H-1B Ready to Work: Coaches Corner on Employer Engagement

February 22, 2017

The H-1B Ready to Work (RTW) “Coaches Corner” on Employer Engagement provided a platform for grantees to interact directly with H-1B RTW TA Coaches Tressa Dorsey and Kisha Toppin. There was an open discussion on employer engagement practices, successes and challenges with other grantees through a series of questions.

This summary was developed to provide insight on the Coaches Feedback with strategies and information that was shared during the Coaches Corner call. Click here to listen to the entire call.

Overview

Employment placement challenges are more than often not related to the execution of key activities outlined in your Statement of Work. Placement is a direct result of partnerships that are high functioning and mutually beneficial. TA Coaches Tressa Dorsey and Kisha Toppin discussed strategies to building those partnerships that may improve placement outcomes. In preparation for the call, grantees were asked to discuss and share their responses to the following questions during the Coaches Corner.

1. Are the employers that you incorporated into the grant programs still partners?
2. Describe specific aspects of those relationships that have created longevity.
3. How do you develop partnership strategies with new employers?
4. What types of efforts go into sustaining a mutually beneficial relationship with employers?
5. How do you provide on-going support to employers who have hired program participants?
6. How often do you connect with individual employers to find out how things are progressing with hired individuals?
   a. Who’s responsibility is it?
7. What types of activities, services or events do you provide for employer partners to ensure they stay connected to working with program participants?
8. Describe specific actions you will take to build employer partnerships this year.

What did participants want to gain from the call?

- Best practices for engaging larger employers.
- How to demonstrate to employers the value of your project and get them to develop interest in LTU workers.
- Suggestions for events to introduce program participants to potential employers.
- How can frontline staff connect with employers?
- What are the best practices on how to communicate with employers on grant paperwork and administration?
Statement of Work Tips

- Review your SOW to analyze your initial target goals and compare to your current accomplishments.
  - Questions to ask:
    - How can we improve?
    - What does it mean if we are not on target?
    - What resources do we need to meet our goals?
    - What is making us successful?
- Conduct this analysis with internal team members, partners, and subcontractors.

Targeting and Engaging Small and Large Employers

**Grantee: Memphis Bio Works**
**Industry Focus:** Information Technology

- Memphis engages with smaller companies
  - Smaller businesses benefit financially by hiring on-the-job training (OJT) participants.
- By working with smaller businesses, it is easier to engage with leadership. However, it’s not a one-size-fits-all – you need to see what works for your specific programs.

**Grantee: District 1199c Training & Upgrading Fund**
**Industry Focus:** Healthcare

- Develop lucrative relationships to understand how your needs overlap with employer needs.
- Keep people engaged
  - Send information;
  - Send meeting invites;
  - Provide discounts on training;
  - Employer advisory boards
  - Quarterly meetings with relevant speakers
The purpose is to collaborate with employers, and learn new grantee updates and best practices. A few examples of speakers include individuals who manage training programs, laborers, economists, and public policy officials

**Grantee: Florida State College at Jacksonville**
**Industry Focus:** Information Technology

- Jacksonville targets a full range of employers – from the smallest to the biggest – due to the fact that job seekers are better suited for different types of employers.
- Internship (try before you buy) was a key to success for engaging larger employers.
- Opening doors is important, but keeping them open is also important,
  - All except one employer are still on board and they refer other companies.
- Meet and greet is a mini career fair.
- Keys to engaging larger employers as partners:
  - Listen to staffing agencies and employers on how to present the program to companies
  - Be a facilitator of training and a pipeline. Emphasize that it’s for the local community. We have the same goals.
  - Constant contact with employers. Employees use a 24-hour turnaround for sending resumes to employers.
  - Seek employer buy-in from the very beginning and be clear of expectations
  - Dissemination
    - Create flyers for companies and 3x5 cards targeted to participants
    - Billboards
    - Word of mouth
    - Formal presentations to employers
Developing and Maintaining Effective Partnerships

**Grantee:** City and County of Denver’s  
**Industry Focus:** IT, Advanced Manufacturing

- In the first 90 days, communicate with job seekers and employers to find out what strategies are favorable and which ones have been unsuccessful.  
- Invite employers to a private roundtable to discuss how to develop workforce talent.  
  - This roundtable is for employers that recently moved into town or are newly expanding.

**Grantee:** District 1199c Training & Upgrading Fund  
**Industry Focus:** Information Technology

- Industry partnerships are beneficial because they help employers realize that it’s in their best interest to partner with workforce development;  
- Invite academic institutions to have a seat at the table with employers so that they can jointly collaborate with workforce development;  
  - In addition to meeting company leaders, develop a relationship with the employees that will have a more hands-on role in ensuring the success of the partnership.

Streamlining Documentation to Reduce Turnoff for Potential Partners

**Grantee:** Nebraska’s Department of Labor  
**Industry Focus:** Information Technology

- Use only one OJT contract per employer that lasts one year  
- Then, individual participants sign OJT plans  
- This reduces 70-80% of the paperwork  
  - The employer pre-application is two pages  
  - The contract is 4 pages. It’s a little long due to legal info.  
  - The OJT training plan for each participant is filled out by the grantee and is about 3 pages  
    - The employer reviews the plan and updates the skills piece of the OJT plan, which increases accountability.

---

**PROMISING PRACTICES FROM KISHA**

- Have a clear vision and convey messages to potential and current employers.  
- Facilitate joint planning amongst partnership employers.  
- Ensure ongoing communications and updates.  
- Convey expectations (what’s the process, how you will follow up, etc.).  
- Clarify goals and responsibilities.  
- Share in decision-making.  
- Providing ongoing support.  
- Be flexible.  
- Address challenges and celebrate successes throughout the process.  
  - Identify a champion employer that can assist with the recruitment of additional employers.

**PROMISING PRACTICES FROM TRESSA**

- Utilize technology that links companies to talent, such as Denver’s Talent Showcase.  
- Create streamlined documentation process for potential employers.  
- Emphasize employer partners networking  
- Highlight publicity through social media and local coverage of business services being offered to employers.  
- Join trade associations and industry groups  
- Base cohort training schedules on employers’ hiring timelines (coordination of internship and PWE)  
- Promote employer presentations in training/classroom settings  
- Participate with CEO and employer roundtables/advisory councils