this capacity building work, input was solicited from the Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) division director and the State’s Independent Living manager, to ensure this effort was supportive of their goals to improve transition services for youth in care.

Fedcap Rehabilitation Services, Inc. (Fedcap), responded to the RFP and also had engaged the DCYF division director prior to submitting their proposal. Although Fedcap is a workforce development agency based in New York City, the CEO and numerous staff have strong ties to New Hampshire and know the child welfare and juvenile justice systems extremely well. Fedcap was awarded the contract to partner with OMHRA, HPOP, and New Hampshire’s DCYF to create the conditions for system change. (The contract required Fedcap partner with OMHRA/HPOP staff to implement the project.) The project was managed as a team, attending meetings with DCYF, assisting with development of marketing materials, and identifying speakers for a symposium.

This effort targets multiple levels for intervention. Changes to policy, training curricula, and other institutional practices are a necessary step, but are not sufficient by themselves. A common problem in efforts such as these is that project goals—in this case helping youth who have been in the State system become inspired about and then supported for going to college—are goals that most people support enthusiastically. However, this support, doesn’t

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always translate to behavioral change on the ground in terms of daily work. The best practices described here (Get Ready, Networking by Design, and Connect 2 Career) can become the context for different types of interaction with youth in the belief that changing behavior will contribute to changing minds. Providing concrete, packaged, and action-oriented strategies like these are a critical step in promoting the necessary cultural and behavioral changes that must happen if to change the story for these youth.

- All provider regulations, policies, and training curricula for DCYF staff, residential providers, and foster parents, have been reviewed with the goal of strengthening them to emphasize self-sufficiency, specifically through strategies to encourage youth to plan for and attend post-secondary education.
- A memorandum of understanding with the New Hampshire Community College system is in progress to spell out the college's commitment to work in partnership with DCYF to identify students as they enter school, provide them with visible support services, and implement other strategies to ensure their success.
- The Connect 2 Career how-to manual guides the development and implementation of a process for youth, beginning as early as 9th grade, to explore a range of career opportunities. The Connect 2 Career event brings together employers and representatives of healthcare occupations as panel members to create a forum for youth to meet with professionals, learn about various healthcare occupations, and interact with panel members in a professional manner in speed-dating style. In many child welfare systems, children in care rarely have access to this type of experience. Connect 2 Career, along with Network by Design (see below), are intended to provide participants throughout their high school years, opportunities to create a portfolio of interests and make connections that build social capital.
- Through Networking by Design, a networking event located in a business setting, youth in care have an opportunity to practice their networking skills directly with community stakeholders and build meaningful relationships with community leaders. A secondary, but very important, potential outcome of Connect 2 Career and Networking by Design is the simultaneous creation of opportunity for community leaders to nurture the hopes and dreams of our communities' most vulnerable citizens and to change the trajectory of their futures.
- Personal Branding is a marketing agency approach to reframe one's experiences of adversity into marketable positions of strength. This strategy has been incorporated into Fedcap's Get Ready program and is highlighted especially for youth in care. The project culminated in a symposium, held on September 27, which brought together DCYF case workers, colleges and universities, business leaders, legislators, providers and numerous other community members and agencies. The event featured a panel of young adults from the child welfare system who had achieved higher education. One speaker is an HPOP participant and a recent graduate of a Licensed Nursing Assistant (LNA) program.

The products described above were developed by Fedcap and are now available to OMHRA. OMHRA plans to offer Connect 2 Career and other events over the course of the next year as part of their case management and training work.

10-Week College Readiness Program

Pima County Community College District

Pima Community College has implemented a 10-week college readiness program designed to assist students who do not possess the academic competencies needed to begin training. The program's goals are to prepare students to pass the necessary entrance/assessment tests, complete their HPOG health care training, and achieve success on the job.

The program is delivered in a classroom environment, 24 hours a week, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (with 30 minutes for lunch), Monday–Thursday. Average class size is about 15, and students are required to attend at least 80 percent of the sessions; an attendance rate lower than this will cause the student to be dropped from the class. The class consists of multiple components:

- Reading and writing (8–10 hours per week)
- Math (8–10 hours per week)
- Community Building (1–4 hours per week)
- College and career success (2–4 hours per week)

An orientation to the college readiness program includes descriptions of the roles of the County OneStop and the College Student Services and the purpose and expectations of the class. Students are also provided with contact information for key offices and advisors. These advisors assist students outside the classroom throughout the 10-week period with a number of activities, including campus tours, fingerprinting, completing the college application process, getting the necessary immunizations, and taking the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE).

Instructor philosophy is one of learner-directed methods (e.g., class brainstorming), with a focus on contextualized healthcare learning, critical thinking, and application of concepts. Instructors also use hands-on and experiential learning when possible and model the soft skills and professionalism that will be needed both throughout the training program and in the workplace. While instructors use a curriculum outline as a guide, they encourage students to reflect on what they already know as well as what knowledge gaps they need to fill. Student responses inform the instructors' lesson plans, allowing the students to feel a sense of ownership towards their education. As a result, students who would normally resist the idea of studying soft skills or basic math now feel comfortable, confident, and invested enough to accept coaching in these areas. Instructors also make themselves available outside of class hours, giving students an opportunity to discuss any issues they may be having.

