

# 2019 H-1B GRANTEE CONFERENCE

## Strengthening America's Talent Pipeline

NOVEMBER 13-14, 2019 | WASHINGTON, DC

## Conference Highlights

The Strengthening America's Talent Pipeline National Grantee Conference, held November 13-14, 2019 in Washington DC, was designed to facilitate peer learning, provide sustainability strategies, and offer technical assistance (TA) to ensure continued success in the implementation and administration of the America's Promise and Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grant programs. This in-person event was an opportunity for the grantees to come together and share best practices, discuss solutions to common program challenges, as well as build continued relationships with peers, federal staff, and TA coaches from Mathematica Policy Research and High Impact Partners. The conference focused on sustainability, grant closeout, data analysis, and active peer-to-peer engagement.

[Strengthening America's Talent Pipeline Conference Agenda](#)

### PLENARY SESSIONS

#### [Sustainability Strategies and Lessons Learned](#)

This panel discussion focused on sustainability strategies and funding ideas from current and former U.S. Department of Labor grantees, as well as a subject matter expert.

**Speakers:** *Rosa Maria Castaneda*, Annie E. Casey Foundation; *Cheryl Martin*, Division of Strategic Investments, ETA/USDOL; *Jessica Cassarino*, Community College of Aurora, Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI); *Linda Kurokawa*, MiraCosta College, America's Promise; *Phyllis Marty*, Alachua Workforce Board, SWFI; *Liz Ojeda*, City and County of Denver, Ready to Work

#### Key Points:

- ★ Engage industry partners to help generate ideas as you are planning for sustaining your program.
- ★ Research philanthropic organizations as another funding stream. These organizations often like to see innovation and creativity in proposals – consider what new program elements you can include.

- ★ Consider hosting a “Data Walk” where businesses, philanthropists, employers, and community partners can learn about your organization and participants. The event can bring awareness to your program outcomes by connecting the personal stories of participants to each of the outcomes and goals your program has set.
- ★ Think about ways you can help meet the needs of your employer partners so their businesses can grow. Include examples of the project’s return on investment (ROI) by demonstrating previous successes.

### Performance Trends and Program Accomplishments

This session reviewed the performance trends for both the America’s Promise and SWFI programs. The session focused on program data from the June 30, 2019 quarter and aligned grantees’ accomplishments and performance goals.

**Speakers:** *Monica E. Antonio*, ETA/USDOL; *Kevin Mauro*, High Impact Partners; *Kristen Milstead*, ETA/USDOL; *Gregory Scheib*, ETA/USDOL

#### **Key Points:**

- ★ Both programs are making progress on their overall performance goals.
- ★ Data can be broken down to look at specific demographics to discover successes and challenges.
- ★ Data can tell a more complete story when you include specific examples of participant successes.

### Closeout and Grants Management

Grants Management staff discussed the grant recipient responsibilities during the closeout process, and a Federal Project Officer (FPO) discussed the requirements for requesting a period of performance extension.

**Speakers:** *Adrian Barrett*, Federal Project Officer, ETA/USDOL; *Avery Malone*, Grant Officer, ETA/USDOL; *Meron Assefa*, Grant Officer, ETA/USDOL

#### **Key Points:**

- ★ Communication is key to a smooth closeout process.
- ★ Each grant will be assigned a closeout representative who will answer any questions you may have.
- ★ The closeout handbook can be downloaded from the [DOLETA website](#).



- ★ Period of Performance (POP) extensions can be requested once two-thirds of the grant period has passed. America’s Promise and SWFI grants are now able to submit requests.
- ★ POP extensions are approved by FPOs. The national office will only review POP extension requests if the FPO is considering a denial of the request.

## GRANTEE BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### Accessing Child Care to Support Education and Training (SWFI Only)

Grantees learned how to make connections between education, training, and child care and apply this information to sustain the child care aspects of their grants. Three grantees shared strategies to facilitate access to child care, and all grantees participated in small group discussion about applying these strategies to their own programs.

**Speakers:** *Jessica Harding*, SWFI Technical Assistance (TA) Coach; *Mathematica*, *Gina Adams*, Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population, Urban Institute; *Carol Burnett*, Moore Community House, SWFI; *Sandra Dafiaghor*, OAI, Inc., SWFI; *Jim Huh*, OAI, Inc., SWFI; *David Moore*, Total Action for Progress, SWFI

#### Key Points:

- ★ SWFI grantees can take the following actionable steps to support access to child care for parents seeking education and training:
  - Support access to child care subsidies in your state, including the supply of home-based child care providers and the ability to use subsidies in home-based settings.
  - Prioritize child care in workforce development; strategies include addressing child care in assessments and employment plans.
  - Access additional resources through partnerships (Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), state and local child care partners and other funding sources (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, CCDF, TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Plan Employment and Training, state funding, local funding/matching funds).
  - Work with stakeholders to incorporate child care for parents with low incomes seeking education and training into state vision and strategic plans (Ex. WIOA 4-year State Plans).
- ★ Three grantees led small group discussions describing the strategies they use to facilitate access to child care, including partnering with Head Start; working with local subsidy agencies to leverage subsidies; and working with the state agency to receive TANF funds to support child care.



