HPOG

Employment Virtual Learning Cohort Resource Guide

HPOG
Health Profession Opportunity Grants
OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
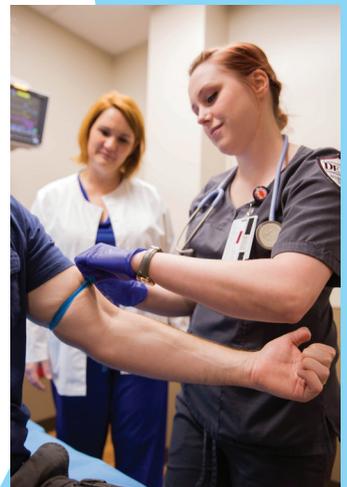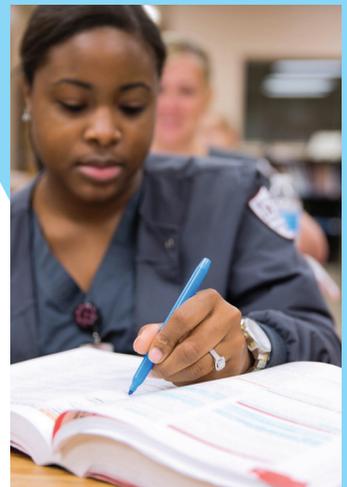
FOREWORD

About the Health Profession Opportunity Grants Program

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program is administered by the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HPOG is a discretionary grant program. It provides grants to support demonstration projects that are designed to provide education and training for healthcare occupations that were expected to pay well and be in high demand to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals.

The program is responsive to community workforce needs and improves job prospects for adults from hard-working families, matching careers in a growing field with people who are eager to fill them. HPOG participants are given the opportunity to obtain higher education, training, and support services needed to secure positions that have opportunity for advancement and sustainability, ultimately leading these individuals on a pathway to financial self-sufficiency.

HPOG participants enroll in a variety of training and education programs that result in an employer- or industry-recognized certificate or degree. Many programs are designed as career pathways—connecting progressive levels of education and training with employment opportunities. Grantees partner with employers and workforce agencies to connect participants to employment.

To learn more about HPOG and its grantees please visit https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/hpog.

About the Resource Guide

This resource guide is a compilation of case studies and tools that were developed as part of the HPOG Employment Virtual Learning Cohort technical assistance activity. The cohort was a group of 10 HPOG grantees that gathered virtually, once a month for 4 months (January–April 2018) for learning events. Then each grantee planned and completed employment-related action steps in consultation with a subject matter expert during monthly conference calls. The cohort completed an in-person capstone event in May 2018.

These case studies reflect promising practices that the grantee programs felt had positive participant employment outcomes. The case studies were written to help other HPOG grantees develop similar practices, if desired. The tools were developed to help grantees reflect on and develop more robust employer engagement and employment services practices. Other workforce programs, particularly those targeting the healthcare sector, may find these case studies and tools valuable.

Other resources sponsored by HPOG at the Office of Family Assistance are available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource-library/search?area[2400]=2400.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to JBS International, particularly Mary Hayes, who led and coordinated the Employment Virtual Learning Cohort. Thank you to Bill Browning, who served as the Subject Matter Expert for the Virtual Learning Cohort, authored the case studies, and developed the tools. Thank you to the staff at Project HELP at Central Community College, Volunteers of America Texas HPOG Program, and the HPOG HOPES Program at Pima County Community District for serving as case studies for the cohort.

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HPOG CASE STUDY: PROJECT HELP'S EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Project HELP (Health Education Laddering Program), the HPOG program at Nebraska's Central Community College (CCC), has formed, strengthened, and documented more than 60 employer relationships that have deepened regional employers' reliance on the program for skilled, entry-level healthcare talent. Two Career Coaches have led this effort, managing a growing number of employer relationships statewide. This case study describes the foundational capacities that underpin employer engagement and provides a step-by-step process to attract and progressively deepen employer partnerships, beginning with the first call or visit to a new employer. It also describes how Project HELP's team uses employer information to guide HPOG participants on a successful job search. Finally, the case study explains how Career Coaches use presentations, facility tours, and mock interviews to further engage with employer representatives and generate job applications from interested HPOG participants. At the end of this case study, there are attachments of tools based on Project HELP documents for other HPOG programs to adapt and use.

Bringing an Effective Sectoral and Employer Engagement Strategy to Life

As an HPOG grantee, Project HELP exemplifies a sector strategy that simultaneously addresses the needs of both its targeted employers and low-income participants. As recommended in The Aspen Institutes Sectoral Strategies for Low-Income Workers: Lessons From the Field, Project HELP's staff members develop (and document) deep industry expertise by interviewing employer representatives about their needs for skilled workers and their institutional processes for acquiring and developing skilled front line workers. This allows them to collect information that isn't generally found in labor market studies. They deploy this knowledge in multiple ways to help prepare and support HPOG participants to successfully compete for high-demand career opportunities in healthcare occupations.

Project HELP showcases a systematic employer engagement methodology to build and advance business partnerships with a range of healthcare employers that lead directly to positive outcomes for both employers and program participants. Project HELP aims for deeper levels of engagement in employer relationships, while employers look to Project HELP to achieve their talent acquisition goals, as described in Jobs for the Future's A Resource Guide to Engaging Employers (see the description of the ladder of employer engagement, pages 3–5). The Project HELP team also developed its approach to employer engagement over time to address many typical employer engagement challenges as outlined in The Urban Institutes The Goals and Dimensions of Employer Engagement in Workforce Development Programs (see pages 3–4).

Introducing Project HELP and Its Operating Environment

CCC, led by Project Director Becky Fausett, is a second-time HPOG grantee, having participated in the first round of HPOG (HPOG 1.0). During HPOG 1.0, Project HELP focused on CCC's service area of 25 counties, which includes three campuses and three learning centers and enrolls just shy of 6,000 for-credit students. In its second HPOG, Project HELP expanded to include three other community colleges—Midplains Community College, Northeast Community College, and Southeast Community College—covering most of the state. As a more rural state, Nebraska's community colleges face less competition from other training providers in serving the demand for skilled healthcare workers. This case study focuses primarily on employer engagement activities and relationships within the original CCC region, including the towns of Grand Island, Hastings, Columbus, and Kearny in the central part of the state. The CCC service area is comparable in size to the State of Maryland. Since this region was the focus of HPOG 1.0, it has had more time for trial-and-error experiments to lead toward an effective strategy to develop and manage a large number of employer-partners.

As with many other HPOG programs, nursing assistant training attracted the largest share of CCC's participants. Next in enrollment volume was another short-term certification program, medication aide, followed by longer term registered nursing (RN) and licensed practical nursing (LPN) training programs.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

A solid foundation is necessary to execute a successful employer engagement strategy. The Project HELP case study suggests several capacities that constitute this groundwork: (1) capable staff with clear relationship management accountabilities, (2) a strategic focus to guide their efforts, and (3) a knowledge management system to preserve and maintain the program team's industry expertise.

1. Establish Clear Relationship Management Accountabilities

- **Project HELP's Career Coach/Recruiter Role:** Project HELP has two full-time Career Coaches, each with specific geographic responsibilities, covering about half the state. The Career Coach role includes three equally important areas of responsibility:

  o **Manage employer relationships**—Develop new relationships and engage employer representatives in various ways to support the program and the hiring of HPOG participants.

  o **Deliver job search support services for HPOG participants**—Deliver job readiness workshops and individualized résumé/job search coaching, upon request, to prepare participants for a successful job search.

  o **Recruit new HPOG participants into the program**—Market HPOG and its affiliated training and career opportunities at career fairs, and via partner organizations, such as TANF agencies and area high schools, to achieve enrollment goals.

Note: Please see Attachment A for a sample Career Coach job description.

- **How To Succeed in the Career Coach Role:** In order to be successful in calling on businesses, it is helpful to have prior business-to-business sales or relationship-management experience to be comfortable in making what are essentially sales calls to help employer representatives solve business problems. However, many workforce development leaders have also learned effective business development practices while on the job. CCC's Career Coach for the CCC region, Christina Miotke, has been with Project HELP since 2016. Miotke previously worked as a social worker, and also had a sales job where she made cold calls to grocery store managers and chefs to sell organic grains, giving her prior experience to bridge the needs of both participant and employer audiences. When she started with Project HELP, the staff had formed relationships with about two dozen healthcare employer-partners. However, following the departure of a previous team member, there was little information formally documented for these relationships, so it felt a little "like starting from scratch."

2. Determine the Focus for Employer Engagement Efforts

According to Miotke, "it was tricky at first to determine how to divide time," to achieve her goals in all three areas of responsibility. After a while, she began to recognize seasonal patterns and fluctuations, and learned when more intense efforts in a specific area of responsibility were necessary. For example, during fall it made sense to devote more time to recruiting participants, so that they could start HPOG training programs at partner colleges in January. Miotke sometimes spends 2 or 3 days per week on the road during this season, going to recruiting and partner events in her region. She usually books employer meetings when she travels and prepares for them by researching each area's overall healthcare employer network and labor market information. In the spring, as students in the HPOG program complete their courses, she turns her attention to career coaching with participants to help prepare them for a successful job search. In this employment support role, Miotke provides expert guidance based on her direct knowledge of the regional employment marketplace and individual employers' hiring processes. In contrast, employer engagement activities are more of a year-round role. However, there are smaller bursts of activity often tied to special events. For example, in fall 2017 she needed to call and confirm a number of employers to serve as mock interviewers at a job preparation event, so nursing assistant students could gain experience to help them perform at their best during actual interviews. Because Miotke has developed an extensive employer network, she had an excellent response rate, with 8 of the 10 employers agreeing to provide someone to conduct the mock interviews. Moreover, several of them followed up later with Miotke to commend the students' professionalism and all eight agreed to participate at similar events in the future.

As Miotke and her Project HELP colleagues reviewed the array of training programs that serve HPOG participants, they determined that some healthcare training programs needed more employer development than others. For example, RN and LPN programs often include a required clinical component that frequently results in job offers, so these programs were less in need of additional employer relationship development. On the other

hand, nursing assistant training programs, which serve many more HPOG participants, did not have a similar requirement, and therefore were ripe for employer development. Project HELP's CCC colleagues who run these short-term courses generally welcome the participation of employers during the training program and had space within the curriculum for guest speakers booked by Miotke. Local employers often reach out to the college's Director of the Nursing Assistant program or to Miotke to request time to speak with students during a classroom visit.

3. Create and Maintain Employer Knowledge Management Systems

Several years ago, Project HELP leaders recognized the importance of providing real-time guidance for HPOG participants about job openings and hiring practices. Applicants with this information are more likely to be a good fit for currently available jobs. The Project HELP team decided to create a guide for applicants based on the information they collected from employer visits. The resulting "Job Leads" resource, updated monthly, is available on the Project HELP website here.

As Project HELP's employer network has grown, so has the need to create a knowledge management system to preserve this important asset. In summer 2017, Miotke began to enter her employer notes into an Excel database that she regularly updates. "However," she cautions, "it's still a work in process." As of December 2017, there are 66 individual employer entries in the database. Career Coaches consult these notes before reaching out to previous contacts to refresh their memories of these relationships, the employers' hiring processes, and engagement interests. This tool is also available for other Project HELP staff to use, but they mostly rely on the Career Coaches to answer questions or respond to requests related to employers. In the event of a future staff transition, whoever steps into this role next will have a treasure trove of valuable employer information to learn from and build upon. (Note: Please see Attachment B for a sample Employer Information Spreadsheet.)

