
MODULE 1:

Developing Key Partnerships



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Learning Objectives

- Improved understanding of the national/state workforce development (WFD) system.
- Increased awareness and understanding of community WFD partners and their areas of expertise at the local and regional level.
- Improved understanding of current level of interaction between community partners.
- Enhanced understanding of local WFD landscape through the eyes of a job seeker in regards to existing challenges, opportunities and sources of information.

Background

Partnerships allow for a robust array of training programs to exist, especially in rural communities where resources are limited and efficiencies in upskilling the existing labor force is critical. The challenge is that since the 1950's, the landscape of who does the training, how it is done and who regulates the training has changed tremendously.

Historically, employers conducted much of the training themselves via on-the-job experience that was either done under the mentorship of a seasoned veteran or by trial and error, more commonly the latter. In the 1950's, a cultural shift towards more formal training emerged which materialized via vocational or 'trade' courses at the high schools. This structured format of teaching physical job skills began to carry over to workplaces, ushering in the connection between education and business entities.¹

While businesses were adapting to a changing training landscape for their workers, the federal government was also involved in providing jobs to upskill unemployed or underemployed individuals via apprenticeships, on-the-job trainings or summer job opportunities. Beginning in the 1980's, more emphasis was placed on consolidating education and job training programs via regional or community-based one-stop career centers. These centers were set up to assist all individuals and established mandatory partners. Today, these centers still exist with local workforce development boards responsible for distributing the federal and state workforce development funds.² To better understand the workforce development hierarchy, please review the Workforce 101 section.

As the nation's economy continues to rapidly change, the skills gap remains persistent. A considerable amount of variability exists in how much training one needs for a job across industries, making it difficult for one-stop career

¹ Austin, S. 2008. The Evolution of Workplace Training. EHS Today. Accessed on August 9, 2021 at <https://www.ehstoday.com/training-and-engagement/article/21904600/the-evolution-of-workplace-training>.

² History of Workforce Development. Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association. Accessed on August 9, 2021 at <https://www.pawork.org/about-us/history-of-workforce-development/>.

centers to offer or provide information about all training opportunities. Technology has stepped in to alleviate some of these challenges, but it also has its imperfections. Additional challenges have emerged that impacts how communities effectively reach and upskill the potential and existing labor force. A sampling of these challenges range from:

- Various learning styles (visual/auditory/kinesthetic)
- Generation gaps affecting values, attitudes and ways of learning
- Language and literacy barriers
- Continual turnover and absenteeism creating smaller training cohorts
- Availability and affordability of training
- Cost of training and availability of funds
- Necessity of receiving training and lack of pay while receiving training
- Lack of awareness of where to receive training

Therefore, leveraging partners in the community to reach unemployed/underemployed individuals and pool training resources together to address the beforementioned challenges becomes critical. It is unrealistic for a business or even a group of businesses to be able to address all of these challenges on their own. Developing partnerships appears to be an easy endeavor, but much navigating needs to occur to creating lasting collaborations.

As an Extension professional, know that the workforce development space has many key partners and Extension is not readily recognized as a workforce development partner. As a result, it is absolutely critical to develop these relationships into partnerships. Depending on the local situation, Extension may be questioned as to why it is entering into the WFD space compared to traditional programming efforts. Therefore, it is essential to be transparent about Extension's role in this WFD effort and to let all the key actors (e.g., workforce boards, local political groups, state agencies, etc.) know what they are going to be doing.

Each of the WFD actors/partners have their turf and not recognizing that territoriality can do more harm than good. Much of this territoriality is related to funding streams. Taking the time to develop key partnerships with the existing WFD partners, understanding their roles and how they operate is of paramount importance. Care must be taken to develop these partnerships and trust before launching the FORWARD program.

The remainder of this section will give a high level overview of workforce development, talk about the various training types, potential partners that exist within a community/region, and ways to build key partnerships to address pressing skill shortages.

Workforce 101: A Tool for Understanding the Key Workforce Assets in Your Community

As an Extension professional putting together a plan for developing and implementing career pathways for low-income workers, it is important that you have familiarity with your community's workforce development assets. These assets include publicly funded workforce development agencies and programs as well as those funded by private philanthropy and businesses. This learning module will provide enough familiarity with these systems to enable you to identify and contact the people who can bring these resources to the table to help you accomplish your work.

The accompanying worksheet, listed under the Extension Educator Corner section, will help you get started identifying the organizations, people, and plans that are important to developing and implementing your career pathways.

1. What is the public workforce system?

The public workforce system includes federal, state, and local government-funded agencies and programs that provide services to workers, job seekers, and employers to support the economy by developing the talent of the nation's workforce. The system provides services for job seekers, including job search assistance, career readiness training, college and career navigation, services for out of school youth, and information and funding for skill training. The public workforce system also provides services for employers, such as customized training.