According to HPOG program manager Amanda Abens and HPOG director Brian Stewart, one of the course's most compelling elements is the sense of community that develops among the students. Celebrating small achievements and allowing students to form organic peer-mentoring relationships helps personalize the college and ease new or nontraditional students' transition into college-level courses. The support given to students by instructors and peers also allows them to focus on success, with instructors helping students set both short-term and long-term goals. As Ms. Abens describes it, the college readiness environment moves students from "crisis mode" to "planning mode."

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Ms. Abens and Mr. Stewart have a number of recommendations for other HPOG programs looking to develop college readiness courses. Foremost among them is being aware of the needs of the students. Letting students provide input on the direction and content of the class makes them feel invested and motivated and helps strengthen the bond between instructor and students. Instructors should be experienced in adult education and be willing to work at the students' pace; a background in healthcare is an added bonus. Ms. Abens and Mr. Stewart also pointed out that, because their 10-week class is non-credit, program staff and instructors can modify and adapt the curriculum without going through the process required to change for-credit courses. This freedom has also allowed Pima to develop a college readiness "open lab" and has encouraged them to plan a contextualized English-as-a-second-language prep class.

Pima's 10-week college readiness program allows students to form bonds with peers and instructors and leads them to feel a sense of ownership and control over their education. In students who have completed this program, Pima's HPOG staff have noticed an increase in motivation, a bettering of attitude, and an increased willingness to seek assistance.

Employer Advisory Council

Research Foundation of the City University of New York–Hostos Community College

Hostos Community College's HPOG program, the Allied Health Career Pipeline Program, has established a Business Advisory Council for Allied Health that gives local employers a means of interacting with and benefitting from the program. Since the first session, held in February 2012, the Business Advisory Council for Allied Health has met once every three or four months.

Originally the council consisted of four employers: Acacia Network/Casa Promesa, DaVita Dialysis Center, Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, and Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center. These employers became interested in Hostos' HPOG grant in various ways, including through the college's president, Dr. Felix V. Matos Rodriguez. This high-level interest in the program was further demonstrated by Dr. Matos Rodriguez's attendance at the initial Business Advisory Council session. This "kickoff" meeting allowed both the college president and HPOG project director Deborah E. Reid to demonstrate the college's commitment to the program and present the goals of the grant and the ways in which the program's students "graduate" work-ready. As a result, the employers discussed critical skill needs they would like to see addressed by the program's training, which Ms. Reid agreed to pass on to the Hostos instructors.

Rather than simply bring employers together without a clear purpose, Ms. Reid makes sure that all employers at the table understand that working with the HPOG program will benefit them. Employers are encouraged to speak frankly about the skill or knowledge gaps they identify in their workplaces, and Ms. Reid offers ways that the program can address these needs. She also ensures that employers understand that engaging with the program can include a wide range of activities, from simply sharing information on workplace challenges to providing guest speakers and hiring program graduates. This allows employers to feel comfortable collaborating with the program and gives the program a number of employer relationships which can be leveraged and strengthened over time.

For other HPOG programs looking to establish an employer advisory council, Ms. Reid recommends working with employers who can provide clinical rotations or internships, are interested in reviewing program training curricula, or can provide employment opportunities to students. Programs should be open to working with employers in whatever ways the latter are willing. Ms. Reid cautions against "keeping secret" the HPOG program's goals and recommends that the number of students targeted for employment be shared with the advisory council, as many employers will be more willing to work with the program to achieve a specific outcome. Finally, leave time at the end of each advisory council session for employers to network. This allows council members to identify ways they can help one another as well as the HPOG program.

Hostos' Business Advisory Council for Allied Health has resulted in clinical rotations and internship opportunities, job leads, the development of job shadowing programs, and employer input on training curricula. The number of employers on the council has increased since its launch, and its future sessions will focus on opportunities for incumbent worker training as well as the possible use of employer facilities for training.

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Partnerships with Collective Impact¹

San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc.

When asked how she and the San Diego Workforce Partnership's Bridge to Employment in the Healthcare Industry have been so successful, Cindy Perry, the project's director, answered, "Collective impact." She added "Today, it is no longer acceptable to work in silos." Collective impact is the principle that large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, not the isolated intervention of individual organizations.

The San Diego Workforce Partnership's Bridge to Employment in the Healthcare Industry program brings together a broad cross section of business, government, education, and community organizations around a common agenda of social change. For this HPOG program, the signed memorandums of understanding that the Office of Family Assistance recommends its grantees use specify that these partner organizations participate as stakeholders who provide ongoing guidance and support to the program at strategic and operational levels.

For example, the HPOG state partnership group meets quarterly and includes the San Diego County Department of Health and Human Services, the California Workforce Investment Board (WIB), and the State Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Registered Apprenticeship Standards. The HPOG advisory board members include the Workforce Partnership (local WIB), the County of San Diego's Department of Health and Human Services, and representatives from local employers and the hospital association. By coordinating and convening several different groups, this HPOG program ensures that connections, communication, and relationship building among the partner organizations take place on multiple levels that are mutually reinforcing.

