

Tips and Strategies for Engaging Employers in Adult Career Pathways



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- ✓ Successful workforce development programs involve partnerships with local and regional employers that ensure a “dual customer” approach where both employers and jobseekers benefit from job preparation and placements.
 - ✓ Building a constructive partnership with employers requires a change in mindset, one that rejects the notion that we as educators are asking for charity from employers for our learners and instead recognized that we are offering “value-added services to employers” (NVTAC, 2017).
 - ✓ Below is a summary^{1*} of tips and strategies for engaging employers to both participate in the development of career pathways programs and to participate in the job-placement activities of the learners who complete those programs.

I. Understand the Needs of Local Employers

- Research the needs of local businesses, focusing on hiring needs and skills gaps [See <https://literacyfacts.wordpress.com/> for real-time labor market data.]
 - What jobs are available and what skills are needed to fill them?
 - What challenges employers face in finding and retaining qualified workers?
- Learn to speak in the business’s language

^{1*} National Veterans Technical Assistance Center, 2017. Engaging Employers: Tips for Success, <https://www.nvtac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NVTAC-Engaging-Employer-Tips-For-Success-FINAL-6-16-15.pdf>
Washington State Adult Education, Strategies and Tips for Employer Engagement in Career Pathways
<http://www.wfb.wa.gov/Documents/AttachmentBPathwaysLGSSSEmployerEngagementChecklist.pdf>

- Make the case for your program as a value-added service. [Avoid portraying your program as a charity.]

For example, instead of saying,

“We are a nonprofit dedicated to serving veterans who experience homelessness by helping them find meaningful employment. I’m calling to help find them jobs.”

Say,

“We find high-quality, entry-level workers for area employers at no charge. During the past year we’ve put 300 veterans to work at companies like yours. How can we help you meet your hiring goals?”

- Meet with employers
- Network
- Build opportunities for interactions between employers and potential employees

II. Make a Successful Match

- Find willing partners and gauge the willingness of employers to enter partnerships with adult education programs.
- Make contact with senior-level executives or others with decision-making authority
- Schedule an initial meeting with employers to gauge willingness. Come prepared with data to demonstrate your understanding of their needs and how your program can fulfill them

III. Engage Employers in all Aspects of Program Design and Implementation

- Ask employers to identify basic skill requirements and soft skill competencies they need in potential employees
- Request authentic workplace materials and scenarios to contextualize the curriculum
- Ask employers to identify credentials that they consider valuable

- Ask employers to provide work-based learning experiences for adult learning (e.g., job shadowing, internships)

IV. Develop Long-term Relationships

- Enlist employer support in job placement processes (e.g., mock interviews, actual interviews, hiring, providing tips on doing well in the job process)
- Invite feedback about the success of the program and incorporate that into future programs
- Establish a revision/evaluation process to demonstrate a commitment to improvement
- Maintain regular contact and keep employers informed about new curricula or new programmatic features
- Recognize employers for their input, support, and guidance

For more Tips and Strategies on Engaging Employers

Engaging Employers: Tips for Success

National Veterans Technical Assistance Center, 2017

<https://www.nvtac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NVTAC-Engaging-Employer-Tips-For-Success-FINAL-6-16-15.pdf> Tips and guidance on how to engage employers in the development of workforce programs. For more from the National Veterans Technical Assistance Center, visit <https://www.nvtac.org/>

Strategies and Tips for Employer Engagement in Career Pathways

Washington State Adult Education

<http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/AttachmentBPathwaysLGSSEmployerEngagementChecklist.pdf> A two-page list of tips and strategies to approach and build relationships with employers in career pathways.

Workplace Literacy Guide

ProLiteracy, 2016 Toolkit

<https://www.proliteracy.org/Portals/0/Downloads/Workplace%20Literacy%20Guide.pdf?ver=2016-06-02-160543-527> [See p. 31 Sample Employer Survey; p. 43 Sample Contracts; p. 56 Sample Lesson Plans] *The Workplace Literacy Guide* presents steps for developing a workplace

literacy program, including how to bid the program, contract for services, form an advisory team, and recruit for employees. It provides sample goals for development, a sample employer survey, sample questions and responses for discussions with employers, sample contracts, sample assessments, and sample lesson plans for workplace literacy education.