



# Sector Training Strategies During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Issue Brief – Lessons from the America's Promise Partnerships

## SUMMARY

In 2016, the Department of Labor's (DOL) [Employment and Training Administration](#) (ETA) awarded America's Promise Job Driven Training grants to 23 organizations. The funding supported the creation and expansion of partnerships—including workforce development agencies, institutions of higher education, economic development agencies, employers, and community-based organizations—aimed at preparing workers for careers in middle- to high-skilled industries and occupations. The program most commonly targets three sectors: the advanced manufacturing, health care, and information technology (IT) industries.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused America's Promise grantees to adjust operations and service delivery to ensure the health and safety of their participants and communities. The issue brief, *Sector Training Strategies During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Issue Brief – Lessons from the America's Promise Partnerships*, is part of a comprehensive implementation study to explore the development and provision of services by regional grant partnerships in response to the pandemic. The brief synthesizes data collected from virtual site visits between August and November 2020 with 18 of the 23 grantees. Virtual site visits involved video interviews with grant and partner managers, employers, frontline staff, and focus groups with program participants. Each visit included 12 interviews, on average.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of the annual process to determine the department's research priorities for the upcoming year. It contributes to the H-1B portfolio's growing evidence-base to inform [employment and training](#) programs and policies and addresses departmental strategic goals and priorities.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Virtual outreach, intake, and case management required new approaches, technologies, and flexibility. Partnerships shifted to using online meeting platforms or recorded videos to describe services and eligibility to potential applicants. While virtual case management allowed for greater flexibility, it also introduced challenges with the changes in process and approach required by virtual service.
- Success in virtual job placement and career fairs required investment of staff time and technology. Four partnerships adopted virtual job placements services, while six held virtual job fairs. These changes were not always smooth and required additional staff time to execute.
- New barriers to training participation and completion emerged despite the creative use of resources and referral networks. The reported barriers included participants' lack of access to reliable internet connection or technology, their



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concerns about childcare, and their concerns about contracting COVID-19, particularly as they felt increasing pressure to enter employment to alleviate financial pressures.

- In the advanced manufacturing sector, hands-on trainings offered by grantees were halted, discontinued, or shifted to hybrid or in-person learning with strict capacity and distancing rules.
- In the healthcare sector, the pandemic amplified existing shortages of health care workers. At the same time, grantee target areas saw healthcare furloughs and layoffs as demand for preventative, routine, and elective care fell.
- In the IT sector, grantees reported a smooth transition to virtual learning with few disruptions to the industry in target areas. However, an increased pool of qualified applicants posed challenges for job placement of the grantees' participants.

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

**TIMEFRAME:** 2020

**SUBMITTED BY:** Mathematica

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