Cindy Perry, the HPOG Program Director, began with open communication and built relationships one at a time. Because HPOG staff knew the manager of one of the CalWORKS offices (the organization that provides TANF services in the state), they began their efforts by learning about the TANF program—what was important to their colleagues in TANF and what TANF professionals needed to do to achieve their goals. Ms. Perry and her staff did their homework before the meeting. As they learned about TANF regulations and such things as "work participation rates," they were able to show their TANF colleagues how the HPOG program would benefit TANF participants while still enabling the TANF program to achieve its goals. Once the TANF organizations and contractors were convinced, they invited others to join the meeting to see how this community relationship building could help produce positive performance and benefit all of the programs. Some members of the groups initially met weekly, participating in lots of discussion on the front end.

One group that Cindy Perry identified and convened monthly was the common customer group. All of these organizations had "service to a common customer" (TANF-eligible, low-income, and/or refugee participants) as their fundamental goal. Ms. Perry made the case that, by working together, they could all help each other do a better job for their clients. The San Diego program's common customer group included the Workforce Partnership, County of San Diego HHS, the County's CalWorks/TANF contractors (ResCare and Public Consulting Group), County and City of San Diego Subsidized Housing Authorities, and the Workforce Partnership's Navigators.

¹ For a discussion of collective impact, see Mark Kramer and John Kania, *Collective Impact*, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, (48) Winter 2011, at http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact/articles.

To help them learn about each other, the group developed a matrix of support services that participants needed—to be able to stay in the HPOG training program and become successful—along with the organizations that were able to supply the services. All the community organizations had rules that governed what participants they served and how. By agreeing to share information and resources, the common customer group was able to make the most effective decisions for the most customers. To illustrate, TANF can provide childcare and books, but it can't pay for tuition or housing allowance. Others in the partnership group could supply those needs.

The HPOG program did not offer financial support to any of these partners. As a result, they were already taking steps toward the sustainability of the program when the HPOG funds were no longer available. As they worked together, the various community organizations helped each other to understand their strengths and their limits, something very important as the program began to plan for how it could successfully function in the future. This group has continued to work on collective problems associated with their target population.

HPOG grantees can replicate this strategy with partnerships based on collective impact:

1. Identify appropriate organizations; build on existing relationships.
2. Open lines of communication, and try to ensure that you are working with multiple levels of people.
3. Do your homework to learn about other organizations, their goals, and the benefits they provide to participants.
4. Work hard to build trust with potential partners in your community. Make and keep all commitments.
5. Convene community groups frequently to reach an understanding about the common customers they all serve and the ways everyone, but most importantly the participants themselves, can benefit from the organizations working more closely together.
6. As an early concrete step, begin by developing a matrix of support services that identifies the needed services along with the organizations that can supply each service.
7. Use the matrix to determine how and when to call upon different organizations in the community to help accomplish the overall goals.
8. Building on early efforts, establish systems that lead to ease of referral and have everyone working as a team for the benefit of all.

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Mentoring for CNA Students

Schenectady County Community College

Schenectady County Community College (SCCC) has implemented a mentoring program for HPOG Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) students. The goal of this practice is to offer students an extra layer of support by delivering the practical skills training necessary to pass their certification exam and by providing role models to enhance students' ability to visualize themselves in the CNA role.

SCCC's HPOG program currently has three CNA mentors working on a contractual basis and rotating between training sites. These mentors are all licensed, experienced CNAs whose duties are to assist the Registered Nurses leading the simulation lab practice of clinical skills and to model the competencies and soft skills needed in the healthcare workplace. Mentors are also available for meeting with students outside of the classroom, where they can help students review class material, prepare for exams, or navigate the large amount of resources available from the HPOG program and its partners. Prior to the certification exam, mentors join students in the labs for "review days," ensuring that students are prepared for the test.

In addition to forming a bond with students, the mentors interact regularly with instructors and case managers. These relationships increase all parties' awareness of the students' barriers and progress and help program staff provide students with truly "wraparound" support.

HPOG project director Amy Goldfarb states that the most important factor in the success of Schenectady's mentor program is the personal qualities of the mentors themselves. They must be able to see themselves in the students and relate to the students' situations. Indeed, many of Schenectady's mentors come from backgrounds similar to those of the students, facilitating the process of forming mentor-student bonds. They also must have worked in the field and be able to communicate or make real their experience.

Goldfarb especially emphasizes the importance of the mentors' interpersonal skills and ability to inspire and believe in their students. Although many of these qualities are present in current or past HPOG students, Goldfarb cautions against hiring CNAs who have recently completed the program as the difficulties inherent in transitioning from student to mentor may prevent these new graduates from forming an appropriate and effective bond with the students.

Since its launch in late 2011, the CNA mentorship program has resulted in improved training program retention and completion rates, higher certification exam pass rates, and fewer students needing to retest for their certification.

Boot Camps

South Carolina Department of Social Services

A boot camp-style training can introduce program candidates to the type of commitment needed to complete coursework, as well as enhance their prerequisite skill sets. The primary objective of the boot camp approach is to provide a realistic environment where students must learn to adapt to demanding situations typically encountered during their training program and professional life. In the case of HPOG grantees, this approach can be used to introduce individuals to healthcare occupations and their training requirements. Boot camps can also provide concentrated emphases in prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to enter the training program. This introduction allows the participant to begin to develop strategies for time management and gain an understanding of the daily preparations and lifestyle adjustments necessary to complete the program. Boot camp training can also provide students with an opportunity to build relationships with peers and instructors, initiating a support network to accompany them throughout the progression of training courses.