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR GROWING A NETWORK OF EMPLOYER-PARTNERS

When she began, Miotke estimates that Project HELP had around two dozen documented employer partnerships. Since then, she has expanded her region's employer partner network to more than 60 different employers in a large region within central Nebraska, encompassing seven locations where Project HELP delivers healthcare training programs. She prefers to have at least two individual relationships with most employers: an operational

management representative, such as the director of nursing at a hospital or administrator at a nursing home, as well as a human resources representative. Management relationships are often more stable than those with human resources staff and recruiters, who tend to turn over fairly frequently. However, human resources recruiters are often eager to work with Project HELP as a way to promote their organizations and attract quality job applicants, especially for hard-to-fill positions.

This next section describes how Project HELP works step by step to build and maintain an active network of employer-partners.

- **Prospecting:** Career Coaches reach out to healthcare employers that are likely to have talent needs that match Project HELP's training programs of focus, such as hospitals, long-term care facilities, and clinics/medical practices. They also keep an eye out for any new healthcare facilities that open. Before the Career Coach contacts or visits with a new healthcare employer representative, they prepare by reviewing the organization's website to search for names and contact information. If the employer has an online job posting and application system, they also note which entry-level positions have openings that match Project HELP's array of training programs, along with any other information posted online about the hiring process.

- **First Phone Contact:** Miotke prefers a telephone call to make an initial contact. If she cannot find a specific contact online, she calls the facility's main number. For a hospital, she asks for a director of nursing, and for a nursing home or other facility, an administrator. She explains the Project HELP program and its mission to train skilled healthcare workers, confirms that the person has a role and interest in recruiting and hiring, and asks for an in-person meeting to learn more about the organization's hiring process and recruiting priorities.

- **First Meeting:** For new employer contacts, Career Coaches use an interview guide to systematically gather information about the employer's talent needs, hiring processes, and engagement interests. When describing Project HELP, Miotke often focuses on the participant training scholarships, support services, and especially the intensive coaching, which she reports are "the features that are most appealing to employers." Her main goal in this first meeting is to learn more about the employer's needs and establish an interest in further engagement with the Project HELP program. The Career Coaches also bring multiple program brochures and a poster with them as resources for interested employers. (Note: Please see Attachment C for an interview guide based on the Project HELP tool.)

- **Initial Program Engagement:** Often, the first point of engagement for new employer-partners is to make a presentation to a class of trainees in a healthcare program that matches a hiring interest of the employer, with a focus on short-term training programs. The Career Coaches have a suggested list of topics for employer representatives to cover in a presentation, such as giving an overview of their facility and describing the application process. Miotke encourages employer representatives to pitch their organizations and encourage applications. With this clear business benefit of using class presentations to help generate quality applications, employers "nearly always jump at the chance to do in-class presentations." Most of the time, at least one or two class participants will choose to apply for jobs as a result of these presentations, representing a win-win for individual participants and participating employers. Some employers have even begun to initiate contact with the Career Coaches to request opportunities to make classroom presentations. (Note: Please see Attachment D for an outline of suggested employer presentation topics.)

- **Moving Up the Employer Engagement Continuum:** For employer contacts who express an interest in working with Project HELP, Miotke actively seeks new ways to engage them in other beneficial opportunities. In addition to class presentations, she asks interested employers to host facility tours or to conduct mock interviews at job readiness events. For facility tours, she will book the college's van and bring students to see an employer's facility. This helps the training programs come alive by giving students a direct experience at a potential work site, which is especially important for direct care positions in health care. All of these engagements connect participants with employers with the hope that a few will result in employment.

- **Translating Employer Data Into Training Support Services:** Miotke estimates that she delivers approximately five job readiness workshops each year, benefiting an annual total of 75–100 participants. These workshops are an ideal way to share her knowledge about employers' hiring processes, recruiting needs, starting pay, and specific nearby employers of interest to each group.

  Additionally, she uses the Project HELP website to distribute information about specific healthcare employers' needs, current openings, and other key hiring process information for participants and other job seekers. For example, she regularly updates the Job Leads database that is posted on the website. As of late 2017, the job postings list includes information on over 100 healthcare employers in seven communities within CCC's service area, a large geographic area that spans 25 counties. In the future, Project HELP aims to expand this resource to areas served by its partner colleges as well. This resource is beneficial to both employers and job seekers. Employers have another channel to promote their career opportunities to attract qualified candidates, and job seekers get up-to-date information about opportunities to aid their job search.

An Example of the Process in Action
Moving From Initial Meeting to an Engaged Employer With Hiring Results

Miotke attended a March 2017 nursing care job fair as a way to catch up with several of her employer contacts and to meet new potential employer-partners. While at the event, she met the CEO of a nursing home business that had multiple facilities in her region; she described Project HELP and learned about the company. The CEO expressed interest in working with Project HELP. She quickly followed up by email to invite the nursing home company to present in one of the nursing assistant classes. The CEO asked the executive director of the nursing home near the college's main campus to give the presentation. After learning more about Project HELP, the administrator was eager to participate and the presentation was scheduled for June 2017. Not only did his facility need these trained caregivers, but, as the son of a migrant worker, the administrator also had a more personal motivation to participate. He saw Project HELP as an opportunity to open doors for participants just as others had done for him. He shared his personal story with the class, described the career opportunities in his organization, and even provided lunch for the students. He has repeated this same generosity with two other classroom presentations, and his facility has interviewed several HPOG nursing assistant applicants who applied as a result of these appearances.

SUMMARY—EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND PLANNING QUESTIONS

This HPOG case study of Project HELP outlines one example of an effective framework for developing an employer engagement strategy. Below is a step-by-step employer engagement framework and process as described in this case study, along with planning questions to guide others in adapting this framework to fit their regional health employer stakeholders, organizational assets, partnerships, and specific HPOG participants and programs.

Foundation-Building Framework and Planning Questions

1. **Clarify Employer Relationship Management Accountabilities:** Who has employer relationship management responsibilities? How are these "accounts" assigned? How are results tracked and measured?

2. **Identify a Focus for Employer Engagement Efforts:** What criteria will be used to decide on which employers to focus relationship-building efforts? For example, which nearby employers have the largest number of quality career opportunities? Which training programs with significant volumes of HPOG participants could achieve stronger employment outcomes with sustained employer engagement efforts?

3. **Create and Maintain Employer Knowledge Management System:** What information learned from employers isn't already available in labor market data that can help advance your participants' job search and career goals? How will the organization deploy this information within its programs and services for use by staff and/or participants? What type of data system will best accommodate the information collected and your intended uses?

Relationship Management Framework and Planning Questions

1. **Develop and Refine a Process and Goals for Initial Employer Calls:** What do your "relationship managers" need to know about each new employer prospect in order to establish their credibility and value in identifying solutions to talent acquisition challenges? What is your program's most effective "elevator speech" to quickly present a strong value proposition to employers? What are the one or two most attractive win-win employer engagement activities that meet their needs and can also benefit HPOG job seekers?

2. **Deepen Employer Reliance on and Engagement With HPOG:** What additional engagement activities will advance mutually beneficial opportunities and deepen your relationships with employers? For example, how can your organization help create stronger work-based learning opportunities? How might you customize specific programs/services together with larger employer-partners to address high-volume talent acquisition needs?

3. **Use Employer Knowledge To Strengthen Participant Employment Support Services:** Given the program's geography, mix of students, personnel strengths, and partnerships, what communication channels can be used to deliver regional healthcare employment knowledge to prepare participants for a successful job search? How can the program best package key information learned from employers so that it is most useful to help participants?

PROJECT HELP'S EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Adaptable Tools for Use for Employer Engagement

These attachments include tools developed and used by Project HELP that have been revised for more general use by other HPOG programs. These tools can be further adapted to fit the unique needs of other operating environments and programs. Please review the following:

- Attachment A: Sample Job Description for Career Coach Role
- Attachment B: Sample Employer Information Spreadsheet
- Attachment C: Interview Guide for Initial Employer Meeting
- Attachment D: Suggested Employer Presentation Topics

ATTACHMENT A: SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION FOR CAREER COACH ROLE

General Summary: Under direction of [Insert title of Supervisor], coordinates, plans, and facilitates career and employment services for [Insert HPOG project name] participants. Services include but are not limited to: job skills development, placement and support services to participants. Provide advising and counseling to students about careers, jobs, and internships. Work with numerous community entities to identify and recruit potential grant participants. Facilitate job trainings and workshops for participants. Develop relationships with key employer-partners and engage employer representatives in project activities. Provide and coordinate services between local TANF partners, employers, and project participants. Will perform duties and responsibilities in accordance with [Insert name of hiring organization] policies and procedures and other duties as assigned.

Job Specifications and Related Position Requirements

1. High level of general education and professional ability to administer student service programs, conduct correspondence, deliver presentations and workshops, and counsel and advise students, normally acquired through a bachelor's degree. Ability to communicate detailed grant admissions, registration, instructional, and curriculum information in a simple and concise manner.

2. Requires excellent oral and written communication skills to give recruiting presentations to community agencies, business/industry personnel, and external grant partners.

3. Knowledge of career and job market information needed to develop job opportunities for students, and high level of organizational skills needed to develop and implement special projects, normally acquired through 2 years of experience.

4. Knowledge of business development with organizations of various types, normally acquired through previous business-to-business direct sales or partnership development, with preferred prior experience in the healthcare sector.

5. High level of analytical skills needed to analyze employment placement data and revise placement and data collection services as well as to schedule and coordinate recruiting activities.

6. Substantial interpersonal skills needed to work with employers and TANF agencies to develop employment opportunities for students and graduates and to persuasively interact with students, faculty, staff, and the general public.

7. Requires familiarity with Microsoft Office software to be able to work with HELP grant, and typical office documents, presentations, and email.

8. Must possess a valid driver's license and be able to drive between various locations within the project service area.

Essential Functions

Essential Function 1. Develops, implements, and evaluates outreach strategies to local TANF partners and potential employers for job opportunities available to [Insert HPOG project name] participants.

Essential Function 2. Plans and implements procedures related to identification and recruiting of potential students who meet the qualifications to participate in the project activities and classes.

Essential Function 3. Develops, implements, coordinates, and evaluates job skills training workshops for participants. Topics include but are not limited to: job search techniques, résumé and cover letter development, interview preparation, workplace communication, problem-solving skills, portfolio development, etc.

Essential Function 4. Works in conjunction with Admissions to make presentations to potential students. Also presents to organizations, including service clubs, community agencies, chambers of commerce, business/industry sites, and other organizations.

Essential Function 5. Assesses student career needs and provides career guidance and training for students as needed to obtain a career in health care.

Essential Function 6. Makes presentations relevant to targeted healthcare careers and job-seeking skills at college activities, in classes, at TANF partner opportunities, and to healthcare employers and community groups.

Essential Function 7. Meets with employers and TANF agencies to develop job opportunities for [Insert HPOG project name] students. Coordinates with [Insert name of organization] departments and project partners on employer visits in support of project activities and events.

Essential Function 8. Represents the [Insert name of organization and HPOG project name] at community meetings relevant to economic and community development.

Essential Function 9. Conducts outreach to provide employers, prospective students, and others information about opportunities within [Insert HPOG project name].