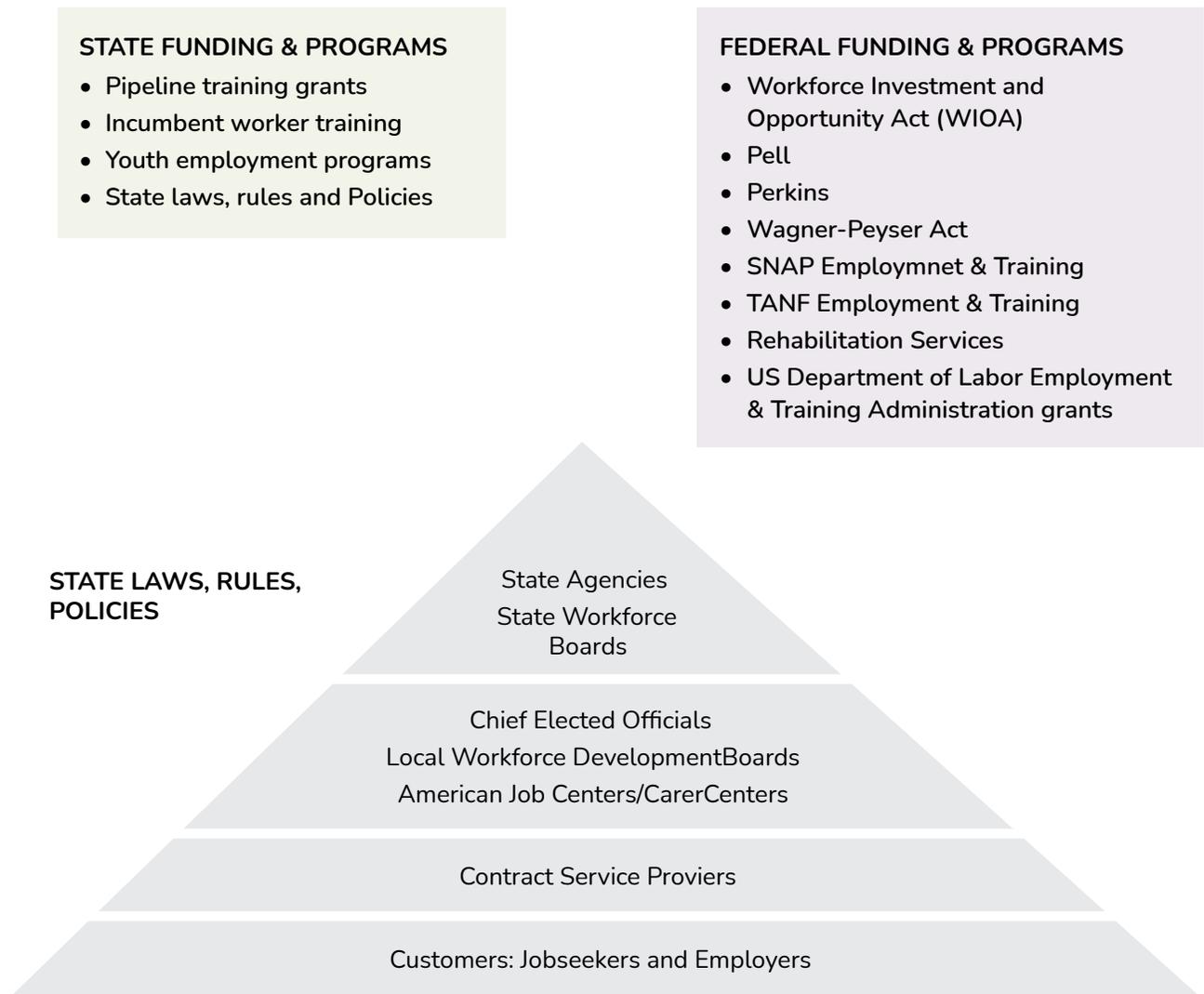
2. Public workforce institutions

Figure 1 provides a graphic summary of the public workforce institutions that manage resources available to address workforce needs.³ These resources are distributed by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education. In some states, state funding supplements the federal funding of workforce programs.

When working regionally or locally, the key actors are the local or regional Workforce Development Board, the local community college, the K-12 school system, and locally influential training providers. They are usually the most fundamental actors in the workforce development system.

- **State agencies** administer the workforce system for the state. They receive funding from the federal and state governments and distribute it to local workforce boards. State agencies involved in the workforce system include employment departments, K-12 education departments, health and human services, economic development, labor, and higher education boards.

Figure 1: Public Workforce Development Organizations



Source: Adapted from Snyder, 2021

³ Snyder, Nancy. Workforce 101: An Introduction to the U.S. Workforce System. <https://vimeo.com/552039826>

- **The state workforce board** determines state-level goals and policies to guide how funding should be used.
- **A local or regional workforce board** is a group of community leaders and stakeholders appointed by local elected officials and charged with planning and oversight responsibilities for workforce programs and services in their area. They convene partners and industry sectors, develop strategies and policies to guide the use of federal and state funding, charter American Job Centers, analyze market data and collect and manage performance data. Elected officials serve on these boards. They can usually be found through the website of the state workforce board. Note that there are a few states that don't have local or regional workforce boards, such as Utah. [This site](#) will help you locate the closest relevant workforce board.
- **American Job Centers** provide service such as job coaching, job search, referral, assistance for companies with filling positions. They are co-located with job search assistance services associated with the Unemployment Insurance systems and funded through the Wagner Peyser Act.
- **Contract service providers** provide training and other services needed by jobseekers. They include community colleges, K-12 schools, community-based organizations, and proprietary/private training schools.
- **The customers** of the workforce system are job seekers and the employers who need positions filled.