The South Carolina Department of Social Services utilizes boot camps in its Project HOPE program to address work-related behaviors (e.g., attendance, working with supervisors) and soft skill improvement (e.g., customer service orientation, time management) among its HPOG participants. The boot camps were developed from the project director's experiences in workforce development over her 40-year career. The boot camps are located in four different locations statewide and are conducted in four-week intervals on a residential basis for participants. The residential nature of the boot camp is similar to the practice used by Job Corps. During the Boot Camp, participants are screened and assessed to determine academic, economic, social and emotional barriers to success. This intensive approach involves pairing participants with mentors and HPOG program staff to enable participants to focus and develop their individualized training/career plans, eliminate barriers to employment, and link participants to supportive services. A key positive of the boot camp is the shared experience that the cohort of participants jointly undertakes. They report that this shared experience helps increase retention rates and bolsters participant camaraderie in the long run.

Project Hope uses a boot camp as a first-step for students to support the successful completion of the condensed training sessions. The boot camp sessions also include adult basic education where deficient math, reading, and writing skills are remedied, so participants are able to transfer more easily into a local community or technical college for healthcare training classes.

There are some important factors to consider when implementing a boot camp. First, a location that is easily accessible to public transportation is important for participants' ease in accessing the camp. South Carolina also stresses the importance of focusing on communicating a sense of upward mobility in selecting a location. For example, selecting a community college (rather than a TANF agency location, for example) as a location for the camp conveys the feeling of higher education and upward mobility. Participants will gain the experience of being on a college campus by participating in the program. On the college campus, additional resources and facilities, such as lab facilities, are part of the participant experience rather than only a traditional classroom. The college setting conveys to HPOG participants that moving upward through a career trajectory is a focus of the program.

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Second, programs may want to work on marketing and promotional materials that describe the boot camp process and purpose to potential participants and potential program partners. Materials that are developed for prospective participants should realistically depict the investment that potential HPOG students will need to make along the journey. Truthful and genuine representation will help participants anticipate some of the difficulties that may arise and understand that many students have encountered these obstacles and overcome them in order to succeed. It is important to strike a balance in developing promotional materials that are worded in a positive and encouraging manner, while accurately conveying some of the challenges students will likely face.

Third, programs will need to recruit mentors to pair with participants during the boot camp and beyond into their subsequent employment. South Carolina recruited healthcare professionals statewide to become mentors. Mentors should be individuals who have experienced some of the same academic and personal struggles that HPOG participants are likely to face, as well as being in the same career field as HPOG participants are training for. South Carolina spoke to their HPOG partners about their employees serving as mentors. Many hospitals have community service requirements for employees. Hospital employees can fulfill these service requirements by serving as boot camp mentors.

Finally, it is important to ensure that selected mentors understand that they have a vital role as part of the case management team for HPOG participants. Frequently, the mentors have more regular contact with HPOG participants than others on the HPOG team. As a result of this greater contact with HPOG participants, mentors may become aware of potential issues and problems earlier than other HPOG staff might. It is important for mentors to share their case management notes and observations with others on the HPOG staff team so that appropriate resources and supports can be made available to assist the HPOG students in their journey through boot camp and beyond.

Community Partnerships—Cooperation Over Competition

Southland Health Care Forum, Inc.

Is your organization a community college striving to provide customized training to meet local employers' needs? Or perhaps you represent a community-based organization, helping individuals find jobs that lead to a career with family-sustaining wages. For all types of organizations, building a comprehensive workforce development program requires developing partnerships with a diverse group of organizations in your community, including State and local public agencies, private and non-profit partners, and members of the business community. These are some of the groups your organization should be partnering with:

- Workforce Investment Boards, Workforce Development Agencies, and State Workforce Agencies
- Community Colleges and Postsecondary Education Providers
- Adult Basic Education Providers
- TANF providers and Human Service Agencies
- Economic Development Agencies
- Community-based Organizations
- Employers and Business Representatives
- Apprenticeship Offices

HPOG grantee Southland Health Care Forum (SHCF) is a non-profit workforce development and training agency, formed as a consortium by St. James and other local hospitals in 2003. Over the years, SHCF has developed a mutually beneficial relationship with community partner Prairie State College (PSC).

Located only a mile apart, these two organizations share the same student demographics. Many SHCF staff actually attended PSC or worked there. This familiarity with PSC, and its staff and administration, has contributed to strong professional relationships between the two organizations. SHCF can contact various departments of PSC at all levels to expedite services for students, remove barriers, and make programmatic changes for continuous improvement. SHCF and PSC have collaborated to establish customized business office, accounting, and records access and procedures in support of the HPOG program.

Another example of successful coordination between these partners is the provision of tutoring services for HPOG participants. Originally, tutoring was delivered at PSC. The team decided that it would be preferable to have tutoring and mentoring at the SHCF site because it would give SHCF staff better access to HPOG students, making it easier to provide supportive services, case management, and barrier management.

During the relocation of the tutoring services, a PSC nursing faculty member was designated as the tutoring coordinator who would teach onsite at SHCF. The tutoring coordinator provides one-on-one and group tutoring, mentoring, and examination preparation services. This has

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helped participants to fully learn and understand complex information presented in the class and to address barriers. Students are able to ask questions, demonstrate, and practice techniques presented in the classroom as they prepare for quizzes, examinations, and clinical demonstration.

