

H-1B TECHHIRE



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

As part of the technical assistance provided to TechHire grantees in their Period of Performance (PoP) Extensions, a Peer Learning Group (PLG) Cohort Call Series was created, with grantees divided into two groups: workforce development boards/nonprofits and community colleges. Christy Montgomery-Jones of Maher & Maher and Matthew Poland of JFF organized and facilitated the first of three virtual meetings of the workforce board and nonprofit cohort in August 2020.

The technical assistance coach facilitators provided a brief

introduction and review of the goals of the PLG Cohort Calls, emphasizing the importance of participation and inviting group members to take part in planning future calls. The group then moved to a Google doc (link attached on CoP page) to facilitate an interactive discussion, starting with answering a fun icebreaker question.

Participants were directed to answer discussion questions together live in the Google doc, which was provided in the Teams chat. Christy and Matt asked participants to elaborate on their answers and add their thoughts throughout the discussion. The resulting conversation took place both verbally and written in the Google doc itself. Below is a summary of the conversation that took place for each question asked.

WHAT GRANTEES HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH

PLG members were first asked what they would like to accomplish during their PoP Extension. A common theme was to continue to recruit, train, and place participants into employment to achieve their proposed targets. Several participants noted that they also are looking for ways to continually improve their programs and will use this time to invest in that goal. Another thread that emerged was an interest in building out or scaling up Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) programs. Finally, participants brought up employer engagement strategies that respond to employer needs.

Objectives of the PLG Cohort Call

- To form small cohorts to continue dialogue among grantees and assist with challenges in the execution of their plans
- To learn about and share strategies for developing and revising grantee goals for their PoP Extension
- To share proposed 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

REQUESTS FOR LEARNING FROM PEERS

The next question focused on what grantees would like to learn from their peer workforce development boards and nonprofits in this PLG cohort over the next several meetings. There was agreement on learning best practices in other regions and markets that can be applied in recruitment and employer engagement as well as other areas. Some participants expressed interest in sustainability strategies, and one person shared a successful strategy in providing technology to their program participants. Finally, marketing seemed to be an interest among several group members. One organization is trying a new digital campaign and will share the results with the group in future meetings.

HELPFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The last question asked grantees what tools and resources could best support them during their PoP Extension. An IWT Participant Enrollment form was requested by one participant. Another person suggested sharing employer relationships from one city or region to another for national or multisite businesses. Finally, the group expressed interest in ideas for bringing local businesses on board for sustainability.

NEXT STEPS

Group members were asked to complete a poll to express their desire to meet monthly or bimonthly (bimonthly was the most popular choice). Christy and Matt agreed to send a follow-up email and set future meetings for the group, encouraging other members of the group to participate in the planning of PLG Cohort Calls. After the meeting, new dates were set for two more meetings of the PLG cohort: October 15, 1-2 p.m. EST and December 3, 1-2 p.m. EST.

TechHire Workforce Development Board and Nonprofit October Peer Learning Group Cohort Call

Objectives of the PLG Cohort Call

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

The second Peer Learning Group Cohort Call for the workforce development board and nonprofit group was held in mid-October. It focused on peer-to-peer connections, aimed at fostering the sharing of ideas, solutions, and common challenges across grantees with similar organizational missions and structure. Additionally, it highlighted grantees' experiences with social media outreach for recruiting and strategies for incumbent workers.

The technical assistance coach facilitators provided a brief introduction and welcomed first-time attendees. Participants connected virtually via a Google doc (posted to CoP page), which

allowed real-time sharing among all attendees.

OUTREACH STRATEGIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

CareerSource Tampa Bay started off the PLG Cohort Call by discussing their recent outreach efforts. Their grant staff launched a marketing campaign in July with the objective of reaching an enrollment goal of 100 by September 2020, targeting young adults ages 17 to 29. They evaluated the effectiveness of their outreach by measuring the number of interested participants, how many of those led to program enrollments, and how many enrollments successfully began the program. The analysis helped grant staff to realize some marks that were missed in the initial campaign. As a result, they began to adjust content to include information specific to the training programs available in their TechHire program, including average wages post-completion.

CareerSource Tampa Bay also realized human contact was still the most effective way to successfully reach potential candidates. The grant increased activity for the outreach coordinator, generating leads through existing relationships and networks.

With the transition to virtual operations, CareerSource Tampa Bay shifted focus to engage potential participants through online platforms, such as local [Meetup](#) groups. They said targeted IT meetups have proved to be an effective audience to engage for their TechHire programming. Additionally, they began to present virtually to partner organizations and other community meetings to spread the word about their programming. Virtual presentations to community partners and potential students were added to help generate word-of-mouth referrals.

CareerSource Tampa Bay provided the following example of their initial campaign:



OUTREACH TIPS TO CONSIDER

As part of the peer discussions, additional grantees identified a list of other strategies and things to consider. All grantees agreed it is important to provide specific information related to training, tuition and fees, and expected wages. Even then, grantees noted that potential participants might have questions or fears. For example, if grantees say tuition and fees are covered,

potential participants may think there is a catch. It is important for potential participants to be able to speak directly with someone to help ease fears and provide additional information.

IWT TRAINING PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

The second discussion topic addressed Incumbent Worker Training strategies. Worksystems Inc. discussed how their program pivoted away from creating apprenticeship opportunities based on local employer needs and transitioned to serving incumbent workers. During this transition, they have received applications to serve more than 80 incumbent workers. The grantee experienced the biggest demand increase between April and May.

Both small and large businesses have expressed interest, including tech companies and non-tech companies with tech divisions. Worksystems encouraged the group to remain adaptable to changing needs in their local labor market. They expressed that while recruiting businesses and employees has not been difficult, meeting the goal of helping the workers advance has been extremely challenging due to the current economic climate. Worksystems continues to track this outcome and provide support to each business to help them identify opportunities.

OTHER DISCUSSION ITEMS

Worksystems said they have observed more success with social media outreach when content is specific to the trainings they offer. They recommended avoiding promoting “TechHire” as a general program within the content. Additionally, they have pivoted to increasing partnerships with Unemployment Insurance [\(UI\)](#). The UI partner is able to search through claimants to identify specific data points and share training opportunities and referrals directly with potential participants.

Forward Careers mentioned that prior to the pandemic, staff internally developed an online platform for business contacts to communicate their needs. They have had positive experiences with businesses reaching out, which has allowed grant staff to customize their offerings from an early stage when interacting with each business.

NEXT STEPS

The facilitators will send a follow-up email to help set future agenda topics. The group was asked to share their desired conversation topics and identify grantees willing to share their experiences on the next call in December. Cohort members will be involved in the planning of the December agenda.

GRANTEE FEEDBACK

“I really enjoyed the Cohort Call. It was my first time being able to join, and it was great to hear from other participants. I thought it was really well put together, and I look forward to the next call.” — Brenda Johnson, LIFT USA

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