SUMMARY

In January 2021, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and funded contractor Trewon Technologies to conduct the Strengthening Community College Training Grants Round 1 Grantee Interim Report Synthesis. The synthesis of round 1 grantee interim reports aims to identify and highlight the most successful or beneficial programmatic and implementation practices across the first round of Strengthening Community Colleges (SCC) grantees and lessons learned from their collective challenges and barriers documented in their third-party evaluation interim reports.

SCC is a specialized grant program vital to the DOL's strategy to enhance the capacity of community colleges across the United States and foster an alignment with labor market demands and an increase in workforce diversity and equity, thus supporting economic competitiveness (U.S. DOL ETA, 2020). In its first round of funding (SCC1), the DOL awarded 11 four-year grants to seven consortia (each with a community college lead grantee) and four single-community college institutions across ten states.[7] Operating in various regions of the United States, the SCC1 grantees have developed and are currently implementing workforce development and career pathways programs to address the national demand for skilled workers in key industry sectors (U.S. DOL ETA, 2020).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following are some of the key practices that grantees and their third-party evaluators noted across the reports as beneficial to SCC implementation:

- Establishing collaborative and often formal partnerships with employers and workforce partners (e.g., local workforce development boards) may help program staff to develop and deliver training and WBL opportunities aligned to local employers' needs and pain points and to socialize awareness of available resources for their communities.
- Offering employer partners multiple options and levels for engaging in and committing to the SCC programs, from participating in formal advisory boards to providing scholarships and apprenticeships, provides opportunities for broadening participation and buy-in.
- Crafting accelerated, accessible, and engaging career pathway opportunities via technology, hybrid coursework, credit for prior learning, stackable credits, and WBL may contribute to improved recruitment, enrollment, and completion rates.
- Building bridges and pipelines between local high schools' career and technical education programs and the community colleges through marketing, recognition, and support of microcredentialing systems can be a strategy for reaching potential career pathways and workforce development program participants.

- Collaborating and coordinating the referral and delivery of streamlined support services in community colleges (e.g., academic success coaches) and with external organizations (e.g., food banks) may help ameliorate the challenges participants face in successfully enrolling in and completing career pathways and workforce development programs.
- Designing and implementing flexible and adaptable rollout strategies at institutional and system levels, such as standardized manuals, consistent tracking systems, and institution of memoranda of understanding across systems, can foster cohesiveness and commitment, particularly within consortia grantees.

Lessons learned for future grantees comprise three areas discussed as follows.

Early Implementation and Adoption of Cohesive Data Collection and Monitoring Mechanisms

- Early implementation of tracking systems for student enrollment and completion can provide real-time progress insights.
- Immediate data collection strategies from pivotal stakeholders can boost program accuracy and feedback.
- Ensuring consistency in support or a point of contact for evaluators, even amid programmatic turnover, can strengthen data collection processes.

Development of Strategic, Frequent Communication Touchpoints for Stakeholders

- Direct feedback from employers and workforce agencies can be instrumental in refining curricula and developing more efficient career pathways.
- A centralized hub (e.g., website, shared online folder) for all project-related data and materials is crucial for clear and effective communication.

Importance of Ensuring Consortia Program Leaders Fully Understand Their Institutions' Needs, Interests, Barriers, and Limitations

- Consistent buy-in, or willingness to actively support and participate in SCC1 initiatives across consortium institutions, can eliminate potential roadblocks and create a unified vision.

SEE FULL STUDY

TIMEFRAME: 2021-2024   **PARTNER AGENCY:** Employment and Training Administration

SUBMITTED BY: Trewon Technologies

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