ATTACHMENT B: SAMPLE EMPLOYER INFORMATION SPREADSHEET

HPOG Employer Data Format with Sample Entries

UPDATED AS OF [ENTER DATE OF MOST RECENT UPDATE]

Directions: Enter each employer name on left hand column, and transfer data collected from employer interview into each row.

Delete the sample entries in blue font after making initial employer entries.

Employer/Contact Names	Location	Positions	Starting Wage	Hiring Bonuses	Uniforms	Min. hiring age	Diploma/GED reqd	Resume	View on Crim. History	Job Shadowing/Internship	Scheduling flexibility	Host tours/Employer Visits	Apply	Types of Services	Tuition Assistance
Sample Nursing Home, Contact: Amber AAA (HR)	Sample City	Med Aide, CNA	MA $13, CNA $12	No	Khaki pants and polo provided	18	No	Preferred, not required	No history of abuse, neglect, HR determines view on other	Not allowed	Flexibility available	Yes to both	Online	100% memory	No
Sample Nursing Home, Contact: Debbie BBB	Other City	RN, LPN, Med Aide, CMF	CMF=$11.24, Med Aide, CMF (C	RN $2500 LPN $1500	Scrubs not required, but	18	HS Diploma or GED required	Preferred, not required	Depends on conviction, how long ago. HR will dertimine.	Post interview, applicant observes at site. Then has 24 hrs to respond to HR	Flexibility available	HR would come to class for presentation	Online	Community based and ICF (intermediate)	No
Sample Long Term Care Ctr, contact: Laura CCC	New City	RN, LPN, CNA Med Aide	NA $10.50, MA $11.50, LPN $14.50	Offered for all positions listed	Scrubs, no particular color	16 with lifting limitations	Nor for CNA	Required as part of online app process	Depends on conviction; will not hire felons or with history of theft or abuse	N/A	Flexibility available, but top priority on needs of residents	Yes	Online only	LTC, Skilled Care, Rehab. Have OTAs onsite M-F	Yes, $5,000 per year; reimbursement at 90% of tuition with grade of C or

ATTACHMENT C: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INITIAL EMPLOYER MEETING

Directions: Use this interview guide when meeting with a new employer-partner for the first time. The questions below can be used to collect information about hiring needs, employment and hiring process, job quality information, and engagement interests. The information gathered with this interview guide can be included in your employer database.

Employment/Recruiting Priorities

1. About the facility; types of services offered/range of care provided
2. Entry-level positions typically hiring/positions available now
3. Of the positions above, which are harder to fill?

Recruiting Process and Job Quality/Flexibility

1. Experience; type, amount preferred, diploma or GED required/training program
2. Minimum hiring age
3. Résumé; preferred? What do you look for? What don't you want to see on it?
4. View on criminal history and type of background check conducted
5. Apply online/in person
6. Starting wages/hiring bonuses/shift differential
7. Scheduling flexibility
8. Tuition assistance policy
9. Uniforms; type, colors, provided by company?

Employment/Recruiting Priorities

1. Interest in making classroom presentations and hosting facility tours?
2. Job shadowing/internships available? If yes, which positions?
3. Serve on Advisory Committee?

ATTACHMENT D: SUGGESTED EMPLOYER PRESENTATION TOPICS

Feel free to use these questions and topics as a guide for discussion. Be sure to encourage lots of questions!

Organization/Facility Overview

- Give an overview of your organization or facility; type of organization, location(s), services provided, and entry-level positions currently available for hire.

Job Application and Résumé

- Describe the application process; can this be done online, does a person come in and request an application?
- Discuss the importance of a professional looking/complete application and résumé. If you require a résumé, what do you like to see on one?
- Will you consider an application from a successful student who is not yet registered or licensed with the state for a specific skilled healthcare occupation?
- Address the topic of experience—if a student is lacking in work experience in this field, what are his/her chances of being hired? What do you recommend?
- What would be a red flag on an application that would cause an applicant to be screened out?
- What features or qualities are most impressive in an applicant's application/résumé? What helps make an applicant stand out?
- Give examples of appropriate job references.

Job Interview

- If an applicant has been terminated from a previous job, how should he/she address this during the interview?
- If an applicant has worked at multiple jobs for short periods of time, how do you as an employer perceive this?
- What is appropriate attire for an interview at your facility?
- Would it be acceptable for an applicant to bring children to wait in a lobby during an interview?
- Does a person need to disclose a disability to you?
- Give a few examples of typical interview questions.
- What impresses you most during an interview? What detracts from an applicant's interview?
- Do you check social media before you hire someone?
- Do you do background checks?

Employment Details

- Describe your shifts and hours for entry-level positions at your facility.
- Describe your dress code.
- Starting wage, raises, shift differentials, working on holidays?
- What are your benefits?
- Does your facility have PRNs?
- Describe your sick leave/vacation time policies.
- Are your nursing assistants required to become medication aides? Is there a time period?
- Describe your policies on cell phones, smoking, tattoos, and piercings.
- Does your facility promote from within? What qualities would make an employee most likely to be promoted?
- Do you offer tuition assistance for those who want to advance internally?
- Do you have periodic evaluations?
- Anything else you would like to add?

HPOG CASE STUDY: VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA TEXAS HPOG'S CUSTOMIZED HOSPITAL PARTNERSHIP

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Volunteers of America Texas (VOA TX), an HPOG grantee, was worried about their "stagnant" employment outcomes in early 2017 and launched exploratory conversations with several new employer-partners to forge stronger employment connections. Less than 9 months later, thanks to a multipronged and rapid relationship-building process with one large hospital system, 15 HPOG participants are now newly employed there. This case study walks through how the grantee formed a high-level relationship and used that relationship to develop a customized training program for patient care technicians (PCTs). The pilot program gave HPOG participants an edge in successfully competing for openings at the hospital. Moreover, thanks to the strong relationship between VOA TX and the hospital system, HPOG participants from other training programs secured job offers as well. The VOA TX experience shows how a focused relationship with a major employer can quickly boost employment outcomes for HPOG participants.

Introducing Volunteers of America Texas and Its Operating Environment

VOA TX is a statewide nonprofit with operations in Dallas/Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston, with the HPOG program located at the Houston location. The HPOG program is part of VOA TX's Financial Opportunity Center, an integrated service delivery model that empowers low-income families to stabilize their finances for long-term sustainability. Clients can access three core services that are bundled together in a holistic delivery system: employment services, financial coaching, and income supports.

VOA TX and its HPOG partners operate in a large metropolitan area in the Houston suburbs, with high concentrations of both healthcare employers and low-income families. This case study focuses on one of the drivers of VOA TX's rising job placement outcomes: a new partnership with one of the largest area healthcare employers in the Houston region.

SHIFTING FOCUS FROM ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION TO EMPLOYMENT

When asked about their recent sharp rise in employment outcomes, VOA TX HPOG Project Director Danita Wadley noted that they "went through the school of hard knocks first." As a new HPOG grantee, they focused attention and resources in year one of the grant (2015–16) on enrollment and participant completion of training programs. This left less staff time available to develop deeper connections with employers.

By spring 2017, the HPOG team was determined to engage more with local employers. The premier employer of healthcare talent in their region is CHI St. Luke's hospital system, part of the national Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI) network of hospitals. With over 10,000 employees in numerous locations, the CHI St. Luke's hospital system has a continual need for new talent, and its website lists over 100 job openings. However, the VOA TX team didn't have an existing relationship with CHI St. Luke's. LaSonya Bishop, the VOA TX HPOG Operations Manager and an HPOG Employment Coach, began working with recruiters at St. Luke's. Unfortunately, due to hospital staff turnover, they were unable to form a relationship. "We were spinning our wheels," Bishop admitted. Direct messages to more senior hospital staff whom they didn't know went unreturned.

DEVELOPING A NEW CUSTOMIZED TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

Wadley and Bishop asked their strategic partner, United Way of Greater Houston, to make a "warm introduction" with the director of human resources at CHI St. Luke's. At Wadley's request, the human resources director brought in the hospital's director of nursing, because, as Bishop noted, "we also need hiring managers on board" in order to develop and sustain a partnership. In mid-February 2017, the four leaders met and developed a plan to offer a customized training program for PCTs for CHI St. Luke's. The focus on a short-term training program gave the partners an opportunity to prove the value of a relationship, while also helping recruit candidates for a high-volume, difficult-to-fill position.

During this initial conversation about the hospital's needs and expectations, both of the St. Luke's leaders "fell in love with the HPOG program." Bishop believes this affinity was due to several factors:

- The VOA TX team established its credibility as an effective workforce provider by sharing data that demonstrate how a partnership can address an employer's business interests. For example, they described post-hire employment success rates from traditional programs (mostly from the Financial Opportunity Center's training programs in the building trades), such as an employment retention rate of 87 percent after 3 years and an internal promotion rate of 79 percent.

- VOA TX's description of the client-driven HPOG service philosophy appealed to hospital representatives. For example, they described how clients chart their own paths and compared HPOG support staff to football coaches who provide guidance and support for participants.

- The program's holistic services that are reflected in all VOA TX Financial Opportunity Center programs (including HPOG) also appealed to hospital officials. These services include skills training for credentials and other supports, such as financial education.

- The post-placement supports provided additional assurance for successful placements. VOA TX offers its clients career coaching for up to 5 years following training.

In the 2 months after the first luncheon, LaSonya Bishop and VOA TX Employment Coach, Nancy Smith, held several meetings with CHI St. Luke's to learn more about the organization's culture and to plan a custom training program for PCTs. They developed a plan focused on creating special workshops to discuss key cultural and attitudinal expectations needed to be successful within the St. Luke's system. Thanks to Smith's direct involvement in the planning of the pilot program, she was well positioned to provide expert guidance to participants in the pilot program (as well as to other students who were interested in CHI St. Luke's).

The VOA TX team also needed to bring their training partners on board. This was especially true for Lone Star Community College, which had to revise their standard PCT training program. At Lone Star, the VOA TX team worked directly with a senior manager to ensure that the customized CHI St. Luke's PCT program had high-level sponsorship and attention. Fortunately, their courses already included soft skills in the curriculum, so only minor adjustments were needed. The changes mostly involved swapping out general soft skills training for the customized modules delivered by CHI

St. Luke's staff. The PCT training program also included financial literacy courses delivered by a different VOA TX partner, Frost Bank. The plans called for active participation during the training by several hospital staff members. CHI St. Luke's director of nursing kicked off the training program by personally delivering the first soft skills workshop. The hospital's recruiters also conducted workshops and did mock interviews.

By April 2017, 2 months after their first conversation, all of the partners were ready to deliver a new 12-week PCT customized training program with CHI St. Luke's. The 6-month timeline below outlines the program delivery process for the pilot cohort and participant results at each stage of the program.

In addition to these nine new PCT hires, the new relationships built during this process began to pay off in other ways, resulting in six additional hires at St. Luke's. By working closely with CHI St. Luke's recruiters, the VOA TX HPOG team learned that the hospital needed strong candidates for open respiratory therapist and surgical technician positions. The VOA TX team identified recent training program graduates for these occupations and helped broker interviews for 12 qualified HPOG candidates. Because the recruiters knew and trusted the VOA TX team, these recommendations carried weight, and they conducted screening interviews with all 12 HPOG candidates. By September 2017, three HPOG participants landed jobs as respiratory therapists and three others were hired as surgical technicians. All of these new hires were the result of VOA TX's efforts to develop strong relationships at CHI St. Luke's.