This practice has improved SHCF's ability to manage its HPOG program by maintaining close proximity and contact with students. They are readily available to help students when they need assistance and provide the support they need to prepare them for employment. Without the strong relationship between these two organizations, coordination of the tutoring services would not have been possible. SHCF and PSC continue to work closely to make the program adjustments needed to ensure the continuing success of their students.

WIA and TANF Collaboration

Suffolk County Department of Labor

The Suffolk County Health Occupational Opportunity for Learning (SCHOOL) HPOG program has been successful in identifying, recruiting, and training TANF recipients because of the foundation provided by the strong institutional relationship between the Suffolk County Department of Labor (DOL) and the County Department of Social Services (DSS).

All employable individuals who receive services through DSS, including many TANF recipients, are referred to the Suffolk Works Employment Program (SWEP), the County's welfare-to-work initiative. The SWEP program, which administers work requirements for DSS, is housed and operated at DOL. DOL and DSS use a system of assessment, referral, and tracking to coordinate the program. This has led to a strong institutional relationship between the two agencies and a shared knowledge base among their staffs. SCHOOL staff are cross-trained to understand both TANF and WIA regulations. They bring prior experience as TANF case managers and job specialists with awareness of the capacities and limitations of the population served under HPOG. Additionally, this cross-training lends itself to providing participants with the range of support services that are needed for retention and completion of the SCHOOL program.

With this pre-existing relationship, SCHOOL staff can draw upon a broad range of training providers for HPOG participants who have worked with TANF recipients previously. This range of trainers includes Eastern Suffolk BOCES, Western Suffolk BOCES, Suffolk Community College, Hunter Business School, and Long Island Education Opportunity Center.

An additional resource of the SCHOOL program, as a result of this interagency coordination, is the ability of SCHOOL participants to utilize the county's One Stop Centers which can offer job placement assistance and career guidance by SCHOOL and DOL staff. These joint sets of services between DOL and the local TANF office are also effective in leveraging HPOG funds against other community resources.

The SCHOOL program credits clear communication in both directions between DSS and DOL, and clear mutually agreed on objectives and processes with the success of the relationship, which has helped the program effectively serve its HPOG participants.

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Career Pathways Approach

Temple University of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education

This grantee selected health information technology as a career pathway. The grant provides the opportunity to offer education and training at multiple levels. There are five tiers in Temple University's Center for Social Policy and Community Development's (CSPCD) Health Information Professions (HIP) career initiative. Tier 1, Administrative/Billing/Coding and Electronic Health Records, provides the opportunity to achieve four certifications, including the National Association for Health Professionals (NAHP) Certified Coding Specialist (CCS) and Certified Administrative Health Assistant (CAHA); Digital Personal Record Certification and ICDL (International Computer Driver's License Training). Tier 1 is taught collaboratively by Temple CSPCD and 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund. Tier 2 is a new certification program at Temple CSPCD which will train for attainment of the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) Certified Coding Associate (CCA), which is highly regarded by doctors' offices and hospitals hiring for Health Information Technicians. Currently there are two options at Tier 2: (1) a condensed 8-month course at Temple; (2) an 18-month (three semesters) program provided by Camden County College in partnership with 1199C Training Fund with credits that count towards an Associate's Degree. Tier 3 is at the community college level, where students can earn credits for associate level programs or earn credits that apply to Tier 4. Tier 4 is Temple University's Health Information Management (HIM) program, a Bachelor's degree program. Tier 5 is a Master's level Health Informatics program, also at Temple. Before this grant program, there had not been the opportunity to provide stackable credentials across an entire career pathway.

HIP coordinates with Philadelphia's local workforce infrastructure to recruit TANF individuals and others in the targeted population. HIP employs a comprehensive orientation process to assess skills, determine what supportive services may be needed, and identify students who are likely to be successful in this career path. A critical question the HIP career coach explores with students before they attend an orientation is whether they are seeking degrees or certifications. Certifications are awarded for Tiers 1 and 2 and degrees are awarded for Tiers 3, 4, and 5.

Once a student is enrolled, a HIP career coach completes an intake assessment with the student. Students are assigned a coach who will work with them for the duration of the program, meeting weekly to assess students' goals and needs. The career coach also works with students to develop goal plans and to modify those plans as they progress through the program. Additional support for students comes from an academic enhancement/personal effectiveness instructor who provides supportive education and training in workplace competency and the HIP career placement coordinators who work with students and employers to provide internship experiences and employment/career opportunities.

It can be a lengthy process to develop a Career Pathways approach as there are numerous components to consider. For example, the HIP articulation coordinator, responsible for articulation agreements between community colleges and Temple University, met with the area community colleges to determine which classes would be needed to transfer into the HIM program at Temple and which classes were available at a local community college. Developing and signing the agreements often required multiple rounds of meetings and

coordination among the partners. Point persons at each community college were identified so that the communication process regarding the agreements would be more streamlined and efficient. Temple estimates that they have currently spent 1.5 years working on the articulation agreements and still have two agreements pending.