When working regionally or locally, the key actors are the local or regional Workforce Development Board, the local community college, the K-12 school system, and locally influential training providers. They are usually the most fundamental actors in the local workforce development system and the first contacts you should make when beginning this work.

3. Public Workforce funding sources and legislation

The public workforce system and its wide variety of programs are funded through federal legislation. In many states, state legislatures also allocate money to support workforce development. The primary sources of federal funding are as follows.

- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act** – This legislation was signed in 2014 and brings together and coordinates a number of federal programs:
 - Employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth, and **Wagner-Peyser services administered by the Department of Labor** through formula grants to states;
 - Adult education and family literacy programs as well as state vocational rehabilitation services programs that assist individuals with disabilities – these are administered by the **Department of Education**.
- **Trade Adjustment Assistance** is a federal program administered by the U.S Department of Labor that provides support to workers who become unemployed or are threatened with job loss due to the impact of international trade. It offers these workers opportunities to obtain skills, credentials, resources and support necessary to rebuild skills for future jobs.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation** is a program administered by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the Department of Education. <https://rsa.ed.gov/>. It is a state-federal program that provides formula grants to state vocational rehabilitation agencies to help people who have physical or mental disabilities get or keep a job.
- **SNAP Education and Training** program is specifically for recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) administered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. The state SNAP office administers this program.
- **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Employment and Training program (WorkFirst)**. Employment and career services are provided to recipients of TANF benefits. These services are provided by the social services agency that administers TANF in each state. Services include job training, resume building, career planning, job coaching and mentoring, as well as child care services.

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- **USDOL employment and training administration grants.** The U.S. Department of Labor provides competitive grant funding opportunities for training programs to supplement the formula funds provided to states under the programs described above. A variety of programs are funded by these competitive grants; they are authorized by a number of pieces of legislation.

4. State and local workforce plans

States are required under the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to develop a 4-year workforce strategy – a single plan for core programs. The core programs are as follows:

- the Adult program (Title I of WIOA),
- the Dislocated Worker program (Title I),
- the Youth program (Title I),
- the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II), and
- the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III),
- the Vocational Rehabilitation program (authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

The plans can also include other programs such as TANF and Perkins education programs- in their plans. Examples of some of these plans are linked below.

- Examples:
 - i. [Oregon Combined Plan 2020](#) ⁴
 - ii. [North Carolina Unified State Plan 2020](#) ⁵
 - iii. [Utah Unified Workforce plan 2020](#) ⁶
 - iv. [Indiana State workforce plan 2020](#) ⁷

5. What local workforce boards are required to do

As described above, federal, and in some cases, state funding is delivered to local workforce development boards from the state. The local workforce development boards have a responsibility to manage those resources effectively.⁸ As provided in WIOA sec. 107 (d), the Local Workforce Development Board are required to do the following:

- In partnership with the County Executive, develop a comprehensive local plan, and a regional plan if the local area is part of a broader planning region, to implement WIOA. The Extension professional should examine this plan early on to see whether Cooperative Extension might work in alignment with this plan.
- Conduct workforce research and regional labor market analysis.
- Convene, broker, and leverage local workforce development system stakeholders to assist in development of a local plan and in identifying non-Federal expertise and resources to leverage support for workforce development activities.
- Lead efforts to engage with a diverse range of employers and entities in the region to promote business representation; to develop effective linkages with employers to support utilization of the workforce system; to ensure that workforce investment activities meet the needs of employers and support economic growth in the region and expand career advancement opportunities for system participants.
- Develop and implement career pathways by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly those with barriers to employment.

⁴ Oregon WIOA State Plan: https://www.oregon.gov/WorkforceBoard/Documents/DOL_State_Plan_of_Oregon_16-19.pdf

⁵ North Carolina WIOA State Plan: <https://www.nccommerce.com/documents/nc-workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act-unified-state-plan-2020>

⁶ Utah United Workforce Plan: <https://jobs.utah.gov/wioa/wioastateplan.pdf>

⁷ Indiana State Workforce Plan: <https://wioaplans.ed.gov/node/3551>

⁸ Urban Institute. Local workforce System Guide. <https://workforce.urban.org/>

- Lead efforts to identify and promote proven and promising practices and initiatives for meeting the needs of employers, workers, and job seekers.
- Develop strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local WDS for employers, workers and job seekers.
- Conduct oversight of youth activities, employment and training activities, one stop delivery system, and ensure appropriate use and management of the funds received by the local area.
- Select operators and providers.
- Coordinate with education providers and review applications to provide adult education and literacy activities to ensure that they are in line with the local plan.
- Develop a budget for the activities in the local area, consistent with the local plan and duties of the local board.
- Ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities--both programmatic accessibility as well as physical accessibility in compliance with ADA regulations.