### **Grantee Learning Exchange** (America's Promise Only)

America's Promise grantees broke up into small groups by industry focus and had the opportunity to share challenges. Fellow grantees offered strategies and tips to help solve those challenges.

**Speaker:** *Michael Laidlaw*, America's Promise (TA) Coach, SKL Associates

#### **Key Points:**

★ Challenge: Curriculum Changes

**Tip:** It is important to work with your employer partners to identify their needs before making any changes to your training program.

★ Challenge: Instructor turnover

**Tip:** Grantees must be innovative in order to prevent instructor turnover; suggestions include offering professional development and flexible work hours or partnering with other colleges/universities in the area to "share" instructors.

★ Challenge: Job Placements

**Tip:** As grantee focus on participant retention and completion, employer engagement has to stay a top priority if you want to meet performance goals and place participants.

### **Success Factors: What to Work on in Year 4** (America's Promise Only)

In small groups, grantees discussed their progress and challenges in the context of the America's Promise Success Factors. Three Success Factors were highlighted, and tips were shared for each.

**Speakers:** *Bruce Rankin*, America's Promise TA Coach, PPM Associates; *Jan Bray*, America's Promise TA Coach, Bray Strategies

#### **Key Points:**

★ Organizational Management

- During staff transitions – keep internal team informed of any changes.
  - Review reports, policies, and data tracking system regularly.
  - Have a team management plan to plan for staff changes.
  - Hold calls and meeting regularly with staff to discuss transitions and new roles and responsibilities.
- Utilize a project management tool to help manage communications with partners.
- Develop and update infographics or visual tools that demonstrate program success on a monthly/quarterly basis.
- Develop a strong communication plan for both internal and external partners and stakeholders.



★ Effective Partner Engagement

- If you have multiple service centers, create a way to share performance data among the centers so each partner or stakeholder is aware of what the others are doing. This will help create accountability among partners.

★ Effective Employer Engagement

- Provide exposure opportunities for your employer partners to entice them to invest in your program.
- Calculate the return on investment (ROI) for employers partnering with your program. Be sure to think about the cost savings of providing training, credentials, and certifications.
- Establish an MOU and ask employers to include your branding on outreach and program materials.

[Using Work-based Learning Strategies to Support H-1B Career Pathways](#)

Grantees learned about a range of work-based learning (WBL) strategies and had an opportunity to discuss challenges and solutions related to using those strategies to engage employers in WBL and place participants in WBL opportunities.

**Speaker:** *Elizabeth Brown*, SWFI TA Coach, Mathematica

**Key Points:**

- ★ Grantees self-selected into small groups by the WBL strategy they were most interested in: On-the-Job Trainings; internships, externships, and co-ops; apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships; and transitional jobs and customized training.
- ★ Within each group, grantees shared challenges they had encountered and solutions they developed to implement that WBL strategy.
- ★ Grantees were interested in learning more about these WBL strategies.

[Don't Just Say it, Show it! Using Program Results to Build Stakeholder Relationships](#)

This session introduced different techniques to demonstrate program results and outcomes in a visual format that can be used for outreach to stakeholders.

**Speakers:** *Michael Laidlaw*, America's Promise TA Coach, SKL Associates; *Kenneth Laryea*, The WorkPlace, SWFI; *Amy Meyer*, United Way of Central Iowa, America's Promise; *Lyle Neumann*, America's Promise TA Coach, High Impact Partners; *Nordia Savage*, The WorkPlace, SWFI

**Key Points:**

- ★ Provide data to employers and show the cost to train (tuition support) an individual vs. the employer's cost associated with replacing an employee.



- ★ Use data to quantify diversity to increase minority representation in an organization.
- ★ For foundations—success stories matter to everyone; develop blogs to tell your story in a more holistic way.
- ★ Whenever possible, provide a tour of your training center for potential employees and participants.
- ★ The use of dashboards (graphs on program metrics) can show where the program currently stands. These dashboards can be used for internal staff to stay on track and for stakeholders to share information on your behalf.

### Deep Dive on Sustainability

Grantees participated in peer-to-peer sharing of tips and strategies to help their programs continue to be viable and successful after the grant funding ends.