Challenges in developing a Career Pathways approach have been the initial coordination and establishing a system of communications among potential strategic partners. Specifically, it has been challenging in some ways to create the mutual buy-in for a career pathway. The grantee has had to demonstrate the specific benefits of the approach to community colleges, as well as to prospective students. For students, the value is that the pathway approach identifies concrete steps that can be taken for upward career mobility. To demonstrate the value of the career pathways model the grantee has developed informational materials including brochures, one-page fliers for each tier, and a website. These materials help people understand all the services that are offered to participants.

For grantees considering building and implementing a Career Pathways approach, Temple offers the following steps:

1. Use local Labor Market Information (LMI) to identify a viable/growth industry sector on which to base the Career Pathway approach.
2. Determine where participants will enter the system and the steps in the pathway.
3. Convene strategic partners who will provide the various educational opportunities at each of the steps or tiers of the career pathway. In the current grantee example, Tiers 1 and 2 were programs that could be provided internally with an education and training partner, 1199C Training Fund, through the HPOG program but Tier 3 required reaching out to community colleges for courses, curricula, and Associate Degree programs that fit the career pathway. With Tiers 4 and 5 the grantee leveraged its relationship with Temple's HIM department. CSPCD and the HIM Program are both part of the College of Health Professions and Social Work (CHPSW) at the University and had previously worked together to develop a similar model which proved to be invaluable in the implementation of HIP.
4. Engage employers appropriate to each level of the career path.
5. Develop Memoranda of Understanding with all of the project's strategic partners.

Project CHOICE Participant Selection Process Turtle Mountain Community College

The HPOG (Health Professions Opportunity Grant) program, Project CHOICE, implemented its application and screening process for students interested in one of the allied health programs offered by the Turtle Mountain Community College. The process helps inform students about the allied health program and expectations for the prospective participants. The allied health program includes Nursing, Pharmacy Technician, and Phlebotomy.

Applications are screened by a selection committee comprised of instructors of the respective programs, a student services representative, and Project CHOICE staff. This process takes place before or at the beginning of the fall semester. Background checks are required before an applicant can begin the screening process.

As part of the application and screening process, interviews are scheduled for applicants selected to participate in Project CHOICE. Interviews provide the selection committee an opportunity to observe the participant's level of commitment to a chosen program of study and to learn how the program can help the participant succeed.

Once the application and screening process is complete, the selected applicants are required to attend orientation. Orientation takes place within two weeks of the interview. Students receive a Project CHOICE student handbook and expectations for both participant and Project CHOICE are explained and outlined. The handbook and orientation help students consider their selected course of study, think about the expectations of each allied health program; and decide if program is the right course of study.

After orientation, the participant is assessed using the TEAS (Test of Essential Academic Skills) to determine if he or she is a good fit for the allied health program of study. Once the applicant is accepted in the program, all releases of information and a contract between the participant and Project CHOICE are signed. The contract lets the participant know what steps need to be followed to accomplish his or her goal.

HPOG grantees can adopt the practice by implementing the following key steps:

1. Establish a selection committee comprised of instructors of the respective programs, student representative, and HPOG program staff.
2. Determine the elements of the screening process (i.e., criteria, eligibility, backgrounds checks, etc.)
3. Set up a comprehensive orientation process to provide all information to prospective participants about the HPOG program (i.e., benefits, challenges and expectations)

Interdepartmental Collaboration for Healthcare Bridge Programs

Will County on behalf of The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago

Will County operates the Healthcare Careers—Skilled Workers, Strong Earnings HPOG program on behalf of the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago (WBMC). The program provides healthcare training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and low-income individuals in Chicago and 10 surrounding Illinois counties. Program services are coordinated through three local community-based organizations and three community colleges. One of the colleges, Joliet Junior College (JJC), enrolls HPOG participants in a career bridge program that targets the Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) or the Pharmacy Technician career pathway. A key to the program's success has been how JJC's inter-related departments work as a team to implement and deliver project services.

The college's Communications and External Relations Office applies a marketing plan that is inclusive of all advertising opportunities, including radio, television, newspaper, and professional publications. The college uses a variety of resources that support community outreach and recruitment, including a Community & Corporate Services catalog that is mailed to each household within the district. HPOG materials are incorporated in the college's brochures and flyers, and the comprehensive JJC and workforce development Web site.

The Department of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) leads the provision of Adult Education, Basic Skills, GED preparation, high school credit, and ESL programs and services to the target populations. A comprehensive array of support services are provided to HPOG participants, including tutorial assistance, career exploration, and college and career transition services. DAEL has facilitated the Math for Healthcare Professionals and Math for Pharmacy Technician courses.

The Community & Corporate Services (CCS) department is known for their expertise in developing employer-driven, customized training programs. CCS has facilitated the bridge programs that prepare students for the college's occupational training. Courses include:

- Computer Basics
- Keyboarding
- Spanish for Healthcare Professionals
- Medical Terminology

The Workforce Development Department supports participants with the KeyTrain curriculum to increase reading and math foundational skills, and employment assistance. Career readiness classes are facilitated and administered by Workforce Development staff. Participants entering the Certified Nurse Assistant pathway can advance into the LPN, and eventually into the RN, programs after completing the occupational training programs operated by the Nursing and Allied Health Departments. While Joliet Junior College partners with a wide variety of outside organizations to serve HPOG participants, it has been careful to ensure internal collaboration as well to prevent the potential of silo effects from limiting the success of the organization and the HPOG program.