All of this means that your local workforce development board may already have identified some important career pathways for your local region. It will be very important that you investigate these plans to see what plans exist, what pathways have been developed, and their state of implementation.

Some examples of local workforce development plans are linked below:

- [Eastern Washington Partnership Plan](https://www.wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EasternStrategicPlan2016-2020.pdf)⁹
- [Southwestern Area Workforce Development Board \(NM\) 2020-2023 Local Workforce Plan](https://ef8511c5-3890-479e-b404-640be70ae727.filesusr.com/ugd/3c44a3_b6638bdc5af-14249b27e13759967977e.pdf)¹⁰
- [Southeast Indiana Workforce Investment Board Local Plan](https://www.in.gov/dwd/workonesoutheast/files/Region-9-Local-Plan-FINAL.pdf)¹¹
- [Mountain area \(NC\) workforce Development Consortium Local Area Plans](https://www.mountainareaworks.org/py21-22-plan-2/)¹²

6. Additional tools for workforce development

There are some additional tools provided by federal law that may be helpful as you put together your career pathways and plans.

- **Individual Training Accounts.** As part of the WIOA, individuals can use individual training accounts set up by local workforce agencies to pay for the training they need to meet the requirements of a career pathway. A legal description of ITAs is [here](#); however, there is a lot of variation by state, and so it is important to check with state workforce agencies to understand how they work in your state.
- **Pell grants** provide support for undergraduate training for low-income students. Federal Pell Grants usually are awarded only to undergraduate students who display exceptional [financial need](#) and have not earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree. A Federal Pell Grant, unlike a loan, does not have to be repaid, except under certain circumstances. Some of the classes and programs that you develop for your career pathways may be eligible expenses for students who are able to obtain a Pell grant.

7. Programs funded by private philanthropy

In recent years, foundations have funded a variety of programs related to workforce development in rural communities. [The Walmart Foundation has funded the CREATE BRIDGES](#) and similar programs to strengthen the workforce in retail, accommodations, tourism, and entertainment industries. Many local and community foundations are active in funding rural workforce development and empowerment projects. For example, the Oregon Community Foundation funds scholarships for child care workers to help with the costs of community-based education and training. The [Benedum Foundation](#) funds workforce development grants in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Georgia. For example, they awarded the Blue Ridge Community and Technical College a

⁹ Eastern Washington Partnership Plan: <https://www.wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EasternStrategicPlan2016-2020.pdf>

¹⁰ Southwestern Area Workforce Development Board: https://ef8511c5-3890-479e-b404-640be70ae727.filesusr.com/ugd/3c44a3_b6638bdc5af-14249b27e13759967977e.pdf

¹¹ Southeastern Indiana Workforce Investment Board: <https://www.in.gov/dwd/workonesoutheast/files/Region-9-Local-Plan-FINAL.pdf>

¹² Mountain Area (NC) Workforce Consortium Plan: <https://www.mountainareaworks.org/py21-22-plan-2/>

grant to develop a college-credit integrated production technologies program for Eastern Panhandle High school students. [The Lilly Endowment](#) funds a variety of workforce training programs in Indiana.

Potential Community Partners

When seeking partnerships to develop the workforce within your community or region – look for individuals who make decisions on behalf of the organization and/or are directly involved in the effort of training potential and current labor force participants (key influencers). You will want a mix of individuals who are visionary and pragmatic in order to enact the work at hand. In working with resource constrained individuals, a wraparound care approach may be necessary. This includes thinking of external constraints that affect a person’s ability to work (i.e. childcare, housing, language/cultural barriers, transportation, proper work attire, etc.). It is recognized that not all of these partners are likely available in your community/region.

In Table 1, a list of potential community partners is outlined. Obvious partners in the workforce development space include those in the education and business sectors. In the community partners sector, the labor department is also an immediate choice. However, challenge yourself to think about the web of support that is needed in order for a person to be able to work, especially a rural limited resourced worker, to propel them into a sustaining employment situation.

Table 1: Strawman Guide of Potential Community Partners in the Workforce Development Arena

| Sector | Potential Partners | Area of Expertise |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Education | Community College | Adult learners; dual credit learners; industry partnerships |
| | Higher education institutions | Student learners; specialized course offerings; industry partnerships; specialized technical services |
| | Cooperative Extension | Connector of resources/partners; training provider; able to create curriculum to address training needs |
| | Secondary education schools | K-12 student pipeline; knowledge of state education system initiatives and career/technical programs |
| | Vocational programs | Knowledge of state’s educational system initiatives and career/technical program; industry partnerships; technical training provider |
| | Adult education centers | Adult learners; industry partnerships; interest in lifelong learning |
| Business | Large business owners – HR department | Understanding challenges of hiring and retaining workers – in particular skill deficiencies. Awareness of their training partnership used for business. |
| | Small business owners | Challenges and opportunities to hiring and retaining workers. |
| | Economic development organization (county/regional) | Connection to local businesses; understanding of the economic development landscape; potentially knowledgeable of WFD training opportunities and funding channels that can be used; connector to resources/partners |
| Community Partners | Social services groups | Understanding or experience with resource constrained citizens; awareness of landscape of social services to assist individuals |
| | Department of Corrections (i.e. local jails; parole departments) | Familiarity with legal system; opportunities to train individuals with a felony conviction |
| | Labor department (i.e. unemployment offices; WFD training programs)* | Understanding of state’s WFD program; existing WFD training system in the area; challenges/opportunities with WFD; industry partnerships |
| | Rural transit groups | Understanding of transit environment – challenges and opportunities |
| | Non-profits | Awareness of local services that can assist resource constrained individuals |
| Potential key influencers | Cultural navigators | Familiarity with cultural groups and ability to serve as a liaison between entities; awareness of needs and challenges |

