UPCOMING TA EVENTS & RESOURCES...
Mark your calendars for the following TA events and resources!

February 2016
- 10th – Evidence-Based Practices Bulletin – With a growing emphasis on the need to achieve long-term results in federally-funded job training and placement services, it’s vitally important to make programmatic choices based on the best available research evidence. But what is that evidence? This Bulletin will provide a framework for evaluating current research that exists, an overview of evidenced-based resources, and practical information that can be used to improve training and placement outcomes.
- 17th – Delivering Excellent Customer Service – This interactive webinar will explore the elements of great customer service and what can be done by grantees to meet this standard. A customer service assessment instrument will be created and delivered after the webinar.
- 24th – Helping Students Cope with Financial Pressure – Financial pressures can cause participants to drop out of training activities. This virtual chat will explore what grantees can do to help ease these pressures and remain engaged.
- 29th – Retention Services Assessment Instrument – This instrument will provide grantees with an assessment tool that will allow you to review your existing job retention efforts and identify measures for improving performance in this area.
- March 3rd – Using Study Groups to Increase Success Rates of Students – This Bulletin will explore the value of study groups as a program engagement measure. We will describe how to make them effective and how to maintain their momentum.

TELLING YOUR PROGRAM’S STORY
How to Engage and Inspire your Stakeholders

When your project succeeds at moving its graduates from the classroom to the workplace, you’ve got a great story to tell and many reasons for telling it. A story that describes the success of your program can be used to recruit participants, engage employers and other valuable stakeholders, and win the support of prospective funders. But writing a story that describes your program’s accomplishments and its value to the public is not an easy task. It requires planning, the skillful analysis of program data, identifying accomplishments that resonate emotionally with the reader, and using an effective format for each of your target audiences. This article will provide you with a brief outline for crafting an effective program story and give you tips for making your story shine.

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TELLING YOUR PROGRAM’S STORY CONTINUED

Plan! Plan! Plan!
A good story about your project requires careful planning. It involves analyzing program data on an ongoing basis and collecting informal stories that reflect your project’s impact on participants and employers. A staff person should be assigned the task of gathering and organizing these stories. You’ll also need to engage a skillful writer, someone who has analytical skills and the capacity to put a “face to the numbers.” Since you have multiple audiences, e.g., participants, employers, funding sources, prospective funders, and the press, you’ll need a variety of stories, written in a way that will capture the attention of each. Finally, you’ll need a plan for disseminating these stories to each of your target audiences. Develop a contact list of stakeholders -- local and statewide elected officials, the local workforce investment board, the press, employers, etc. -- who should receive your success stories, and use a variety of methods to distribute them. These may include e-mail or snail mail, your project’s website, social media, printed flyers, and podcasts. It’s also useful to look for opportunities to promote your program story by collaborating with partners who have media contacts.

Know Your Stakeholders
Employment and training programs have many stakeholders and each stakeholder has a different set of needs and interests. As you prepare to write a success story, you’ll need to consider the needs of each and what type of information each wants to see. For example, a success story that will be sent to the local press needs to be targeted to the appropriate editor and be newsworthy. You’ll need to demonstrate what is “new” about your project and how it addresses an important local need. You’ll also need to present pertinent facts along with a compelling human interest element that captures the editor’s attention.

Use the Right Format
There is no single format that can be used for all audiences. Media sources require press releases. Policy and decision makers are likely to favor a briefing paper format that identifies the policy problem addressed by your project, succinctly describes what you project does, and demonstrates the impact of your project using data and a personal story. Potential funding sources and other stakeholders might best be engaged by using a one-page document that has an attention-getting title or headline, describes the problem your project addresses and why it’s important, the results you have achieved thus far and an example featuring a participant or an employer. As you prepare to write your story, put yourself in the reader’s position and consider what format is most likely to get their attention. All formats should include the contact information for a staff person who can provide further information.

TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR PROGRAM STORY EFFECTIVE
- Create a title for your program story that captures the attention of the reader.
- Define the issue or problem your project addresses in a compelling way.
- Be specific about what you do and articulate the power of your collaborations. Include the names and the logos of your partners.
- Provide specific outcomes. Consider describing your project’s goals and the extent to which you are achieving them.
- Don’t use the jargon of the employment and training community.
- Make sure the reader can relate to the story. While facts are important, you need to provide more than numbers.
- Use a photograph and/or quote when available.
- Ask a friend or a colleague to read your program story and provide you with feedback.
LEARN NOW, WORK NOW: A TRAINING SOLUTION THAT CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS GROW

The Challenge
Like many towns with a growing population of retiring Baby Boomers, Middletown, Ohio has a critical shortage of skilled workers, a problem that threatens the economic well-being of local businesses and residents. According to Sam Milhouse, the president of the Middletown Chamber of Commerce, local economic growth has been stymied by the lack of qualified persons needed to fill existing job vacancies. “Our local employers can’t survive without a pipeline of properly trained workers,” Mr. Millhouse reported at a recent meeting of the Chamber of Commerce. “If we don’t invest in our workforce today, we’ll be paying more for public assistance programs tomorrow.”

The Solution
To meet this critical workforce development need, Middletown Training Solutions, a nonprofit agency funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, partnered South Side Community College and the Middletown Chamber of Commerce to launch “Learn Now, Work Now,” an accelerated training initiative that provides local residents with the skills needed to fill available high wage jobs. The public/private venture oversees two pathways to these jobs. The first is a community track that provides skill development, internship opportunities, and job placement for the long-term unemployed. The second is an incumbent worker track that offers employed residents a pathway into credentialed, higher paying occupations. By closely working with South Side Community College and the employer community, Middletown Training Solution has designed a win-win model that is responsive to the workforce development needs of job seekers and businesses.

Mary Boswell, the executive director of Middletown Training Solutions, said the project is also designed to address any barriers that might prevent the long-term unemployed or incumbent workers from successfully navigating their chosen career path. “We know,” Ms. Boswell reported, “that successful attachment to the workforce requires more than hard skills alone. We’re committed to ensuring that our project’s graduates have the hard skills and soft skills needed for long-term success.”

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Sarah Carter, the Dean of Continuing Education at South Side Community College said that the school has the capacity to design customized training programs that can meet training needs of a wide variety of employers. “Our accelerated pace learning model uses classroom and e-learning instruction,” she reported. “This provides employers with a ready source of skilled workers more rapidly than traditional college programs.”

The Results
Local employers have been very enthusiastic about the project which has exceeded its first year’s goals by placing more than 200 long-term unemployed into full-time employment and providing more than 150 incumbent workers with training that led to credential attainment and higher wages. Jeffrey Smith, the owner of ComTech, a manufacturer of specialized parts for the aerospace industry, reported that he had trouble finding employees who could properly run the company’s sophisticated precision machine tools. “Learn Now, Work Now has changed that,” he said. “The project provided us with candidates who have National Institute for Metal Working Skills machining certifications, a credential that validates their high-demand skills. Through our partnership with Learn Now, Work Now, we have reduced our recruitment costs, grown our workforce and increased our profits by more than 20% during the past year.”

To find out how Learn Now, Work Now can help your company grow, call Mary Boswell at 222-222-2222 or visit the project on the web at www.middletowntrainingsolutions.org.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES
JUST IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Webinar: Reaching Your Home Stretch
This webinar addressed product submission, partner continuity (including education, workforce, community and economic development partners), and staffing transitions as your grant period comes to a close. View this webinar at: https://etagrantees.workforce3one.org/view/5001533441538968414/info

IF YOU OWE THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR A PRODUCT...
As a reminder, the H-1B Technical Skills Training (TST) Solicitation Grant Applications (SGA) required that all products developed with H-1B grant funds be submitted to the Department of Labor’s Division of Strategic Investments 60 days prior to the completion of your grant. If you have additional questions that were not answered, please feel free to e-mail DSI@dol.gov and copy your FPO.