As of early 2018, the new partners were planning a second PCT cohort to begin in March 2018. With the initial success at CHI St. Luke's as an example, VOA TX's leaders are ready to "take this show on the road" with other large employers that have high-volume, hard-to-fill healthcare jobs. Based on the success of United Way's "warm introduction" to CHI St. Luke's senior managers, VOA TX

Timeframe	Project Activities and Results
April–May 2017	**Participant Selection:** 15 interested HPOG participants attended an orientation session at Lone Star Community College, took a basic skills (TABE) screening test, and underwent a background check. Twelve of the participants passed the background check and scored above the ninth-grade level on the TABE math and reading. They were advanced for interviews with CHI St. Luke's recruiters. Nine HPOG participants were ultimately selected for the PCT training program.
May–August 2017	**Training Delivery:** The nine HPOG participants began the 12-week PCT training program at Lone Star Community College's North Harris Health Professions campus. Biweekly workshops focused on the hospital's culture and practices were led by CHI St. Luke's director of nursing and recruiters from human resources. (For an outline of the hospital-led topics, please see Attachment E.) Following these workshops, a VOA TX Career Coach holds additional workshops and individualized coaching meetings so that participants can further explore these specialized topics. In addition, officials from Frost Bank deliver three financial literacy workshops to guide participants in money management basics. Following the skills training, participants are placed into a PCT clinical experience at various CHI St. Luke's locations.
September 2017	**Credentialing and Employment:** All nine enrolled HPOG participants successfully completed the PCT training program, with 100-percent pass rates on their state certification tests. CHI St. Luke's recruiters surveyed participants to help match them with current openings that fit their goals. They also created a unique job code to ensure that program participant applications receive special attention. The recruiters coordinated a hiring event attended by program participants and hospital supervisors for relevant positions. All nine HPOG participants were hired by CHI St. Luke's at different locations for full-time positions, starting at $14 an hour plus benefits.

is using the same networking strategy to launch exploratory conversations with other employers. The human resources director at CHI St. Luke's introduced VOA TX to the human resources director at Methodist Hospital, another large nonprofit hospital system in the Houston area. While the discussions with Methodist Hospital are still in the early stages, they quickly zeroed in on a need for RNs and LPNs. In December 2017, VOA TX held two lunch-and-learn events with Methodist Hospital, where LPN training participants could learn more about Methodist's organizational culture and the application and recruiting processes for new hires. Participants with an interest in employment at Methodist Hospital have an opportunity to interview for openings after they earn their state occupational certification.

LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT BUILDING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

This case study about how HPOG's leaders at VOA TX built a customized training program with its partners in a large hospital system offers several lessons.

- **The Value of a Warm Introduction With Senior Leaders:** Senior leaders in large institutions may be difficult to reach. They also can be guarded, since so many vendors knock on their doors to develop business with them. By securing an introduction from a trusted intermediary who knew both organizations, VOA TX was able to quickly establish the trust needed to work closely together and have an honest conversation about hard-to-fill positions.

- **Dedicate Consistent Staff Capacity to Partnership Development:** VOA TX dedicated significant staff time to build the array of partnerships needed to develop and deliver this custom program. LaSonya Bishop estimates that during the initial months of program development she devoted more than 50 percent of her time to forming the hospital partnership and organizing the contributions of other key

partners in the pilot program. She advises others to "bring your educational partners on board with the need to deliver holistic services, so that they support the changes needed to foster greater success for our students."

- **Articulate HPOG's Value Proposition:** In initial conversations, VOA TX's leaders communicated a value proposition that aligned with senior hospital leaders' needs and interests. These included the program's holistic approach to help support participants in acquiring valued soft skills and the continuing career coaching support once a participant is on the job. Also, by incorporating and coordinating its other HPOG partners' contributions within the pilot program, VOA TX took a burden off the employer.

- **Engage Employer Stakeholders in Each Project Stage:** In the pilot phase, hospital officials were involved in each stage of the project, including candidate selection and training delivery, not just in the final recruiting stage. As Danita Wadley advised, "get employers on board and get them involved in the build-out of plans. We look for employer-partners who want to invest in plans together."

- **Differentiate HPOG Participants From Other Candidates:** In addition to letting hospital officials know about ongoing coaching services for new hires from the HPOG program, the customized training plan equipped participants with workplace knowledge valued by the employer. These program features gave HPOG participants an edge in the hiring process and transmitted important information for on-the-job success. The hospital's recruiters ensured that pilot program participants received special attention during the hiring process. "It takes many touches in developing the extra shine needed to sparkle like a diamond," concluded LaSonya Bishop, about the 100-percent employment success rate of the PCT pilot program.

Intensive Career Coaching Keeps Participants Engaged After Training Completion

VOA TX's intensive career coaching is built on strong relationships, with two group or one-on-one meetings per week while participants are enrolled in training programs. For a typical 12-week certification training program, such as PCT, this pace results in around 25 group or individual meetings before an HPOG participant completes training. Coaches continue to provide ongoing assistance once on the job, mostly via virtual coaching. Post-placement supports provide an additional incentive for program graduates to stay engaged with their Career Coaches. For example, one PCT hired by CHI St. Luke's in 2017 is receiving tuition assistance from VOA TX for her nursing degree to move up a career ladder at CHI St. Luke's. Beyond such incentives, the VOA TX team cites the strong foundation and well-connected relationship built over many conversations and meetings that helps to ensure continued engagement and progress with clients. "Participants like to brag to their coach about how well they are doing," said Bishop.

ATTACHMENT E: OUTLINE FOR THE CHI ST. LUKE'S WORKPLACE CULTURE WORKSHOPS

During the PCT pilot training program, officials from CHI St. Luke's Hospital delivered biweekly workshops on important workplace culture topics. These workshops gave participants an opportunity to learn about the attitude, qualities, and soft skills valued by the hospital and necessary for ongoing employment success. The topics are listed below, organized into four themes.

1. Hospital Core Values

- Reverence
- Integrity
- Compassion
- Excellence

2. Working with Peers

- Conflict Resolution
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Team/Group Dynamics

3. Dealing with Patients

- Customer Satisfaction
- Challenging Patients
- Helping Others
- Customer Needs

4. Stress Tolerance

- Relaxation Techniques
- Self-Awareness
- De-escalation
- Patience

HPOG CASE STUDY: HOPES PROGRAM—INFUSING EMPLOYER INTELLIGENCE INTO TRAINING PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Pima Community College (PCC) is an HPOG grantee and operates the Health Career Opportunities with Personalized Educational Supports (HOPES) Program. At the end of the first round of HPOG, HOPES Program leaders took a look at their data and questioned why their healthcare employment numbers were not higher. This moment of discomfort led to a comprehensive review of employment processes in HPOG 1.0 and a focus on what could be changed in HPOG 2.0 to increase healthcare employment numbers. The HOPES employment team selected several occupational training programs on which to focus and conducted interviews with area employer representatives who recruit for these targeted occupations. These conversations made them realize that employment information must be interspersed throughout all HPOG services. HOPES began engaging with employers in new ways that contributed to strong healthcare employment outcomes for these targeted training programs. Using the newly gathered employer information, the HOPES Program designed an innovative toolbox of materials for its Employment Coaches to use with participants. The toolbox contents are described in Attachment G. PCC's review and redesign of targeted training programs can be useful for other HPOG grantees who aspire to boost employment outcomes for specific programs.

PCC is a 2-year college enrolling approximately 42,000 credit students at six campus locations in the greater Tucson, Arizona metropolitan area. PCC's HOPES Program is operated within the Workforce and Continuing Education Department. The HPOG employment team that led much of the work described in this case study comprises Suzi Shoemaker, Advanced Program Coordinator for Employment; Carmen Carlson, Employment Specialist; and Donna Ruthruff, Workforce Development Specialist from the Pima County One-Stop.

A MOMENT OF DISCOMFORT SPURS CHANGE

During HPOG 1.0, PCC's HOPES Program met most of their 5-year goals, but employment in the targeted healthcare sector had fallen short. Further, they realized that some of these specific employment outcomes were difficult to track because the HPOG coaches and the Pima County One-Stop workforce development specialist often lost touch with participants soon after they completed their training programs. Student support services tilted heavily toward the college's natural propensity to focus on academic success and, as a result, participants drifted away because advisors had less assistance to offer.

With this in mind, the HPOG HOPES staff created a new position to develop an employment approach in conjunction with their Pima County One-Stop partners. Suzi Shoemaker, the HPOG 1.0 Project Director, was hired as the Employment Advanced Program Coordinator and led an in-depth program-by-program assessment, with an aim to improve employment outcomes.

During Shoemaker's review, she realized that certain HPOG-approved healthcare occupation training programs already had

high employment rates post-graduation. For example, the dental assistant, medical laboratory technician, and surgical technology courses all had close to 100 percent employment rates in the profession upon graduation. She chose to leave those training programs alone, and instead, focus on occupations where graduates were not finding employment, such as nursing assistant, medical assistant, medical office programs, and LPN.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND REDESIGN PROCESS FOR THE LPN PROGRAM

Suzi Shoemaker specifically targeted the popular and demanding LPN program and led an in-depth assessment of the program over a 4-month period. Here is the timeline of events and activities.

March 2016—Begin Assessment Process: The program assessment process began for targeted healthcare occupations, including LPN.

April 2016—Refresh Labor Market Analysis and Identify Top Employers: Suzi Shoemaker and Donna Ruthruff reviewed up-to-date regional labor market data for LPN jobs and identified the top employers in the region. They also went on an internal "door-knocking campaign" to interview PCC staff and engage them in the assessment process. For the LPN program, these conversations identified employers that were already engaged with PCC, such as organizations hosting clinical training for LPN students. They also discussed current employment readiness programs offered by PCC. They covered the employment support processes PCC uses to help students find employment and tracking of employment results and identified ideas on how to increase employment. HOPES and the PCC Nursing Department

already had a strong relationship, and nursing program leaders were excited by the opportunity for further collaboration. In particular, PCC's LPN Advanced Program Coordinator was an essential internal partner to engage, since any potential program changes would be implemented from this position.

April–May 2016—Conduct Employer Interviews: In her role as Employment Advanced Program Coordinator, Shoemaker, together with Ruthruff, initiated outreach to targeted healthcare employers, such as nursing homes, hospitals, and clinics, with a focus on LPN positions. Shoemaker combined contact information from multiple resources to compile a database of over 100 area healthcare employer contacts. For example, some employers were identified by pulling reports from the Pima County One-Stop database that confirmed new hires of HPOG 1.0 participants. They generated more extensive employer lists through an online resource called [Reference USA](#). This resource helps workforce programs develop employer contact lists by type of business and provides names, emails, and phone numbers of company managers. It is available for free at many public libraries. The employment team also identified some hiring contacts through [indeed.com](#), a popular job search aggregator website. Finally, they also collected contact information from colleagues within the college.

Once HOPES had compiled a comprehensive list of employer contact information, Shoemaker emailed and called local employers to talk about HPOG and the new employment processes the college established. The HOPES employment team's stated goal in these messages was to "to learn more about your company's employment needs, how you hire, and see if there are ways we can partner together to prepare our students to be great employees for your company." They asked employers if they wanted to learn more about the changes and possibly partner in hiring LPN graduates. They would then schedule an appointment to visit the employer's facility to learn more about the work setting and the employer's hiring needs. In spring 2016, the HOPES employment team met with eight employers who hire LPNs regularly.