* Note that the labor department may have more than one player in this space. One would be the statewide public workforce system and another would be the regional or local workforce boards. While the two interact with each other, they are not the same.

Constructing Formal Partnership Agreements

When the task force is first convened, it is helpful to create an agreement on how you all will work together. At some point (especially once you travel down the career pathway journey), formal partnerships will need to be established. Commonly, memorandum of understandings (MOUs) are created, which outline the expectations of each party. Below are several examples of MOUs that may be helpful when developing a MOU specific to your county/region's purposes.

Between community colleges and workforce boards regarding training

1. [Memorandum of Understanding between Massachusetts Casino Career Training Institute](#)¹³
 - a. In response to workforce needs, a partnership with the Workforce Investment Boards/Regional Employment Boards (WIB/REB), the Massachusetts Community Colleges have established the Casino Careers Training Institute. This includes a collaboration with the various workforce development partners in each region within the Commonwealth. Through the Institute recruitment, screening, career counseling, training, job placement assistance and more will be provided by the colleges and the workforce partners.
2. [Oregon TAA Memorandum of Understanding with Community Colleges](#)¹⁴
 - a. MOU to provide Community Colleges with an opportunity to communicate directly with the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Federal program administered by the Oregon Employment Department (OED) Central Trade Act Unit (CTAU). This to assist eligible participants to navigate the college system, and to increase individualized support for participants while in training.
3. [Memorandum of Understanding Between the Board of County Commissioners and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service North Carolina State University and The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Program North Carolina A&T State University](#)¹⁵
4. [Memorandum of Understanding between Wyoming Department of workforce services and the University of Wyoming](#)
 - a. MOU parties are the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research and Planning Section, and The University of Wyoming.
 - b. Exclusively statistical purpose.

Between a local government and a union or business regarding apprenticeships

1. [Memorandum of Understanding Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County](#)¹⁶
 - a. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is **among the Local Workforce Development Board** (Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County), **the Chief Local Elected Officials** representing the City of Seattle and King County (CLEOs), and **the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners** relating to the operation of the WorkSource Seattle-King County one-stop service delivery system.
2. [Memorandum of Understanding between Mountain Area Workforce development board and partners of the career center in Henderson County, NC](#)¹⁷
 - a. This Memorandum of Understanding is between the North Carolina Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, the Local Area Chief Elected Official (hereinafter referred to as CEO), and the NCWorks Career Center Henderson County partner agencies (hereinafter referred to as the Partners) to provide an aligned, collaborative and performance driven one-stop workforce delivery system for the citizens of Madison County.
3. [Sample MOU - DOL YouthBuild Program and Local Workforce Development Board](#)¹⁸
 - a. Sample MOU was adapted from an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in which the YouthBuild program and the local American Job Center (AJC) had an existing relationship.

¹³ MOU Massachusetts Casino Training Institute: https://www.springfield-ma.gov/planning/fileadmin/Planning_files/casino/proposals/penn/Exhibit_5-b_MOU_with_Mass_Casino_Carers_Training_Institute.pdf

¹⁴ Oregon TAA MOU: https://taa.workforcecps.org/resources/2020/01/16/16/35/MOU_Community_Colleges

¹⁵ North Carolina MOU: <https://eod.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Memorandum-Of-Understanding.pdf?fwd=no>

¹⁶ Seattle – King County MOU: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c04ba6e4b0012ad48d079e/t/5abbd2ef352f53d186013bcc/1522258680173/WDC+SKC+2017+WIOA+MOU+final_1218-2017_EXECUTED.pdf

¹⁷ NC MOU: http://www.landofsky.org/pdf/MAWD/MAWDB_AreaPlan_2020/CAREER_CENTER_MOU_HENDERSON2019_revised.pdf

¹⁸ Sample MOU: https://youthbuild.workforcecps.org/resources/2018/04/30/13/47/~/_/link.aspx?_id=A69D960EDD6E4475B6D8DEEFB46FBDB3&_z=z



Extension Educator Corner

This module covered a tremendous amount of information. As an Extension professional, there are two key tasks that are important to complete before proceeding with this work.