- Check out the REVISED Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): https://etagrantees.workforce3one.org/view/2001520980561496894/info
- Grantee Deliverables Collection Webinar & Recording: https://etagrantees.workforce3one.org/view/4011519856133354276/info
- Grantee Collection Deliverable Tip Sheet: https://etagrantees.workforce3one.org/view/2001516251835156112/info
- Grantee Collection Deliverable Appendix: https://etagrantees.workforce3one.org/view/200151625188139932/info
STORIES MATTER: HOW TO WRITE A SUCCESS STORY

There’s no better way to move people to action than by telling them an inspirational story involving a participant. A good participant success story connects both the heart and the brain. Embed a fact into a story and it’s much more likely to be remembered; embed a request into a story and it’s much more likely to be acted upon. Andy Goodman, well-known author, speaker, and trainer on storytelling says it best in his booklet, Storytelling as Best Practice: “We [nonprofits, foundations, and public interest communicators] remain a sector devoted to data and enamored of empirical evidence. And while we will always need hard facts to make our cases, we often fail to realize that the battle for hearts and minds starts with the hearts...Even if you have reams of evidence on your side, remember: numbers numb, jargon jars, and nobody ever marched on Washington because of a pie chart. If you want to connect with an audience, tell them a story.”

While there are many ways to share your story with the public, the same principles of good story-telling apply to each.

1. Determine the outcome you desire and simultaneously identify what matters to the reader or listener. Always keep in mind that the reader or listener wants to know “what’s in it for me.” If, for example, you are approaching an employer in pursuit of a job placement and the employer is a stickler on punctuality, it’s best to tell a story about a prospective job candidate that highlights his or her record of punctuality and attendance.

2. Tell a story in three parts.

   - In the first part, you provide a “tease” about what you are going to say and engage the listener’s attention. In the second part, you present the facts you want to convey in the context of a story. Finally, in the third part, you summarize what you said and make your “ask.” In the case of the employer who is a stickler for punctuality, you might start by saying, “I have a wonderful story to share with you about program graduate that has an extraordinary motivation to succeed.” That’s the tease.

   - In the second part of the story, you remind the employer of the blizzard that took place in February that crippled public transportation and closed many businesses. At that point, you describe how that person walked three miles to attend class that day and had a perfect attendance record throughout his training.

   - In the third part of the story, you make your pitch for the program graduate to be interviewed for a job. You might say, “Now that you heard about this great candidate, can we arrange for a job interview?”

If you would like to learn more about the art of storytelling, please see our Bulletin on the subject by clicking on this link: https://rexo.workforce3one.org/view/2001324960172846532/info.
Short on Talent?  
Look to Veterans to Get the Job Done!

After serving six years as a Machinist Mate on submarines in the Navy, Hugh Hubble struggled valiantly to find a stable career in the civilian world. Although he was trained as a chemist, he could not secure work in that profession despite his best efforts. Discouraged, but not defeated, the veteran sought the help of New Century Careers at the Eastern Westmoreland Career and Technology Center in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, where he furthered his manufacturing and machining background by enrolling in the MANUFACTURING 2000 (M2K) pre-apprentice program. Hugh diligently completed more than 450 hours of training in a 15-week period which he said was a great fit for him. “I really enjoyed it,” he reported. “They have such great mentors and teachers. It’s a hands-on program from day one.”

After completing his training, Hugh landed a full-time position at the veteran-owned company, Hamill Manufacturing. Hamill serves the defense, aerospace, petro chemical and power generation industries and specializes in precision machining, welding and fabricating. Fourteen percent of the company’s workforce is veterans. Hugh reported that he secured the job in just three weeks. “I had more interest and more responses in the manufacturing industry in a few days than I did in the chemistry industry in 3 years,” he said.

Hugh is very satisfied with his new position which he said is a good fit for him. “It’s what I did in the military. I’m good with math and I like working with my hands.” He said that his military experience prepared him well for a career in manufacturing. “This is good work for a veteran,” he added. “Lots of attention to detail, which they teach you in the military. It’s a stable and great career path.”
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FPO — REGION 2

Laura Tramontana is a Federal Project officer in Region 2’s Discretionary Grant Unit where she manages H-1B Technical Skills Training, Jobs Accelerator, YouthBuild, American Apprenticeship, and National Farmworker Jobs Program grants. Ms. Tramontana also serves as the Regional Monitor Advocate. As the Regional Monitor Advocate, Ms. Tramontana monitors Region 2’s State Workforce Agencies for compliance with employment service regulations that require equal access to migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs). She provides support to the region’s State Monitor Advocates, who are charged with ensuring equal service to MSFWs and advocating for improved services within their state systems. Ms. Tramontana draws from experience at the state level, where she worked as New York State’s Monitor Advocate prior to joining USDOL.