Promising Practices

The Navigator Model

Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

The navigator model is a promising practice that is gaining traction throughout the community and in several different service environments. The Workforce Development Council of Seattle–King County uses HPOG-funded navigators to work across education, workforce, and social services systems to promote integrated case management and services at the individual level. Navigators help participants access information and resources to support good planning and successful outcomes, including packaging support resources across systems for individual success and improving how existing systems work together.

Many in the HPOG target population are individuals with limited resources, limited academic histories, and possibly limited English language skills. In order to engage in the educational system and succeed in career progression, these students typically need many resources. Some of these resources are available through the educational system, some through the social services system, and others from other systems. This network of systems is a complicated and complex web for students in the program to understand and navigate. Students may get off track because of a need they have that they can't determine how to meet or because they haven't made a plan to address meeting that need. Navigators provide assistance with these matters but also help students to develop the skills necessary to navigate these systems independently and to develop and refine their own action plans for success. At its core, the navigator's job is to link between and within systems and industries in order to help the individual succeed along all steps in his or her career path and become more self-sufficient.

One key consideration in establishing a navigator program is recruiting the right people to serve as navigators. This role is different from case management because the navigator should understand more intimately the multiple systems with which their clients need to interact. This intimate understanding really requires seasoned professionals who have knowledge-based relationships with key people and organizations to develop expertise in various subject areas.

In this grantee's model, all navigators are employed by one agency, procured through a competitive process. Navigators in the Seattle program meet biweekly as a team with their director. Several of the HPOG navigators have gone through healthcare training programs themselves or have had previous experience working as navigators in the healthcare sector. For organizations seeking service providers, it is imperative to first map out what is needed from these providers, such as knowledge across systems, knowledge of the industry, and the ability to engage in career planning.

Another important consideration is determining the extent to which navigators will be able to handle all the necessary tasks as the caseload grows. It may be necessary to adapt and modify the initial navigator model so that it continues functioning efficiently and effectively once the caseload grows and there are more demands on navigators' time. Participants may be engaged with their navigators for an average of three years, which means participants are part of the navigator caseload for a protracted time.

For those considering developing a navigator model, the grantee recommends researching and investigating the various navigator models that can be employed. For example, some navigators are employed by a Workforce Development Council or Workforce Investment Board. Some community colleges have utilized navigators in a more limited way. Also, there are other HPOG grantees, such as San Diego and Edmonds Community College that also use navigator models.

At the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County, navigators provide step-by-step support for program participants as described below:

1. A prospective student entering the HPOG program meets first with the navigator. The student may be referred from various sources, such as TANF or WorkSource, for example.
2. The navigator determines the student's eligibility to participate in the program, conducts a background check of the student, and utilizes assessment tools to determine if a healthcare career is a good fit for the student applicant.
3. The navigator begins career planning with the student. CASAS scores are reviewed. Students are asked to conduct some research individually about the variety of healthcare careers that may be open to them. The navigator is critical to helping students understand the parameters that exist around particular career choices, such as which courses are required, how much time is necessary to complete the course of study, what pay scale is typical, and where training for specific career choices is offered. One of the tools this grantee utilizes in some of the career planning activities with students is a training packet developed in King County through the Workforce Investment Act program.
4. The navigator helps the student to determine the next steps in the educational journey. Throughout the engagement with the student, the navigator provides information regarding training opportunities.
5. The navigator assists the student with linking to necessary training, helping the student enroll in the proper school for the particular career choice, covering transportation costs if necessary, and coordinating with other agencies like TANF to provide additional support services.
6. Navigators meet regularly with students and, in the case of HPOG-funded training cohorts, establish specific times when they can be found on campus. They can assist students with budgeting, financial planning, and linking with support services such as housing and fuel cards.
7. Navigators may assist with registration for certification or licensing exams and are able to assist with fees as necessary.
8. Navigators support job search, with the assistance of an HPOG-funded job developer, and continue contact with students once they have secured employment to support job retention. Navigators also assist with return-to-training for incumbent workers.

Promising Practices

Serving Rural Communities

Workforce Investment Board SDA-83, Inc.

Rural areas can create unique challenges for workforce development programs. One of the major issues is accessibility—how do programs reach individuals scattered over large geographic areas, who may live many miles from access points, and have limited transportation options? Common strategies for addressing this issue include strategic marketing and outreach, transportation assistance, Internet services, phone services, and itinerant staff. One-stop centers can create a network of access points in a rural region, each with varying levels of services ranging from comprehensive to computer-only.

The Professional Healthcare Opportunities—Careers and Support (PHOCAS) program, implemented by Workforce Investment Board SDA-83, provides healthcare training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and low-income individuals in rural northeast Louisiana. The targeted service area, Louisiana Regional Labor Market Area 8, consists of 3 Workforce Investment Areas and 11 parishes. This region has a population of more than 300,000, with one-half of the population residing in Ouachita parish, centered on the city of Monroe. The balance of the population is in 10 highly rural parishes. This region has many poverty-stricken, underserved communities with high proportions of single-parent households, people with low educational levels and high unemployment rates, and no public transportation system.

The PHOCAS program utilizes two primary strategies to address these challenges in serving its rural communities: working with partners to establish program staff at as many physical locations as possible (one-stops, colleges, and other partners); and using technology when appropriate as a way to reduce the impact of physical distances. The appropriate use of support services also helps clients succeed despite barriers.