Task #1: Identify the key players in the local workforce development system

- What is the state workforce agency in your state?
- What is their web site?
- Which local Workforce Development Board covers your area?
- Do they have a current workforce development plan?
- Who are the members of the local workforce board?
- What sectors has the workforce board prioritized in their plan?
 - Have they already identified high-demand pathways?
 - Have they been implemented?
 - If not, why not?

Task #2: Assessing workforce development landscape in your county/region.

Building upon the work done in the first task, conduct the following activities in preparation of compiling a local taskforce centered on workforce development.

1. Using Table 1, identify the existing partners in your county/region who support rural low-income/under resourced workers.
2. Identify the appropriate contacts for each organization.
3. Using the Community Network analysis (found in the appendix), assess the partnership levels between each organization.
4. Review the results of the network analysis. Look for the strengths and weaknesses in the county/region's network related to workforce development.
 - a. An alternative to the community network analysis is to convene the community partners and spend the first meeting discussing the WFD landscape. This information is likely best captured in a mind map format so that linkages can be captured across different partners. Recommended nodes would be adult education, career and technical education, workforce board, public workforce system and training.



5. Invite community partners to participate in a workforce development taskforce to review labor market information (LMI) data, identify next steps and work collaboratively to address workforce development roadblocks in the county/region.

Engage with Job Seekers/Low-Income Workers

Once you have gathered all the information regarding the workforce development landscape, now it is time to see if job seekers navigate the same landscape. To conduct this activity, assistance may be needed from community partners to identify where and how to engage with job seekers. Simple places would be via schools through the career and technical education program, adult education centers, community colleges or through existing informal connection points. The following activity is a facilitation exercise that gathers input from job seekers who can further inform where the watering holes are within the community as well as what barriers exist in hindering job searching or upward mobility within the chosen job market. Once you have completed the activity titled “What was your path”, then you should have a good perspective of what the workforce development landscape looks like in your county/region and have some insight as to where barriers exist. This is helpful information as the task force begins identifying and crafting career pathways for job seekers.

What was your path?

Overview: This activity combines individual reflection, group discussion and facilitation to list the workforce development components that were used in the participant’s lived experience. Viable pathways, along with gaps and constraints will be identified and connected.

Materials Needed: Butcher paper (or flip charts), markers, Post-It notes

Suggested Duration: 1 hour

Lesson Objectives: *The end of this lesson, participants will be able to:*

- Describe the steps taken during a successful and/or unsuccessful job search including (but not limited to) finding job openings, decision-making process when choosing to apply, application procedures, interviewing experience, post-interview follow-up, and on-boarding.
- Identify online and bricks-and-mortar sources of information used during a job search.
- Evaluate the information and services provided by governmental institutions/agencies, non-profits, faith-based and other entities that were consulted during a job search.
- Illustrate the job search pathways undertaken, the gaps encountered and the elements that contributed to success.

Activity:

1. Ask three people to tell “their story” regarding a successful or unsuccessful job search.
2. What are the similarities and differences in the stories?
3. Ask participants to share the assets (individual or community-level) that they have relied on in their job search. On a flip chart paper, record their responses. Repeat this activity by asking them to share the barriers and constraints that they have faced in their job search. Categories may include: childcare, clothing, transportation, access to technology, etc.). In other words, “What has made your job search/staying employed easier and/or more effective?” and “What has made your job search/staying employed more difficult?” How have you or might you overcome some of these difficulties?
4. Next, give each participant a marker and Post-It notes. Show the group the butcher paper outlining a grid. On this butcher paper (or flip chart paper in landscape orientation), create 3 rows and 8 columns. In the first row, label each column with a phase in the workforce development pathway:
 - a. Self-evaluation (skills, education, experience, qualifications, etc.)
 - b. Targeting (geography, industry sector, occupation, potential employers, etc.)
 - c. Materials Preparation (cover letter, resume, portfolio, etc.)
 - d. Opportunity Identification (Networking, web-based search, program-based, etc.)
 - e. Application process / Initial Interviewing (phone or online screening calls)
 - f. Formal Interview / Negotiating Offer
 - g. Starting the Position / On-boarding
 - h. Performance Evaluation / Professional Development / Promotion

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5. Ask the group to fill out this grid with their experiences. They will write their answers on their post-it notes to place on the grid.
 - a. First prompt: “As we have been discussing, think back to a time that you were searching for a job. This could be recently or some time ago. Preferably, a successful search. Using the Post It notes, write down individuals, institutions or groups – virtual or face-to-face - that you relied on to assist you with your search through each phase outlined below. This assistance may come in the form of research, preparation, execution or evaluation. Arrange by phase in the second row.”
 - b. Second prompt: “Now, in the third row, please add barriers and constraints that you have faced that have made each of these phases more difficult.”
 6. Have each participant share their answers. Allow for questions.
 7. Summarize the results.
 8. In terms of the assets, ask participants to discuss what assets have been the most effective.
 9. In terms of the barriers, ask participants to discuss ways that they have successfully dealt with or overcome these issues. If the participants struggle to answer, ask the group to come up with some possible solutions.
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Appendix: Additional Resources and Information Related to Key Partnerships

*Work based training programs*¹⁹

Common workforce development terms that refer to work based training of workers include the following:

