

H-1B TECHHIRE



TechHire Workforce Development Board and Nonprofit Cohort December Peer Learning Group Call Summary

The third and final Workforce Development Board and Nonprofit Peer Learning Group (PLG) Cohort call was held on December 3rd. The call was the last in a series focused on peer-to-peer connections and specific topic areas. Specifically, this call focused on a peer consultancy for LIFT USA and a brief discussion about sustaining the PLG independent of the TA provided by JFF and Maher.

The peer consultancy used the following protocol:

1. Introducing the challenge
 - a. A “focus” grantee shares some challenges that they are looking for advice on
2. Clarifying questions
 - a. The group asks clarifying questions of the grantee to better understand the challenges and issues, necessary context, etc.
 - b. Facilitators steer participants away from solutions at this point and toward questions to continue framing the issues
3. Brainstorming solutions
 - a. The group brainstorms potential solutions among one another
 - b. Focus grantee listens, but doesn’t participate in this part of the discussion
4. Sharing and discussing solutions
 - a. Group discusses the proposed solutions with the focus grantee

Objectives of the PLG Cohort Call

- To learn about and share strategies for developing/revising grantee goals for their PoP extensions
- To share proposed and/or revised work plans grantees have developed specifically for their PoP extension
- To discuss strategies and approaches which may include online/virtual training job placement, retention, and sustainability elements

PEER CONSULTANCY: LIFT USA

Participants utilized the December 3rd Google Doc (link attached on CoP page), which allowed real-time sharing across all attendees. The session began with a brief presentation by the LIFT USA project director, specifically their challenges related to the guiding questions - ***How Might We Support Students in Job Placement?*** And ***How Might LIFT USA Collaborate with Local American Job Centers?***

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

The first question the group asked what existing infrastructure was in place prior to the start of the grant. LIFT USA noted that they were already working closely with their local adult education program, and the state workforce development board. There were some issues with the partnership commitments that were written into the grant proposal. There were also issues with employer partners, staff turnover at LIFT, and a delay in starting grant activities.

Next the group clarified who else LIFT has worked with. They discussed a service provider who specializes in serving Latinx communities, that offered to assist but they were too expensive to pursue and wouldn’t guarantee placement. Finally, there was discussion about what else changed in the environment throughout the grant period. The grantee responded that instructors changed, and there was momentum up until the pandemic, which slowed things down again. Currently, their adult ed partner has come through as a good support and they have been considering working with Ivy Tech Community College but these conversations are still new.

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BRAINSTORMING & SHARING SOLUTIONS

The group then discussed LIFT's challenges. Others in the group noted that they have had to rebuild partnership agreements because of changing conditions from a proposal to actually delivering a program. One participant noted that they had more flexibility with TechHire compared to WIOA-funded programs and used this to come up with creative solutions to problems.

In terms of employer engagement, they discussed strategies of using paid work experiences based on what participants needed and where employers were willing to take risks. Some of their employers were comfortable starting with internships before job placements and apprenticeships, for example. It seemed to the group that perhaps LIFT needed to re-prioritize staff time to dedicate more hours to employer engagement also.

The grantee was invited back into the conversation to respond to and discuss the solutions developed by the group. The group added more detail for her, such as considering using case managers from adult ed providers for support on job placement, if possible. They also discussed with the grantee scheduling a presentation with her workforce board employers to engage them as employment partners, which she agreed was a good idea.

SUSTAINING THE PLG

After the consultancy, the group had a brief discussion about sustaining this PLG for WDBs and nonprofits beyond the length of the technical assistance contract. The technical assistance coaches offered to give the participants sample agendas and email lists to give them support in doing this. They seemed interested and the group agreed to follow-up over email about this.

MURAL ORIENTATION

Another technical assistance coach from ICF gave the participants a brief orientation to Mural, the interactive virtual whiteboard tool that will be used in the Toast to TechHire event. Participants had a chance to create sticky notes and to create nametags attached to a map of the U.S. as introductory exercises.

NEXT STEPS

The facilitators agreed to follow-up with the group with materials for sustaining the PLG and to provide this call summary to all PLG members.