#### **Key Points:**

- ★ Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) should involve their community colleges. Ideally, the WDB would form a committee composed of one person from each of the project's local colleges, as well as employers who would help develop and advise on the training needed in the local area.
- ★ It's important to look at how your program and partner organizations view sustainability. WDBs are focused on employment, while educational institutions, who provide the training, are often more focused on credentials and certificates.
- ★ As you work with employers check to see if they have a foundation department that can provide a potential funding source.
- ★ Research entrepreneurial ventures your organization may be able to partner with.
- ★ Strategies prioritized highly included expanding family, friend, and neighbor child care access; implementing employer needs assessments; supporting pre-approved child care providers in close proximity to training providers; seeking accreditation to provide in-house trainings; and designing and implementing a direct and formalized referral process between agencies.



## Effective Employer Engagement Showcase

Grantees met in small groups with grantee presenters that have implemented promising practices for engaging employers. Presenters gave short presentations and then answered questions on their employer engagement strategies.

**Speakers:** *Elizabeth Brown*, SWFI TA Coach, Mathematica; *Jenny Bolte*, New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board, America's Promise; *Darcy Brouillette*, Vermont Technical College, SWFI; *Danielle Calaway*, Vermont Technical College, SWFI; *Marty Holliday*, New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board, America's Promise; *Ruth Mazara*, Moore Community House, SWFI

### **Key Points:**

- ★ Effective strategies for engaging employers include meeting with employers regularly and listening to their needs, developing a “no wrong door” approach to employer services, and maintaining a database of information on local employer needs.
- ★ Pre-apprenticeships with local employers are a win-win for employers and grantees. Employers build a pipeline of candidates trained in the skills they need, and participants gain valuable skills and work experience that can lead to higher initial wages.
- ★ Employers sometimes ask for more credentials than needed based on a job description, leading to credential and degree inflation. Grantees can alleviate this disconnect by engaging employers in skill-based hiring discussions.

## You're Hired! Getting Participants to the Finish Line

This panel discussion focused on job placement and tracking, and participant retention. Panelists shared strategies and tips on what they are implementing in their programs.

**Speakers:** *Amanda Kosty*, America's Promise TA Coach, AACC; *John Berardi*, CareerSource Brevard, America's Promise; *Hilary Valentine*, Delaware Technical Community College, America's Promise; *Amelia Youngstrom*, Action for Boston Community Development, SWFI

### **Key Points:**

- ★ **Delaware Technical Community College**
  - Participant Engagement
    - “Trust Building” with participants was the key to participant engagement and retention.
    - “Trust Building” process:
      - Make sure staff has buy-in to the mission of making each participant feel like family.
      - Celebrate every milestone.



- If you can leverage funding from your partners, provide quarterly group luncheons to engage participants and celebrate successes.

### ★ Action for Boston Community Development

#### Case Management

- Making case management mandatory was a promising practice for this team.
  - Provide participants with self-assessment tools so everyone is aware of participants' individual needs. We use a "Self Sufficiency Matrix" that covers 16 areas of a person's life – housing, parenting, etc.
  - Texting participants is better than phone calls for outreach.
  - Develop individualized service plans for each participant to address their professional and personal needs (e.g., housing, professional development, etc.).
- Work with employers to identify scheduling options or supportive services to assist participants.

### ★ CareerSource Brevard

#### Job Placement Engagement

- Use assessments for IT industry participants to help inform them of the type of training and employment needed. Example: CompTIA assessment
- Work with your sector strategy group (Chamber of Commerce, EDC, SBA, etc.) to help attract and engage businesses.
- Work with employers to create individual training plans for participants and then, where possible, commit grant funds to appropriate portions of the training.

## Small Group Grantee Meetings

Grantees had the opportunity to meet in small groups to discuss challenges and share strategies and tips. Below are a few strategies from these small groups.

### Key Points:

- ★ Demonstrate the ROI for employers and other funders. Grantees agreed that they need to make the business case by packaging their results in infographics or similar outreach materials.
- ★ Include success stories when recruiting potential employer partners.
- ★ It's important to develop a pitch about how your organization can provide solutions to employer needs. Some examples of business-related services included: tax credit information, no cost job opening advertising, human resources support, or customized job fairs.
- ★ Create a pitch to small- and medium-size businesses (15-75) that your program can "build an employee vs. buying an employee". Through training you are building an employee for



the business based on the skills that the business indicates are necessary for the employee to be successful.

- ★ Grantees want to ensure they can tell the full story of their grant and the people they've served. This requires thorough participant follow-up practices and a data system that can capture this data.
- ★ Many grantees are thinking about sustainability and have designated certain staff members as responsible for suitability planning.