1. On-the-job training (OTJ): Is a wage subsidy (typically at minimum wage) that covers 60-75% of an employee's wage while they are receiving training at a place of employment. These contracts usually cover between 6-9 months of training, and if the employer is satisfied with the worker's performance, is expected to hire them at the completion of the subsidized period. If the worker is not hired at training location, then sponsoring agency will attempt to place them in a regular job. Career support services (job coaching/counseling) is also typically provided to workers.
2. Apprenticeships: Commonly used within the trades, this training program is typically a partnership between businesses, unions and government that provides a structured training and work-based experience that leads to an industry specific certification or license. Apprenticeships are to be registered with the Department of Labor to ensure it meets the appropriate requirements. Workers are paid at an apprenticeship rate and upon completion, are hired by the employer at the normal wage.
3. Career pathways: Its purpose is to foster industry-driven training and alignment across workforce and education systems within a geographic region. This training is more focused on occupation and driven by employer demand. The pathways outline clear education and training steps workers can take to drive career advancement. Community partners work together to provide the necessary training and any wraparound services to support the worker.

To learn more about work-based training programs, consider reading a Brookings report²⁰ on how these programs can advance equity and advancement of young people. Additional adult training programs exist for specific segments of the workforce including: dislocated workers; Indian and Native American Programs; job corps; migrant and seasonal farmworkers; people with disabilities; safety and health; seniors; trade act programs; veterans; and youth programs. Information for each program can be found at the Department of Labor's website: <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/training/adulttraining>

Case examples and best practices

Below are several case examples and best practices from across the nation.

Source: National Skills Coalition (has a lot of publications to peruse). Below are a few to review.

- **Partnering Up: How Industry Partnerships can bring work-based learning to scale:** <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Partnering-Up-Brief-FIN-LOW-RES.pdf>
- **How adult education/CTE Collaborations benefit workers and businesses:** <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NSC-EL-PASO-Dec2018-Online-FIN.pdf>
- **Powerful Partners: Businesses and Community Colleges:** <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Powerful-Partners-Businesses-and-Community-Colleges.pdf>
- **Adult Education: A Crucial Foundation for Middle-Skill Jobs:** https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/9.26-NSC-AdultEd-factsheet_final.pdf

Source: US Chamber Foundation

- **Building a More Inclusive Talent Marketplace: Increasing Opportunity Through Community and Business-Led initiatives:** https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/T3_Network_OPReport_Sept20.pdf

¹⁹ Adult Education Programs: https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/93536/workforce-development-and-low-income-adults_and-youth.pdf

²⁰ Brookings Report: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20201120_BrookingsMetro_Work-based-learning_Final_Report.pdf

Source: Career & Technical Education (CTE)

- Work Based Learning Tool Kit: <https://cte.ed.gov/wbltoolkit/>

Source: Youth.gov

- Programs and Initiatives Working to Reconnect Youth and Prevent Disconnection: <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/opportunity-youth/programs-initiatives>

Source: Workforce Strategies (United Way)

- Understanding ALICE in your workplace (Employer Strategies): <https://workforcestrategies.unitedwaynj.org/employer-strategies/index.php>

Other resources

When conducting your environmental scan, you may want to use two additional resources to better understand the readiness of the community and/or to identify the network and its strength within the county/region. Those resources are listed below.

1. Community readiness assessment

In advance of tackling workforce development within a community or region, it helps to know whether the community is ready to address this issue and enact meaningful change. The leading resource on community readiness is from the Tri-Ethnic Center at Colorado State University.²¹ The below community readiness assessment has been adapted from the process recommended from Colorado State University and relies on a Likert scale assessment. This assessment could be distributed at a large scale to assess the knowledge, leadership and community climate surrounding workforce development.

• • • Community Readiness Assessment • • •

For each statement below, indicate the extent to which that statement describes your county. Use the scale from 1 to 4 provided, where “1” indicates strong disagreement on the statement and a score of “4” indicates strong agreement with the statement. There is a “Don’t Know” option if you are unsure how to measure the statement. This assessment will help determine how supportive and aware your community is towards workforce development.

| A. Community knowledge of efforts | Don't Know | Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree | | Category Total |
|--|------------|-------------------|----------------|---|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| Residents recognize that available jobs exist in the county/region. | | | | | |
| Residents know of places where one can receive workforce development training. | | | | | |
| Residents know who among their community is working on providing education and skill development to adult workers. | | | | | |
| Residents are exposed to frequent communications on workforce development efforts in their county/region | | | | | |
| Residents are aware that continuous learning develops their workplace skills. | | | | | |

Once you have responded to all of the statements, add the scores for each category and record it in the last column of the worksheet. Measuring each category allows your community to identify areas that need the most attention and ought to be addressed in the goalsetting exercise.