Before her work in government administration, Ms. Tramontana primarily worked for private non-profit causes, including monitoring the criminal justice system’s treatment of cases involving violence against women and children. Ms. Tramontana has also worked in Pennsylvania law practices, with both private individual and business clients. Ms. Tramontana is a Pennsylvania attorney. She earned her Juris Doctor from The Pennsylvania State University, The Dickinson School of Law. She speaks English and Spanish.

Ms. Tramontana’s diverse experience helps her to provide meaningful guidance to ETA grantees as they manage their grant programs. She is grateful to be in a position to support the use of ETA funds that improve the daily lives and futures of individuals throughout the region.

SKILLS ACCELERATOR

On January 19th, the National Office held a performance reporting Webinar titled: “H-1B TST, JA, and MIIA Grants at the Homestretch Performance Reporting Technical Assistance Webinar.” It covered some of the common risks to achieving performance outcomes, as well as common performance reporting issues and misconceptions about H-1B Aggregation Rules.

The webinar also included strategies for continuing to report outcomes for those grantees that have period of performance extensions and tips on how to report outcomes in your narrative report that cannot be measured solely by the Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) form.

If you weren’t able to attend the Webinar live, a recording is available for you at the following link: https://www.workforce3one.org/view/5001601147749800282/info

The Webinar was extremely well attended, and grantees had a lot of great questions about the end of the grant lifecycle. These questions will be aggregated into an FAQ that will be made available very soon.

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Upcoming Technical Assistance: Small Group Roundtable Calls

Over the next couple weeks, in advance of the deadline for reporting the most recent quarter’s performance reporting data on February 12th, the National office will host a series of small group roundtable calls to follow up the “Grants at the Homestretch Performance Reporting Webinar.” These calls will be an opportunity for grantees that may have missed the Webinar, or grantees that have additional questions about the end of the grant process, to receive guidance in an interactive setting. These calls will be separated by grant and round, and are scheduled on the following dates and times:

- Monday, January 25th – 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Technical Skills Training - Round 1)
- Wednesday, January 27th – 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Jobs Accelerator - Round 1)
- Monday, February 1st – 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Jobs Accelerator Advanced Manufacturing - Round 2)

COMMON ACRONYMS
CoP – Community of Practice
DSI – Division of Strategic Investments
DOL – U.S. Department of Labor
ETA – Employment and Training Administration
FPO – Federal Project Officer
H-1B JA – Jobs Accelerator Grantees
H-1B TST – Technical Skills Training Grantees
OWI – Office of Workforce Investments
PII – Personally Identifiable Information
QNR – Quarterly Narrative Report
QPR – Quarterly Performance Report
WF3One — Workforce3One (Online Resource)

ETA GRANTEES’ COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE/RESOURCE PAGE

Be sure to visit the ETA Grantees’ Community of Practice/Resource Page for updated forms, tip sheets, interim reporting guidance, webinar recordings and other useful technical assistance materials. This site is designed to support your efforts in getting participants trained and moving along career pathways. It’s also a place to learn and share, and we’ll be posting training materials and grant resources for your use during your grant’s period of performance.

https://etagrantees.workforce3one.org/

REGIONAL OFFICES
REGION 1 — Boston — 617-788-0170
REGION 2 — Philadelphia — 215-861-5200
REGION 3 — Atlanta — 404-302-5300
REGION 4 — Dallas — 972-850-4600
REGION 5 — Chicago — 312-596-5400
REGION 6 — San Francisco — 415-625-7900

The DSI Team encourages you to write us with any questions, concerns, and topics of interest for TA activities to the dsi@dol.gov mailbox.