They pursued deeper relationships with employers who showed interest and those that appeared to offer quality career opportunities. They quietly discontinued relationships with those that didn't meet these criteria. For example, the employment team stopped talking with one home-based skilled nursing employer after two staff visits showed dismal working and living conditions. An interview with another employer uncovered that jobs advertised as full time were actually independent contractor positions. These roles had less job security and the workers would have had to pay the employer share of payroll taxes, which full-time employees don't pay.

The conversations with local employers offered many new ways to better align PCC and HOPES employment support services with specific employers' recruiting processes. For example:

- One human resources representative spent 3 hours demonstrating the online recruiting system, which revealed that recruiters often only reviewed the first 30–40 résumés they receive. For this employer, responding to an older job posting would be a waste of a participant's time.

- Another interview revealed the employer's terminology for first aid/CPR certification was different than the language used by PCC and HPOG participants. This vocabulary mismatch resulted in LPN applicants being labeled "not qualified" for positions where they did, in fact, possess the required certifications.

- Human resources representatives from different healthcare employers reviewed their job descriptions and explained what criteria they use in interviews and hiring decisions.

- Another recruiter did not value the "skill set" features that were listed prominently at the top of the résumé format recommended to HPOG participants. This meant that HPOG applicants didn't pass the "20-second" résumé review rule and were rarely selected for interviews. The employment team learned that the "skill set" section needed to be moved lower down on the résumé for anyone applying for positions with this employer.

- They also learned that most area hospitals with urgent care centers did not generally hire inexperienced LPNs, even those who successfully completed clinical rotations at hospitals. In order to help HPOG participants land their first LPN job after graduation with a competitive wage, they would need to focus on developing employer relationships with other types of organizations.

June 2016—Launch Program-Specific Job Fairs: The college held its first program-specific "boutique job fair" for the LPN program shortly after the spring 2016 cohort graduated. These job fairs are the HOPES employment team's top point of engagement with participating employers. Although the first group of graduating students hadn't taken the state's LPN licensing test, hiring demand was so strong that participating employers were willing to make early offers contingent on passing the licensing exam, since they wanted to get first crack at this new talent pool. The spring 2016 event attracted six employers and 15 graduating students (cohort participants included HPOG as well as non-HPOG students). The most recent job fair in December 2017 attracted nine LPN employers and 15 program graduates. Many employer-partners were so pleased with the results, they have returned to participate in the job fair each term.

The LPN job fairs are now held five times per year in conjunction with the completion of specific LPN cohorts. Current HPOG and PCC students are also invited to the job fairs to meet and learn about the different types of employers in the field. For these students, meeting with employers earlier in their academic career provides motivation and the knowledge that employment is waiting for them once they complete the program and pass their state certification exam. A review of employment data from recent LPN cohorts shows this strategy is yielding results: 58 percent of LPN program graduates from the HOPES Program work for employers that participated in a job fair.

Pima Community College's Program-Specific Job Fairs

PCC and the HOPES Program offer a series of targeted activities during the last 2 months of training, which culminate in a specialized job fair for targeted programs like LPN, as described above. The job fair is generally held 1 day prior to program graduation. A detailed timeline of the job fair planning process, including actions to prepare HPOG participants, is below.

1. Three weeks in advance of the job fair, invite and confirm employers who are actively recruiting for jobs that are related to the program. The college generally has 6–9 employers that participate.

2. A few weeks prior to graduation, coaches begin preparing students who are completing the program to ensure that they have a complete portfolio of materials and information needed for job applications and interviews (including but not limited to professional references; 20 most-asked industry-/position-specific questions, with student-prepared answers; referral for professional clothing; and professional résumé contextualized to the health sector).

3. One week before the job fair, college staff, including HPOG's employment team members, conduct mock interviews with students and provide feedback using a scoring rubric that details six competencies and three ratings categories, with the top-performing category labeled "You're Hired!" (See the description of mock interview rubric in Attachment G.)

4. On the day of the event, an HPOG employment team member gathers students before the fair starts to review tips and questions to ask employers and to help boost participants' confidence. During the event, HPOG staff will arrange introductions to employer-partners for nervous students and highlight their strengths to get the conversation started. They counsel participants to obtain the recruiter's contact information (usually in the form of a business card), so the students can follow up directly with the employer.

5. Post-job fair, HOPES follows up with participants to learn which employers the student is interested in and arrange individual career counseling appointments when necessary.

After the event, the HPOG HOPES employment team makes a point of chatting with participating students to gather feedback and discuss follow-up actions. These may include reviewing answers to LPN-specific interview questions, the 20 most-asked interview questions, additional mock interviews, filling out online applications, creating reference lists or cover letters, as well as making referrals to low-cost clothing suppliers for students who need professional outfits to wear to interviews. A HOPES employment team member asks which employers the students liked most, whom they plan on following up with, and discusses specific application processes that each employer uses. A HOPES employment team member also inquires if there are any employers not at the job fair that the student is interested in, and when possible will send the résumé to their employer contact.

The employment team also collects feedback from participating employers. They discuss potential hiring interests from the event and assess how the job fairs are benefiting each specific employer. Not only do most employers return to participate at each job fair, but the HOPES employment team reports that this initial point of engagement often leads to additional partnerships. For example, some employers ask about participating in other college-sponsored job fairs, speaking directly to ongoing cohorts about employment, or hosting a clinical rotation or externships. Other employers heard about the job fairs and have begun contacting the college to ask about participating.

The healthcare occupation-specific job fairs have transformed employer engagement within the college in unexpected ways. Recently, an employer representative who attended the LPN job fairs asked if PCC would be interested in setting up a 6-month paid preceptorship opportunity, which functions much like a formal on-the-job mentoring program, for LPN/RN students. This led to conversations between the college's Nursing Department and this employer to work on developing experiential training for students. PCC's program-specific job fairs have struck a chord within the college, as illustrated by a quote from Rochelle Byrne, PCC's Nursing Advance Program Coordinator. "The job fairs have been an excellent tool for both our students and our program. Because the boutique job fairs bring together a myriad of employers from all across town, it provides the perfect opportunity to bring together the administrators from the nursing program who need clinical sites and the employers who want students for mutual benefit."

USING EMPLOYER INTELLIGENCE TO REDESIGN EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Armed with detailed information about employer needs and recruiting/hiring practices, Suzi Shoemaker and the HOPES employment team began to incorporate employer intelligence throughout the HPOG participant experience. She summed up their approach by saying "we show students from the beginning that we believe in them, and this spirit of employability is demonstrated by our entire HOPES Program service staff. When staff are excited about students' employment prospects, then students get excited, too." This resulted in a redesigned, more holistic approach to student support services where employment activities are baked into the student service process from the initial HPOG orientation. This contrasts with the prior transactional academic approach to student support services, where employment support was only introduced at the end of the process.

Shoemaker led an initial training for the group of HPOG coaches in this holistic approach to employment services, including a Coach Employment Academy Guide (see a description of the Guide in Attachment G). This training helped build greater understanding about employment processes and the need to discuss employment early on with students. Shoemaker's workshop helped accelerate the cultural shift of the program toward a consistent emphasis on employment and not just academic success. The accompanying Guide summarizes employer thoughts about the qualities of successful applicants and the barriers that prevent applicants from moving forward in the hiring process.

The college's new approach to employment coaching combines employer information, employment preparation, and support services throughout the HPOG participant experience, including:

- **Outreach Events and Student Intake Process:** As Reina Ravago, PCC's Outreach Advanced Program Coordinator, describes, "Employment is discussed in the very first slide at the information session. We discuss that HPOG is a well-rounded program where they receive ongoing education and employment supports. We explain that we start to prepare them early on for employment to include résumé-building, interviewing, professional development, etc… so that they [the students] have this support throughout their entire journey, so they are well prepared when they start looking for work post-training completion."

- **Employability Class:** PCC's workforce agency partner, The Pima County One-Stop, conducts a 4-day workshop at the

beginning of the HPOG student experience. It helps participants assess their interest in various occupations and begin building their portfolio of materials for a successful job search. The student's portfolio includes a résumé, master application, cover letter, and references. All HOPES students are required to participate in this class unless waived by their HOPES advisor or Pima County One-Stop case manager for special cases. Those who may receive waivers include participants who are already employed in entry-level healthcare jobs or who applied to HPOG HOPES after enrolling in a healthcare training program.

- **Employment Coaching:** The HPOG HOPES Employment Coaches support their caseload of students by helping them make an informed decision on an occupational goal that matches their skills, values, and interests. They then direct participants to a corresponding program of study to acquire new skills and credentials for this occupation. During training, Employment Coaches continue working with students to address any barriers that threaten to slow their progress. They also continue refining students' efforts toward achieving a specific employment outcome within their chosen occupational field of study. Initially, a coach will meet with the student right after random assignment and provide a list of items needed to be accepted into the program the student has selected. These can include obtaining a fingerprint clearance card, meeting with their One-Stop workforce development specialist, taking the college placement test, attending information sessions for their training program of interest, and obtaining required immunizations. HOPES coaches meet with new students at least once a month while they are preparing to start a healthcare training program, either in person, via email, or over the phone.

Performance Support Tools for HPOG Staff and Participants

To support the HOPES coaching team's employment-focused advising with their students, Suzi Shoemaker and the HOPES Employment Specialist, Carmen Carlson, developed an extensive employment toolkit that incorporates what they learned from employers. The toolkit documents are available in a shared Google doc for all HOPES coaches to use with their participants. The toolkit contains presentations on topics such as interviewing skills, résumé development, and targeted healthcare career cover letters. There is a checklist to ensure that a participant has easy access to all of the information needed for a successful job search. Another tool is a professional dress manual with specific guidance on what to wear and not wear to interviews, along with a referral form for a local nonprofit clothing bank where participants can acquire professional clothes for interviews.

In addition to these industry-specific tools, the HOPES staff can also access many program-specific tools, such as occupation-specific cover letter templates, résumé formats and examples, and sample job descriptions for the occupation. There is also a list of volunteer opportunities with over 50 area employers where students can gain experience needed to successfully compete for healthcare jobs that require some prior experience (especially in the medical office field). Attachment G has a description of PCC's employment toolkit.

An Unconventional Employer Engagement Example

How does PCC's employer engagement approach play out with specific employer partners? One example with an atypical employer illustrates HPOG HOPES' process in managing relationships. Nancy James is a Talent Acquisition Specialist for Corizon Health, an organization that provides healthcare services in prisons for incarcerated individuals. She was referred to Suzi Shoemaker by a PCC colleague for an introductory discussion. The first phone conversation between Shoemaker and James was 90 minutes long. In it, James shared details about the prison's philosophy of care, working conditions, ideal candidate fit, and more. During the call, Shoemaker learned that LPN jobs at Corizon Health paid higher than average starting wages for LPNs and had strong benefits and attractive shift schedules that matched many HOPES participants' scheduling preferences. As the relationship has progressed since this first conversation, James has participated in four LPN job fairs at the college and hired over seven HOPES participants for LPN roles. Shoemaker conducted several post-employment interviews with graduates hired by Corizon, and gathered "very strong" reports of a safe and supportive work environment, with opportunities for continual professional development. Many students have mentioned that the diversity of expertise they gain through this employment is most invaluable and has assisted them in identifying a specialty they wish to focus on. Nancy James has become such a champion of HPOG partnerships that she was interviewed on camera for [HPOG's 2017 Employer Engagement video](#) that describes examples of effective partnerships between HPOG and employers.