An important first step for developing the PHOCAS program was partnering with the other two workforce investment boards in the region. This, in turn, facilitated cooperation with the region's one-stops, called Business & Career Solutions Centers. Located in all 11 of the parishes, the centers function as the hub for PHOCAS services, including application, interview, assessment, case management, and follow-up processes. PHOCAS case managers, known as Student Liaisons, are located at each center to keep in regular contact with participants and assist participants from enrollment to completion, placement, and follow-up.

In this region, community colleges are a critical part of the community infrastructure. In July 2012, all campuses of the Northeast Louisiana Technical Colleges became part of the Louisiana Delta Community College (LDCC) system. As a result, there are LDCC campuses in seven of the region's parishes. PHOCAS Success Centers are being established at these campuses, with the main center at the Monroe Campus. PHOCAS Success Centers serve as resource centers for trainees and serve as the guiding force behind a cohort approach to training.

Another partner, DeltaLINC is a regional adult and family literacy program. PHOCAS has a Student Liaison staffed at Delta LINC, so that this program can provide remediation to PHOCAS participants and assistance with those needing help to attain their GED. DeltaLINC will provide comprehensive assessments that will assist with the identification of education needs, career pathway development, and appropriate placements.

One way the PHOCAS program is using technology to overcome distances is a tutoring Web site. Launched in September 2012, the site was developed to connect participants with health sciences tutoring services. Students can use the site to request one-on-one help from a tutor specialized for healthcare training or they can use the site's online tutoring features. Instructors are able to upload study tools and other documents for student use. Additionally, PHOCAS has developed online tutorial videos for basic skills training and pre-requisite courses. The videos are publicly available on the Louisiana Delta Community College Web site, covering dozens of topics in math and science.

Throughout the project, PHOCAS has worked to expand its support services in ways that serve the particular needs of this community. The PHOCAS Zonal Travel Reimbursement Supportive Service was created to assist participants with the cost of traveling to and from education and training providers. This system creates 10 zones based on the total distance participants travel per day. Reimbursement amounts are determined by the travel zone. Student Liaisons work with participants to check on attendance and ensure the reimbursement is awarded properly.

Promising Practices

Core Skills Training

The WorkPlace, Inc.

To take advantage of the training and support services that HPOG programs offer, participants typically need to learn or brush up on work readiness skills and other “soft” skills—the foundational skills they need to get, keep, and do well in a job. These skills are important for everyone, but especially for those with little work history, troubled backgrounds, or other barriers to employment. The WorkPlace, Inc.’s Southwestern Connecticut’s Health CareRx Academy focuses on these skills at the very beginning of the participants’ HPOG experience to help them understand what will be expected of them in the training as well as in the workplace.

In the Academy’s mandatory workshops, students are required to treat their training as a job and practice the same skills, actions, and attitudes that they will demonstrate in the workplace. This expectation helps them realize from the beginning that the end goal is a job. Workshops offer information about conducting a job search, preparing a resume, practicing interviews, and learning new job skills. In addition, they give participants a broad picture of the workplace and what it means to be on a career pathway.

The workshops are designed to be interactive and provide concrete examples typically found in work and healthcare settings. Some vendors provide teaching materials and assessments. All are required to provide opportunities for student evaluation of the sessions they offer.

Teaching these work readiness skills in the context of healthcare helps participants see the personal connection on multiple levels. For example, they are introduced to *why customer service matters in healthcare, learning to know your patient and the patient’s family, building trust and empathy, and leveraging your compassion*. Trainers from the Connecticut League for Nursing inform them that while in training they are expected to demonstrate good personal habits and show up to class on time, dressed appropriately and ready to work. When Academy participants enter their technical training, they more readily understand the importance of getting along with others and making good decisions. They learn that they need to get along with fellow students, workers, and supervisors who come from many backgrounds.

It’s hard to overemphasize the role that attitude will have in their future success. Displaying interest and willingness to learn motivates others to help mentor and guide participants in the classroom and in their future careers. Students are encouraged to think of themselves as part of a team responsible for the success of the group. By teaching and modeling these behaviors from the beginning of the program and insisting that participants use them during training, the Academy helps its graduates shine well before they get into the workplace.

Steps taken to implement this Foundational Skills Program:

1. Talk with local employers who identify these foundational skills as critical for people to get hired.
2. Issue a Request for Qualifications to create a list of qualified outside vendors from which to procure services for covered topics and delivery methods. Select vendors with a range of experience, with some working with TANF clients and others with health professionals or corporate clients.

3. Run workshops between three and five hours in length. Typically 10 to 14 students attend each workshop, enabling interaction with instructors and with other students.
4. Recognizing the need to develop soft skills is so important, require students to attend workshops.
5. Have workforce specialists determine which workshop topic and which vendor would most benefit each student. Students then sign a form indicating the workshops they will attend.

An ongoing challenge: Even with this requirement, Academy workshop attendance has not been where it should be. One reason may be timing: workshops were started during July and August, and students may have struggled with school vacations and other summer demands. So far the Academy has offered the workshops in mornings and afternoons, but it may try evenings or weekends. The vendors have been resourceful in trying to build attendance: some provide refreshments, and at least one texts students the day before to remind them to attend. Academy staff also make reminder phone calls and send emails and will soon begin texting reminders as well.

