Chapter 3: Vetting Programs and Creating Expectations

Developed in partnership with [the Urban Institute Income and Benefits Policy Center](#) .

- Evaluate potential workforce development agencies to determine best fit as partners.

Overview

In addition to making sure a program will fit well with your client's specific experiences, skills, interests, and needs, it is also important to make sure you "vet" or weigh the quality, usefulness, and expectations of an education, training, or employment opportunity. Things to consider when vetting a program include:

- Making sure the program provides a credential that is valuable for the labor market;
- Looking for public reports or data showing that the program successfully helps students complete the program and enter employment;
- Ensuring the program accepts any financial aid options needed to be able to participate;
- Exploring the "evidence base," or what is known about the effectiveness of particular strategies or approaches emphasized by the program or service; and,
- Investigating the program or organization's experience with trauma-informed approaches to services.

Program Eligibility

MINIMUM EDUCATION LEVEL

What is the minimum level of education? Are there other eligibility assessments or tests needed to enroll?

Consider the basic level of education or work experience needed to enroll, such as a high school diploma or GED, or English language proficiency. Some programs offer supportive programming prior to job training. For example, pre-apprenticeship programs

are designed for individuals who may have limited skills and experience, and offer coursework that helps build math and other skills needed to successfully enroll in a registered apprenticeship program.

Credentials

INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED TRAINING & CREDENTIALS

Does the program offer certificates, certifications, degrees, and/or licenses that are industry recognized credentials?

It is critical to ensure that any potential partners are able to provide survivors with the knowledge and skills required, or desired, by local or regional employers. This can be thought of as "**industry-recognized training**." Industry-recognized training aligns with employer hiring requirements and may be recognized by some trade organizations. Training can culminate in the attainment of credentials—including certificates, certifications, degrees, and licenses—which are desired or required job qualifications. The Career One Stop Business Center offers a helpful tool to identify industry-recognized credentials or certificate programs. Look for programs that provide information about program completion rates and what the average starting salary looks like for a career in each field.

Program Efficacy

PROVEN TRACK RECORD

Does the program have a demonstrated history of strong outcomes of student/participant success?

Be sure that potential program partners have a history of success, both with student completion rates and with students going on to get a job in their field of study. Training providers, especially community and technical colleges, often provide annual reports describing the outcomes for participants enrolled in their education and job training program. The best way to find this type of information is to search a provider's website, looking for reports or data on things such as the following:

- number of participants enrolled or served
- number of participants completing a particular training or program

- number of participants entering employment in their field after completing a particular program
- starting wages and increases in wages over time

Not all programs have the resources to collect this data or connections to employment data necessary to track all of the items listed above; however, be wary of providers that do not attempt to report on outcomes or have very limited information on participant success. When information is not available, it may be best to contact program staff to learn more about metrics that may not be published.

EVIDENCE-BASED DESIGN

☑ Is the program design informed by evidence-based or research evaluated promising practices?

Look for "**evidence-based**" programming that offers proof that their strategy or approach works. One resource for investigating evidence-based approaches to education, training, and employment is the Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse. This resource provides the following to help inform a decision about what programs or services would work best for your client:

- information about what works to help job seekers with low incomes find and sustain employment
- "interventions" (i.e., approaches or strategies) designed to improve employment outcomes, reduce employment challenges, and support self-sufficiency for people with low incomes.

KNOWLEDGE OF TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES

Does the program recognize the presence of trauma among participants and take steps to support those individuals?

Organizations within a local or regional workforce system are increasingly aware of the importance of trauma-informed services. However, this is still a relatively new concept for many, and even more do not have policies or practices in place to address potential trauma experienced by individuals seeking education, skills development, and employment services.

In order to identify whether or not the education, job training, or workforce program you are exploring is aware of or practicing trauma-informed approaches, it may be necessary

to email or call the program to discuss. It can be helpful to ask what supports programs make available to participants – including those that support mental health needs, how they account for the varying learning styles and educational histories of learners, and what steps are taken to help participants who appear to be struggling or are at risk of dropping out of the program. You can also look for mention of trauma-informed approaches on the provider's website.

Conclusion

To ensure the success of survivors, it is critical that organizations evaluate potential workforce programs and build intentional partnerships that uphold values of safety and empowerment.

Continue to Chapter 4.