**Indicators Affirming Results From
Pima Community College's Approach**

The new HOPES program management mindset shifted the previous linear approach to participant service where training was at the beginning of a student's journey and employment at the end. In the new model, employment is a central focus within each phase of participant experience, driving all service activities. As the college's HOPES Program Manager, Angie Sytsma, remarked: "Employment is the flywheel that drives all activities and

interventions of our HPOG program. We are closing the traditional divide between academic training and meaningful employment achievements." In the 2 years since beginning its program assessment process, PCC's HOPES program staff has observed how this approach is contributing to stronger results.

- **Employment Outcomes:** PCC's HOPES first-time healthcare employment results exceeded the targeted goal. Within the targeted programs, the majority of employed participants were hired by employers that actively engaged with the HOPES employment team.

- **Employer Engagement:** The overall number of employers that engaged with the targeted training programs has roughly doubled, nearly all employers continued participating in subsequent job fairs, and other employers have begun contacting the college about participating.

- **Coaching Effectiveness:** The college has embedded its knowledge of employer practices into an extensive array of tools that are used throughout the participant experience by its coaches. HOPES coach, Andrea Anduaga, summarized her role as follows: "As an HPOG coach, we fill the role of navigator that involves working with our students from HPOG random assignment to entrance into a program of study to graduation to employment. Having toolkit materials, like our Employment Toolkit, allows for information at our fingertips and creates more efficiency in our roles. This has also triggered similar information sharing in other areas, such as program advising and student success handouts. This [toolkit] allows for coaches to spend more time with and on our students."

- **Participant Engagement:** After completing training, HOPES participants are largely responsive to requests for employment update information, and employers are also willing to share employment verification information about HOPES participants. (Note: Participating employers are made aware of the college's standard practice of obtaining signed releases by participants to permit such sharing of information.) Students have also been receptive to requests from staff to help interview future HOPES applicants. Completing the circle of a successful relationship, a few former HPOG students have taken part in employer panels to share their experiences with groups of new participants.

ATTACHMENT F: PLANNING QUESTIONS TO GUIDE A RESULTS-DRIVEN PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Other HPOG grantees who are interested in a similar program assessment approach can consider a number of planning questions to help inform their strategy.

- **Determine Focus for Program Assessments:** Which training programs with significant enrollments by HPOG participants already have high employment outcomes, and don't need a program review? Which training programs have the largest gap in employment outcomes by HPOG participants? Which programs lack a natural employment onboarding process such as a clinical experience with employers or have an underutilized network of clinical employer sites?

- **Build Alliances With Targeted Program Management Colleagues:** Who makes program management decisions for the targeted training program(s) and what benefits might they realize by participating in a program assessment process? Do they demonstrate an interest in engaging with HPOG in conducting a review, sharing employer contacts, and supporting outreach to past program participants to discuss their experiences? Do you have confidence that they will be willing to make program changes based on findings with employers?

- **Assess and Engage the HPOG Case Management Staff:** What is the level of comfort among current HPOG coaches/case managers in discussing employment goals with HPOG participants and providing specific employment guidance? In what ways can the program better equip and prepare the HPOG case management staff to strengthen their capabilities to support participants in preparing to compete successfully for jobs within their targeted occupations?

- **Focus on Most Valuable Employers:** Based on regional labor market data, which area employers appear to have consistent hiring demand for the targeted healthcare programs and occupation(s)? Which have more convenient locations, better quality career opportunities, and more supportive working environments for HPOG participants? Which prospective employers do you already have supportive relationships with and access to?

ATTACHMENT G: DESCRIPTIONS OF TOOLS USED BY HOPES PROGRAM/ PIMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

This case study referenced numerous tools developed by the PCC HOPES employment team based on its program assessments and employer information gathering. These tools were developed specifically based on employer needs in PCC's service area.

Coach Employment Academy Guide: This 25-page guide orients and trains Employment Coaches for PCC HOPES. The guide has basic information on the college's HPOG program and recommended processes for effective coaching and incorporates many of the participant tools listed below.

Checklists To Run Successful Job Search: This participant checklist lists 14 items that are necessary for participants' job search. The list includes fingerprint clearance card, state occupational licenses, and personal documentation such as a Social Security card, citizenship ID, etc. The remainder of the document has space for participants to record information that they will need to complete online applications and to include in their résumés.

Professional Dress for Job Search: This tool lists "Dos" and "Don'ts" on appropriate dress for men and women to wear for interviews or other professional events. The description includes pictures of professional clothing and suggests specific Tucson-area nonprofit/secondhand stores at which to acquire professional clothing at low cost.

Cover Letter Workshop PowerPoint Presentation: This 12-slide presentation outlines a detailed five-step process for writing an effective cover letter.

Interview Folder With Program-Specific Interview Questions: This folder includes position-specific interview questions created for each of the HPOG healthcare training programs supported at PCC. The folder also includes the 20 most-asked interview questions with sample answers and a fill-in-the-blank "Tell Me About Yourself" handout to help students develop their answer to that question.

Interviewing Skills Workshop PowerPoint Presentation: This 26-slide presentation contains best practices and recommendations for how to succeed at a job interview. For example, the presentation includes tips for how to dress, frequently asked questions for which to plan responses, a recommended format for answering interview questions, how to prepare for an interview, sample questions to ask (or not to ask), and links to other interviewing resources.

Résumé Development PowerPoint Presentation: This 24-slide presentation discusses how to develop strong résumés. It includes an overview on the purposes of a résumé, information about résumé-screening software used by employers, how to break down targeted job descriptions to include key skills on one's résumé, and examples of a recommended résumé format and content.

Résumé Workshop Handout Folder: This folder includes several handouts used in résumé development workshops in conjunction with the presentation above. Handouts include sample résumés and directions on using online résumé builders, etc.

Mock Interview Scoring Rubric: This guide is intended as a "grading" rubric to assess mock interviews and provide useful feedback to participants. The scoring rubric lists competencies in six areas, such as first impressions, attitude, quality of responses, etc. Within each competency area are three levels of ratings that each have specific descriptions of behaviors observed. The bottom rating level says "needs work," and the top rating level says "you're hired!"

Sample Job Descriptions: These job descriptions are used to guide participants in developing position-specific résumés and job applications. This file includes sample job descriptions for targeted healthcare jobs, including certified nursing assistant (CNA), medical assistant, phlebotomist, surgical technician, etc.

Occupational Training Program Files: This resource has program-specific files for 18 different healthcare occupations. Each file includes an overview of PCC's training program for that occupation, along with a career-specific cover letter/résumé template and employment history worksheet.

Occupational Skill Sets: This file includes information from the O*Net U.S. Department of Labor website, as well as information from the PCC program website, describing skills and tools used for 14 occupations targeted by the HOPES program.

FIVE PROJECT LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO ENGAGE EMPLOYERS AND IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

There are common patterns across all three of the HPOG "promising practices" case studies (Nebraska Central Community College, Volunteers of America Texas, and Pima Community College) that point toward a set of project leadership practices associated with strong employment outcomes.

All HPOG projects (not just these three cases) are examples of sector strategies that build ongoing relationships and expertise within a single business sector. Sector strategies have been established by research studies as an effective way to address the needs of both businesses and low-income workers. The decision-making options described in this briefing are only possible when using a sector approach.

The goal of the case studies was to identify specific practices at these grant sites that were prominent drivers of their strong employment results. There are five common project leadership practices observed in various forms across the three grantees that are associated with stronger employment outcomes.

1. **Use Shortcomings To Energize Change Initiatives:** HPOG leaders at Volunteers of America Texas (VOA TX) and Pima Community College (PCC) each described uncomfortable moments early in the project when they realized that their employment outcomes were falling short. They used these painful realizations to energize and focus team efforts to significantly change their practices. While the initiatives that each team chose differed greatly, they were both triggered by an honest acknowledgment that they were not achieving their goals and an unwillingness to settle for mediocrity. The Nebraska Central Community College (CCC) team experienced a different kind of setback. They overcame the loss of institutional employer relationship knowledge following the departure of a staff member that left them "starting from scratch" in building employer relationships anew. Their rebuilding effort consisted of carefully documenting these relationships to preserve this knowledge. They have since built an employer database detailing insider knowledge of over 60 area employers.

2. **Focus Team Efforts on High-Impact Employment Improvement Opportunities:** Leaders at the three case study organizations described a decision-making process by which they selected a specific (and different) set of occupational training programs and associated employers that they believed would yield significant employment results. In each case, they chose occupations with strong employer demand and a high volume of HPOG participants in related training programs. However, the programs selected all had room for improvement

in employment outcomes and greater employer engagement. Nebraska CCC's leaders focused on certified nursing assistant programs and employers; VOA TX focused on a single large employer's critical need for patient care technicians; PCC focused on a series of high-volume programs, beginning with licensed practical nurse.

3. **Design Dual Customer "Translator" Job Role:** Each of the promising practice cases designed a critical "career navigator" position within the HPOG team that gathered employer intelligence and translated this insider knowledge to benefit participants. In each case, the job included an employer-facing "account management" role that gathered fresh and unpublished employer intelligence about talent priorities, hiring processes/practices, and cultural values from personal conversations with targeted employer representatives. In various ways, this job also included a participant-facing role to share this knowledge with students to give them an edge in the job search and hiring process. Nebraska CCC's Career Coach shared her expertise about employers' certified nursing assistant hiring practices in workshops (and also published portions of this information on the CCC website for participant use). PCC's Employment Advanced Program Coordinator focused on preparing participants for program-specific job fairs at the conclusion of their training programs. VOA TX had an Employment Coach join employer meetings with CHI St. Luke's hospital officials, which gave her firsthand knowledge to reinforce the employer's cultural expectations in meetings with program participants.

4. **Gather and Deploy Employer Knowledge:** Each of the three projects documented and managed the industry knowledge gained from employers in different ways. CCC's team documented this information in a formal database with detailed entries for over 60 employers. PCC engineered this knowledge into an extensive set of tools—many of which were program specific—that its coaches use to guide participants in their career planning and job search process. VOA TX's single-employer customized program used a different approach. They engaged CHI St. Luke's hospital staff to communicate cultural expectations and hiring tips with participants, which were reinforced in HPOG-led coaching conversations and workshops with participants.

5. **Create Win-Win Employer Engagement Roles:** Each of the grantees offered a win-win opportunity for employers to actively engage in the program. These engagements provided value for participating employers who used the activities to identify high-quality applicants for hard-to-fill positions of special interest as well as HPOG participants who discovered a great career fit and gained an edge in applying with these employers. For example, both VOA TX and CCC used employer presentations as their preferred engagement roles with employer representatives. For PCC, program-specific job fairs attended by six to nine employer representatives serve the same purpose, and their employment results show that 58 percent of successful participants get jobs with employers that attend these job fairs.

As these examples show, the specific employer engagement and employment support strategies differ greatly across the three promising practice grantees. However, each team of project leaders followed similar program/process improvement and decision-making patterns as described above. Strategies and tactics change based on each project's unique operating environment, but effective program leadership practices look similar.

NON-HPOG CASE STUDY: INOVA'S PARTNERING TO CREATE A NEW HOSPITAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

INTRODUCING THE HOSPITAL AND ITS TRAINING PARTNER

Several years ago, Inova Health System began partnering with a healthcare administrative training program to place interns from the program into entry-level administrative roles within Inova. Inova is a large nonprofit healthcare system located in Northern Virginia. At the time of this case study, Inova operated five hospitals and a network of specialized healthcare businesses, employing over 12,000 workers.