²¹ Community Readiness: https://tec.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CR_Handbook_8-3-15.pdf

Community Readiness Assessment (cont.)

| B. Leadership | Don't Know | Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree | Category | |
|--|------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Total |
| The community's leadership structure is inclusive of resident ideas, feedback and involvement in community initiatives. | | | | | |
| Public recognition highlights available education and workforce training opportunities. | | | | | |
| Equal amount of workforce development attention and support is given to all businesses. | | | | | |
| Leaders have a coordinated effort in place to assist rural adult learners in finding and obtaining training or education needed to find work in the county/region. | | | | | |
| The community's leadership is aware of the importance of continuous learning for its residents as demonstrated through policies, practices and laws. | | | | | |
| C. Community Climate | Don't Know | Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree | Category | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Total |
| Local organizations and groups are connected to one another, they trust one another and they seek opportunities for collaboration with each other. | | | | | |
| Programs and/or facilities, which focus on workforce development skill development, are accessible to businesses in the region. | | | | | |
| Specialized workforce development services (technical training, micro-enterprise education) exist in the region. | | | | | |
| A formalized process exists that supports adult learners in the region (i.e. No wrong door; single point location; network of service providers, funding, etc.) | | | | | |
| Residents and leaders care about the business climate in the county/region. | | | | | |

Community Readiness Assessment – Analyzing Results

| If the average score in any one category was: | Stages of Community Readiness | Description | Potential Goal |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 0 | No awareness | Issue is not generally recognized by the community or leaders as a problem | Raise awareness of issue |
| 0 - 0.49 | Denial/resistance | At least some community members recognize that it is a problem, but there is little or no recognition that it might be a local problem | Raise awareness that the problem exists in the community |
| 0.5 – 0.99 | Vague awareness | Most feel that there is a local problem, but there is no immediate motivation to do anything about it | Raise awareness that the community can do something about the issue |
| 1 – 1.49 | Pre-planning | There is a clear recognition that something must be done, and there may even be a committee. However, efforts are not focused or detailed | Raise awareness with concrete ideas to address the issue |
| 1.5 – 1.99 | Preparation | Active leaders begin planning in earnest. Community offers modest support of efforts | Gather information to plan and improve programs to solve issue |
| 2 – 2.49 | Initiation | Enough information is available to justify efforts, and activities are underway | Provide community specific information |
| 2.5 – 2.99 | Stabilization | Activities are supported by administrators or community decision makers | Stabilize efforts/programs |
| 3 – 3.49 | Confirmation /Expansion | Standard efforts are in place. Community members feel comfortable using services to support expansions of efforts. Local data are regularly obtained | Expand and enhance services |
| 3.5 - 4 | High level of community ownership | Detailed and sophisticated knowledge exist about the issue. Effective evaluation is in place | Maintain momentum and continue growth |

2. Network analysis (3 pages)

• • • Workforce Development Network Assessment • • •

Research shows that a well-connected and informed community is vital to the success of an initiative or major project. However, measuring the strength of a community’s connections, or network, is difficult. As an Extension educator/agent, knowledge of this network will help you understand its strengths and challenges, and how this project can strengthen the existing network. To understand how to build and sustain successful networks for workforce development, and how these partnerships contribute in your community, complete the connection inventory below. The information you gather, whether from existing knowledge or through these connection assessments will help you have a ‘picture’ of the workforce development network within your county/region as well as the strength of those ties.

Directions for Extension Educator/Agent:

1. On the next page, identify organizations that are involved in the workforce development space in your county/region. Consider looking at the strawman guide of community partners to develop your list. Populate each line with one organization. Keep this list of organizations the same for all your assessments.

- You are interested in learning how these organizations are connected to each other. Have each organization fill out their connection to the other organizations. This can be done on their own and sent back to you or via an interview process. If they identify other organizations that they are connected to in regards to workforce development, they can be added to their assessment. If there are organizations where there is no connection, just check “no connection”.
- Collect all the results. **They are to be kept strictly confidential. Any sharing of results should only indicate overall connections between organizations, not the connection quality between two specific organizations.**
- Look at the responses. It may be helpful to develop a network analysis map (which can be done via paper and pencil or via computer (with some coding of responses). You are looking to see what organizations are connected to each other, level of formality and trust. The results can also show where the gaps lie within the county/region.

FIRST NAME: _____
 LAST NAME: _____
 ORGANIZATION: _____
 ROLE: _____
 DATE: _____

Connection Inventory Spreadsheet

| Organization Name | Description of Connection | | | | Type of Connection | Connection Quality | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|--|--|---|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | No Connection (We do not work with each other) | Cooperative (We know of each other and share information) | Coordinative (We work side-by-side on a few projects) | Collaborative (We rely on each other to achieve common goals) | CHOOSE ONE: Formal: Connection is between the overall organization (not tied to certain people). Informal: Connection would be lost if certain people left their organization. | Does this organization keep its word, do a good job, and respond to your organization and client needs? | | | |
| | | | | | | Little Trust (poor connection) | Some Trust (fair connection) | Good Trust (solid connection) | High Trust (excellent connection) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | FORMAL OR INFORMAL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | FORMAL OR INFORMAL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | FORMAL OR INFORMAL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | FORMAL OR INFORMAL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | FORMAL OR INFORMAL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | FORMAL OR INFORMAL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
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| | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | FORMAL OR INFORMAL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |