Regional Reemployment Strategies for High-Growth Industries

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Topics Covered

- Background on the High Growth Job Training Initiative (HGJTI)
- Evaluation design for HGJTI
- Highlights of and findings on regional reemployment strategies
- Implications
HGJTI or “High Growth” Grants

- **Purposes:**
  - Building capacity for training programs in a high-growth industry
  - Training new workers or upgrading the skills of current workers
  - Creating strong partnerships between business, community organizations, and the workforce investment system

- **Scale:** Over 160 grants awarded from 2001-2008
  - Broad range of grantees
  - Nationwide, regional, and local reach of projects

- **Sectoral Focus:**
  - Range of industries (e.g., construction, health care, and energy)
  - Changed over 7 years of grant program based on industry needs
Workforce challenges addressed by grantees were insufficiently skilled workers, poor employment opportunities for targeted groups, and a lack of training programs for occupation.

Some projects had job training or capacity building only, but most had both components.

Some projects focused on short-term safety training or skills upgrades for large numbers of trainees while others focused on longer-term training with degree/credential attainment.
Grantees often implemented more than one job training program.

A range of capacity-building efforts were undertaken – from building awareness for occupations among youth to increasing the number of permanent training “slots.”

Most employer and industry partners were required to provide cash or in-kind donations as a match to the grant.

As HGJTI funding ended, grantees sought new funding from industry and government partners to sustain training programs.
HGJTI Evaluation

- Documents and examines the various models and projects that were developed
- Identifies innovative features and potentially promising strategies
- Assesses the implementation of capacity-building and job training projects and programs
- Analyzes employment and earnings outcomes/impacts from select job training projects
Examples of HGJTI Regional Reemployment Strategies

- Columbia Gorge Community College
- Community Learning Center
- Carpenters Joint Apprentice Program
Columbia Gorge Community College

- Industry: Health Care
- Region: Columbia Gorge on the Oregon/Washington border
- Training Program: CNA → LPN → ADN
- Partners: Hospitals and long-term care facilities
- Target population: Workers dislocated from main regional manufacturer and other unemployed residents
Community Learning Center

- Industry: Aerospace
- Region: Dallas/Ft. Worth
- Training Program: Aircraft assembly
- Partners: Regional aerospace manufacturers and union
- Target population: Dislocated and incumbent workers from regional aerospace industry
Carpenters Joint Apprenticeship Program

- Industry: Construction and Advanced Manufacturing
- Region: St. Louis and Cape Girardeau
- Training Program: basic and advanced curriculum for entry-level jobs in construction and manufacturing
- Partners: Regional Industry Training Group of employer partners
- Target population: Dislocated workers and other unemployed individuals
HGJTI Implementation Lessons

- Employers are important partners in implementing all aspects of an industry-driven project.
- New training technologies should be explored and used to provide better training delivery mechanisms.
- Having hands-on training components is as important as classroom training.
- Instructors from industry are needed, but they can be difficult to retain.
- Projects need to be flexible to respond to changes in the external environment.
- Resource and cash contributions, especially from employers, are difficult to secure.
Rich, contextual information on regional differences is important to understanding program implementation and outcomes.

Interviewing workforce system professionals is vital to understanding regional contexts, even if they were not key partners in the effort.

Careful, detailed site visit preparation by trained staff is important to ensure that the most knowledgeable people are interviewed and the need for follow-up is reduced.

Well-developed protocols focus data collection efforts so extraneous data does not convolute the analysis.
HGJTI Evaluation Lessons – Nonexperimental Impact Analysis

- Finding a comparison group or groups after-the-fact is difficult, but even more so when dealing with diverse regions.
- Working with program staff on data collection early on in the process is necessary to obtain reliable and valid program data, especially in multi-site programs.
- A smaller scale training program may be effective in serving employers and participants but it does not allow for impact analysis.
- Evaluators must consider if and how training programs changed during their period of performance during the analysis.
Potential Implications

- Do any of these regional reemployment strategies work?
- Many of these projects served a few hundred people or fewer. Could these projects effectively be brought to a larger scale during a recession?
- How can workforce intermediaries better sustain employer and partner involvement in these projects during an economic downturn?
- Should regional reemployment projects include adult basic education if recruitment of qualified individuals is challenging?
HGJTI Reports Available at www.urban.org

- Implementation and Sustainability: Emerging Lessons from the Early High Growth Job Training Initiative Grants (Trutko et al. 2007)
- Implementation Analysis of the High Growth Job Training Initiative Programs (Nightingale et al. 2008)

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