Inova consistently had several dozen entry-level jobs posted that matched the skills and focus of a local career training program called Training Futures. Available entry-level jobs included medical receptionist, patient admissions specialist, medical records clerk, and unit secretary. Training Futures was a medical office training program, operated as a partnership between a nonprofit organization, Northern Virginia Family Service, and Northern Virginia Community College. The training curriculum delivered a comprehensive set of administrative skills for its participants, including computer user capabilities (Microsoft Office), customer service, filing, and soft skills. Its specialized healthcare industry modules included medical terminology, introduction to HIPAA compliance (patient confidentiality requirements), and an introduction to medical coding. The 5-month curriculum featured a 17-week skill-building curriculum, followed by a 3-week unpaid internship for all participants who successfully completed the curriculum and met performance expectations regarding program attendance.

THE RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING PHASE AND FINDING A "CHAMPION"

Inova was well-known as a premier regional employer, and the abundance of online job postings for various administrative positions compelled many Training Futures participants to apply. However, applications submitted by trainees seemed to go into the "black hole" of its online recruiting system. No one was called for interviews.

Training Futures' program leaders made several attempts to develop a partnership with Inova, including meeting representatives from Human Resources and a few individual hiring managers. They explored how to leverage Inova's internship program as an opportunity to test out new hires risk

free and to help provide additional support for special projects or divisions that had open positions. Inova's response was always, "we don't do internships."

However, one senior human resources recruiter at the largest Inova hospital, located close to the training site, was interested enough to visit the Training Futures program. She came away very impressed with the quality of the program and the participants she met. Hiring managers had expressed frustration to human resources about the slow pace of hiring for administrative positions. She believed that hosting interns from the program could help address several ongoing challenges that she described to the program team: having hundreds of unknown applicants for each opening, a higher-than-desired turnover rate for entry-level administrative jobs, and a cumbersome and time-consuming hiring process.

Training Futures' program coordinator gave her the form used by other employer-partners to define the skills and tasks required for each requested internship position, since administrative roles vary widely. For each internship requested, the Training Futures staff use the completed employer forms to match with participants who had excelled in the skills and tasks needed, in order to maximize the success rates for both parties. The senior human resources recruiter met with her supervisor, the hospital's human resources director, to discuss the possibility of using internships with Training Futures as a type of temporary-to-permanent tryout for potential new hires. He agreed to explore it further with the hospital's legal team.

ENCOUNTERING AND OVERCOMING POTENTIAL BARRIERS

The proposed new internship program passed the first test, about legal liability of interns. Since the hospital already hosted clinical rotations for other college training programs, the administrative training internship program at Training Futures, which included Northern Virginia Community College as a partner, was viewed similarly.

However, the new administrative internship program would need to follow all of the requirements and processes for clinical rotation placements, such as with registered nurses' training programs. This included many new steps that the Training Futures program didn't incorporate for internships with all of its other employer-partners, such as having participants complete the formal employment application, passing a background check and drug screen,

documenting required immunizations, getting a hospital name badge, and attending new employee orientation. These activities would require the Training Futures staff to conduct internship selection several weeks earlier than usual so that any training participant who was matched with an Inova internship would have time to complete the additional steps. Given the importance of this relationship to the success of the Training Futures program and its participants, the staff and Inova's senior recruiter agreed to work closely together to coordinate these additional steps and pilot the internship program.

BUILDING ON A SUCCESSFUL PILOT

For the first pilot internships, Inova's senior recruiter persuaded two influential hiring managers who had open administrative positions to be the first internship supervisors. The staff placed two strong Training Futures participants in these 3-week internship roles, and the participants agreed to complete all of the extra steps. They visited the hospital a week prior to the internship start date to get their immunizations and a name badge.

The first internship placements were successful; managers and interns all felt the program was beneficial. Managers found that the Training Futures interns needed only limited supervision and were more productive than anticipated. The senior recruiter also liked it because it made her job easier compared to time needed in the traditional process to review and screen so many résumés, conduct screening interviews, and then arrange interviews with

hiring managers. She had more confidence that interns who had already proven themselves would be successful in the job. Successful interns already had hiring action files that were nearly complete, so human resources didn't need to do much else in order to make an offer to successful interns.

Following the pilot cohort, the initial internship hiring managers and the senior recruiter spread the word about this success with other Inova hiring managers that had administrative openings. Soon the Training Futures program was receiving more internship requests from Inova per cohort than they could handle—over a dozen in some cohorts. Over a period of several years, Inova hired several dozen Training Futures interns for full-time positions and became the program's top employer-partner. One particularly successful intern is the receptionist for the hospital's human resources department. She had such a striking presence with all guests that the human resources director presented her with a plaque that read "Vice President of First Impressions."

Reflecting on the Training Futures internship-based partnership, the senior recruiter summarized her experiences: "Since Training Futures participants had already persevered to attend and complete an intensive 5-month training program, they had already demonstrated many qualities and capabilities we needed. Ninety-five percent of the Training Futures participants who served as interns were successful. They were trained to meet or exceed our expectations."

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE CASE STUDY AND HPOG GRANTEES

1. What conditions signal that an internship may be a solution to recommend?

- Employer need for difficult-to-fill occupations, with limited success via traditional recruiting
- Ongoing hiring demand for targeted jobs
- High turnover in targeted jobs
- HPOG has training program that matches needs
- Absence of work-based learning option for this program
- No new costs for employer to fund

2. What advocacy strategies can influence organizational decisions to approve a new internship program?

- Need to have established relationship with a "champion" within the employer organization to advocate for/run program
- Cultivate potential champion via program exposure, such as an HPOG site tour/meeting participants
- Emphasize HPOG's role in screening and preparing successful trainees for a strong fit and employment success
- Need backing of senior manager to approve new internship program, either directly or via internal champion
- Cite precedence of similar program (e.g., clinicals with HPOG partner college)
- Having college partner helps, especially for HPOG grantees that are community-based organizations

3. What key initial action steps and stakeholder benefits can lead to a successful new internship program?

- Be prepared to make changes to follow employers' processes
- Run small-scale pilot to test process/work out bugs and minimize risks before expanding
- Choose internally influential pilot supervisors; leverage existing relationships when possible
- Careful screening/matching of interns for placements
- Give interns real work to perform
- Human resources recruiter benefits: makes recruiting easier by completing hiring package up front, reduces the need to screen scores of résumés of unknown candidates
- Hiring manager benefits: reduce hiring risk via temp-to-perm tryout, high productivity via HPOG training programs and soft skill preparation
- Work experience and supervisor recommendation even for interns not hired

APPENDIX: TOOLS FOR BUILDING YOUR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PLAN

EMPLOYER STAKEHOLDER MAPPING ACTIVITY

Goal of Activity: Mapping employers and other related organizations helps unlock regional system information by making it visual. Using the results of visual mapping, workforce development providers can make decisions on where and how to focus efforts within the system to boost employment outcomes.

Materials Needed: Flipchart paper or large poster board, colored markers

Basic Instructions—Map Your Perspective

Tip: Be prepared with a second set of poster board or flipchart paper, so that you can create a final version after doing a messy first draft. Don't worry about getting everything right the first time!

1. Write your organization's name in the center and place a star around it.

2. Think about the employers within your region that have hiring needs that may match with your programs and participants. List them on a separate piece of paper.

3. Choose one employer organization from the list. Use the coding system in the chart below to place this employer on your map.

4. Do the same coding with other employers on your list and place them on your chart.

5. Make a list of other organizations that can influence employers within your network, such as your training partners, industry associations, government agencies, etc. Choose which ones to feature on your map, with an emphasis on those that you know may have existing relationships with the employers.

6. Use the same coding system in the chart below to place each of these chosen organizations on the map.

7. Draw lines connecting the organizations with specific employers if you know they work with the employer in some way.

Questions To Consider About the Employer Stakeholder Mapping Activity and Employment System Map

Once you have completed the Employer Stakeholder Map consider this section. There are many ways to view and interact with various stakeholders within a system, such as a regional healthcare employment system. Below are several broad approaches with questions to address how your HPOG team can use this approach to explore interacting with various actors in the system. Answers to these questions will point you toward decisions and action plans. Potential action steps resulting from your discussion are noted.

- **Build On Strengths:** Which stronger employers are accessible to us that we can work with right now? Is there anyone we know within these stronger employers who can help to champion our relationship within the organization and/or with other employers? (Potential action step: List and star (*) the name of any individual champions you identify.)

- **Important Relationships To Invest In:** What are our criteria for assigning "importance" to a prospective employer relationship (e.g., size/number of jobs, location, job quality/ work environment, relationship history, influence with other employers, etc.)? Using the chosen criteria, which of the employers have the most potential to make the biggest difference in our success? (Potential action step: Star (*) the top two to four employer prospects.)

Type of Organization (e.g., employer, partner, industry group, etc.)	Choose a different color for types of organizations (**blue** for employer; **green** for partner, industry group, or other ally).
Strength/Closeness of Relationship	Strong relationships are placed close to your organization; distance increases for weaker relationships or no relationship at all.
Importance of the Relationship	Organizations very important to the success of your project are big, with size decreasing as the relative importance decreases.

- **The Power of Personal Networks:** Whom do we know who knows an important employer-partner or works with them? How might we leverage these relationships in a way that adds value for all partners? How might we work in partnership with this organization to jointly address those employer needs? Can we ask specific, well-connected partners to introduce us to key employers and possibly partner with us? (Potential action step: Star (*) any close allies who can help you reach one of your top employer prospects.)

Optional: Importance of Knowing Employers' Perspectives

What would be different about this map if we did it from the perspective of a leader within one of our top employer prospects? How do prospective employer contacts view your organization? What do they need most from the larger workforce system of organizations and what are the gaps that you can help fill?

Outline Your Relationship Development Plans

- Which employers are your top prospects? Who on your team will take the lead to discuss their needs and interests in engaging more closely with your project?

- Is there a specific individual champion from within the employer system who can help you build relationships with other key prospects?

- Which allies can introduce you to one of the top employers? Are there ways that the two partner organizations can team together to add value for the employer or are you only looking for an introduction?

- What else do you notice from your employer stakeholder map that can inform plans that have the potential to boost your HPOG project's employment outcomes?

NEW EMPLOYER CALL PLANNING TOOL

Introduction to This Tool

Use this three-step tool to plan an initial call with a new employer contact person who is unfamiliar with HPOG or who represents an entirely new and important organizational relationship. Prior to completing this activity, you will need to confirm a specific employer organization that the HPOG program would like to partner with. Note the name of the employer organization below and the individual contact person's name and role, if known. This tool will help you gather information in conversations about the employer organization with one or two people, review several other data sources to prepare for a meeting, and use this information to plan your call with the employer.

Name of Employer Organization:

Employer Contact Name/Role:

Step #1: Find a "Friend" Who Can Share Information About the Employer

Identify one or two people you know who are willing to share a little knowledge about your assigned employer prospect and have an initial conversation to get information about the employer. You may have identified someone during your employer mapping activity. If not, start with your HPOG supervisor or project director. Other options are close HPOG partners who have a good relationship with the employer or a personal friend who works for the employer. Use the questions below as examples to ask. Feel free to ask other questions as well!

What can you share with me about the organization's top hiring needs for entry-level staff? Which entry-level positions frequently have openings or may be harder to fill?

What else can you share with me about the organization's culture, hiring process/practices, or hiring needs?

Do you know a recruiter, human resources manager, or a hiring manager at the employer location that you can introduce me to? (Don't introduce me just yet, just let me know whom you know!) Who is this contact, and what is the person's role or title?

Step #2: Gather Available Data

Take a fresh look at the data sources noted below to see what more you can learn about this employer before making an initial call. These sources are generally more useful for larger employer organizations.

Check the HPOG participant database or ask a case manager to see if the company has hired any HPOG participants and for which positions. If possible, check whether the hire(s) were successful and whether the HPOG participants still work there.

Visit the company's hiring website to identify current job openings that match your HPOG programming areas. Make a note of the number of openings for entry-level jobs, and print out job descriptions for those that match HPOG programming areas. You can also look on the company website for other clues about their interests, such as diversity hiring commitments or a hiring bonus for a hard-to-recruit position. The company website may list the contact information for a recruiter or manager, if needed.

For larger employers, check out the company's profile on www.glassdoor.com to learn how the company is perceived by workers (click on Reviews), wages reported for targeted positions (click on Salaries), and tips on the hiring/interview process (click on Interviews). You may need to register for an account to view some information on this website.

Step #3: Plan Your Approach

Now that you've identified a key contact, it is time to plan your approach with this employer. Use the guide below to plan an introductory meeting, establish your call objectives, and plan what questions to ask. (This tool assumes that you are already familiar with your HPOG program's "elevator pitch" to describe your program and how it can benefit employers. If not, see your HPOG program director to prepare your pitch.)

Identify outreach strategy: If the contact is a senior manager who is unfamiliar with HPOG, seek a "warm introduction" from your friend or a peer who knows the individual. Ask for an email introduction and follow up with a call or email to confirm an initial meeting. For more junior positions, such as recruiter, you can often make direct contact.

My outreach strategy is to: _____

Establish your goal for the meeting: Be clear about what you want to achieve from this an initial meeting. For example, is there a specific engagement request that is a natural "win-win" that will benefit this person in his/her role, the organization, and HPOG's mission? Or, do you seek the individual's support to invite colleagues into a larger partnership conversation?

My top goal for this meeting is to: _____

Know what you want to learn: You want to walk away knowing more about what this individual's and the organization's needs are and to get insight into the hiring process so that you can successfully guide qualified candidates to jobs. Use your data gathering to help plan at least four top questions to get at these learning goals and show that you did your homework!

My top questions are:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Communicate HPOG's Value Proposition: You want this person to walk away from the meeting thinking that HPOG can be a valuable ongoing partner. Consider this person's role in the organization, what you learned from your data gathering, and note three top benefits or solutions that HPOG can deliver. Feature these message points in your HPOG elevator pitch at the beginning and briefly affirm them when you close the meeting.

The top solutions or benefits we can offer are:

1.

2.

3.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PLANNING WORKSHEET

Foundation-Building Plans

Instructions: HPOG grantees with strong first-time healthcare employment outcomes share a number of common program management practices and processes that build a foundation for effective employer engagement and employment support services. These practices have been embedded into an assessment and action plan document below.

Use the assessment questions that follow to identify your program's strengths and areas for improvement. Then dive deeper with the follow-up questions to articulate your practice if it is something your program is already doing, or to create action steps if it is something your program needs to develop. *Ideally each program will complete the full document. This is a lengthy document; if there are time constraints, please at least answer each Yes/No question and then focus on completing the information for those with 'No' answers. This will position your program for next steps.*

At the end, the goal is to have an articulated, comprehensive employment and employer engagement plan designed to strengthen employer relationships and increase participant employment. Writing this out will help map the program's process. The program can then share the document to articulate the employment plan with staff and/or continue to revisit it as the program is able to build out pieces of the plan.

Employer Engagement—Assessment Questions and Plans

For each question below, electronically highlight your answer (Yes or No) and then address the additional planning questions, noting responsibilities and timeframes for next steps.

1.	Does your project have specific staff assigned to manage employer relationships?	Yes No
If yes, which staff are assigned to that role and how much time per week is spent managing those employer relationships? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice? For example, does more time need to be devoted to this?		
If no, can current staff handle managing employer relationships? Do job assignments need to be shifted among current staff to have a singular staff member dedicated to employer relationships? Does new staff need to be hired?		

2.	Does your project maintain a central contact list of all employer contacts?	Yes No
If yes, what does the format look like? Is it made available to other staff to access if needed? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?		
If no, how will a list be created, by whom, by when, and what information should be included? If multiple people need to access it, where can it be stored so everyone has access to a live copy?		

3.	Does your project maintain a central database or a document that details knowledge collected about individual employers' recruiting processes, hiring needs, and engagement interests?	Yes No

If yes, what does the document record? Employer name, location(s), contact information, occupations in need, most important qualities in job candidates, feedback on previous hires, minimum hiring age, diploma/GED required, benefits offered, shift information, starting pay for different occupations, view on criminal history, type of resume preferred, how to apply, tuition assistance, etc.? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?

If no, what will be created, what will it include (see above for ideas), who will create it, and by when?

4.	Does your project have a systematic way of sharing knowledge about employer hiring practices and other employer information with case managers working directly with HPOG participants?	Yes No

If yes, who does that, how, and how often? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?

If no, what will this look like—who will be in charge of sharing this information, what information, and how often? For example, might the employer relationship manager share new information learned in monthly staff meetings? When will this process start?

5.	Does your project have a systematic way of sharing knowledge about employer hiring practices and other employer information directly with HPOG participants?	Yes No

If yes, who does that, how, and how often? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?

If no, what will this look like—who will be in charge of sharing this information, what information, and how often? When will this process start?

6.	Does your program make contact with prospective new employer-partners on a regular basis?	Yes No

If yes, how, by whom, how often? Is there a goal for the number of new employer prospects to be contacted/engaged?

Do you use cold calls? Do you find ways for a "warm introduction" to new employers by another partner?

Do you attend association, college, or workforce meetings where employers are present? Do you present on your program?

Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?

If no, using the ideas in the above question, what will your outreach efforts to target new employers on a regular basis look like? Who will be in charge of this? How will you find the employers to contact? How many employers will be contacted and in what time frames? Which employers will be your focus? What will be the goal of those conversations?

7.	For the established employer-partners, does your program have an established process and time frame for regular check-ins with the employer-partner, and are those employers active in your program?	Yes No

If yes, what is the regular basis (monthly, quarterly, etc.) and what is shared from the program? Who is responsible for those check-ins? What is asked of the employer? What are the next steps for participant employment? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?

If no, using the ideas in the above question, what would this look like to have regular check-ins with established employer partners? Who would be responsible for this, on what time frame, and for what purpose?

8.	Are employers active in your program offering job shadowing, conducting mock interviews, participating on employer panels or job fairs, making class presentations, etc.?	Yes No

If yes, what does this look like? Does this occur on a regular basis and how often? How are participants prepared to interact with employers? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?

If no, using the ideas in the above question, what would this look like? What top employers might be targeted to participate? Who would be in charge of organizing? How would participants be prepared to interact with employers? When might this start?

9	Has your project identified one or two preferred "win-win" employer engagement options that benefit both participants and employers?	Yes No

If yes, what are those, and with what employers? What are the time frames? Who is responsible for them, and what are the expected results? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?

If no, what might this look like, given the questions above?

Participant Employment Services—Assessment Questions and Plans

For each question below, electronically highlight your answer (Yes or No) and then address the additional planning questions noting responsibilities and time frames for next steps.

Questions	Response	
1. Does each participant who enrolls in your program create an education/employment plan?	Yes	No
a. Does it incorporate a career pathway?	Yes	No
b. Is it made by the participant with his/her case manager/navigator?	Yes	No
c. Is that plan referenced in future conversations about employment and continued education?	Yes	No
If any answer is no, what would it look like to change the program process to make it a yes? Who would be responsible for it and by when?		
2. Are employment services (job coaching/exploration, soft skills, resume prep, etc.) started near the beginning/at enrollment? Offering such services near the beginning of enrollment puts the focus on employment from the start and prepares the participant.	Yes	No

If yes, what are those services? How are they provided, by whom, for how long, and when? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?

If no, what services should be provided, how, by whom, for how long, and when?

3. Is responsibility for case management and employment services assigned to separate staff members (i.e., is there a separate case manager and job developer guiding a participant)?	Yes	No
If separate, how do those staff members communicate to streamline the process for the participant/make hand-offs? Do they meet regularly to share best practices?		
If the same, singular staff member, how does that person balance that workload and become knowledgeable in both areas? Is there any staff development needed to be proficient in both areas?		
4. Do your case managers have an assigned caseload of participants with whom they develop an ongoing support relationship?	Yes	No
5. Do case managers provide proactive case management (case managers contacting participants to check in, not just participants contacting case managers if there is a problem), with a required number of check-ins (potentially checking in weekly for participants in short-term training and less frequently for participants in long-term training)?	Yes	No
If yes, how often are case managers required to check in and how is it documented? Does it vary by length of training? In what form of communication (e.g., phone, in-person one-on-one, small groups, email)? Are there steps that need to be taken to bolster this practice?		
If no, what would be the plan for implementing proactive case management? How often would case managers need to check in? Would it vary by length of training? What forms of communication would be used for check-ins? How would this be documented?		
6. What types of employment/post-employment services does your program offer? Highlight all that apply.		
Career Guidance Soft Skills Resume/Cover Letter Prep Interview Prep Mock Interviews Dress for Success Other (please write in):_____		
a. If Soft Skills are taught, what is included in this? Is it integrated with training or stand-alone, and have employers verified those as desired skills?		
b. For the other service offerings highlighted above, does your program integrate these services with training, have stand-alone workshops for these, or are they resources provided to the participant to complete at their own pace?		
c. Do you have processes to ensure that your participants have a complete portfolio of job search materials by the time they complete training, including a professional resume and cover letter, references, required application documentation, etc.?		
7. Are participants matched/connected directly to employment at interested employer-partners? Said another way, does the program staff understand the qualifications that a specific employer-partner is looking for and then review those participants that are ready for hire, sending only those that fit the requirements and notifying the employer of that fact?	Yes	No

Establishing partnerships with employers so that programs know exactly what employers are looking for has proven to result in a high percentage of participants being hired. Programs are sending those participants that are qualified and match what the employer values—both the employer and participant are happy.

If your program is not doing this, what would it look like to do this? Which top employers should be targeted?
How will you know what the employer values? Will you use the program's employer database? How will you match participants?
How will you prepare participants to meet with the employer? Who is in charge of this process?

8. Are participants routinely reporting employment back to the program?	Yes	No
If no, what is the most likely cause? How could case management practices be changed to create a stronger relationship with the participant so that this information is reported back?		
9. Does your program celebrate individual participant employment success (e.g., a recognition wall)?	Yes	No
10. Does your program bring back successful participants to talk to new enrollees?	Yes	No
If no, what would it look like to do this? Who would be in charge of this and by when would it begin?		
11. Does the program provide post-employment services such as child care or transportation after the participant is employed?	Yes	No
12. Does the program follow up with an employed participant to assess needs or check on career pathway progress or additional training needs?	Yes	No
If no, what would it look like to do this? Who would be in charge of this and by when would it begin?		