PARTNERSHIPS Matter

FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

Tribal nations can’t go it alone if they are to achieve their workforce development priorities. They need to forge partnerships of varying scale and composition with key players within the nation and around it. Below are the common partnerships they’re building and the common reasons why:

▪ Tribal enterprises: to coordinate education/training and ongoing professional development of tribal citizens to take jobs in those businesses and advance through the ranks.
▪ Other tribal nations: to pool resources to provide ample education/training opportunities to their citizens; share program, labor force, and labor market data; share qualified labor for available jobs; learn program best practices; and develop MOUs to consolidate service provision.
▪ Other governments: such as federal, state, and county agencies to access their data, share tribal needs and data, connect citizens with support mechanisms and employers, provide them access to education/training services they otherwise can’t get, and bring those services to reservations.
▪ Colleges/universities: to craft post-secondary education/training regimens and industry-recognized certifications customized to citizens’ distinct needs and tribal nations’ priorities, provide online learning, and assist with tribal needs assessments and data design, collection, and analysis.
▪ Local/regional employers: to inform them about tribal citizens who have skills they need, and allow for joint education/training curricula to cultivate the skills they require.
▪ Native CDFIs: to coordinate workforce education/training efforts, provide targeted training and ongoing support for tribal citizen entrepreneurs, and strengthen financial management skills of employed tribal citizens and those seeking work.
▪ K-12 schools: to share data/assessments about tribal students and provide a quality, culturally relevant curriculum and supportive environment to ensure continued learning.
▪ Families: of the clients and students you serve to support/ensure their success.
▪ Non-profits: such as with organizations to expand internship/fellowship opportunities and labor unions to provide targeted training for in-demand fields and job placement upon graduation.
▪ Coalition partnerships: featuring multiple partners to create comprehensive support systems for citizens and holistic solutions tailored to the nation’s distinct workforce needs and goals.

These partnerships provide tribal nations with greater policy and decision-making control; expand education, training, and job opportunities; better leverage limited financial resources; enhance tribal nations’ institutional and human capacity to engage in workforce development; and strengthen their ability to advance their long-term workforce development priorities.

INNOVATION SNAPSHOT

Hopi Tribe (Kaibab Springs Restoration Project)

In 2014, the Hopi Tribe’s Cultural Preservation Office and Cultural Resources Advisory Task Team (CRATT) forged an agreement with Kaibab National Forest to work together to preserve a system of natural springs within the North Kaibab Plateau. At CRATT’s request, the partnership features a training component for Hopi youth – specifically WIOA participants ages 16-24 – that exposes them to careers in environmental management and related fields, builds their work ethic, and gives them the chance to learn land stewardship and traditional ecological knowledge directly from their elders. To marshal the necessary resources to support the initiative, the partners have enlisted a growing coalition of other partners to offset certain financial costs and provide in-kind contributions in the form of staff time, technical expertise, and professional mentoring of the youth. Since 2014, 44 Hopi youth have participated in four collaborative projects, and their success prompted the Tribe and U.S. Forest Service to launch plans to replicate the approach in three other national forests, and also expand the youth training component to include longer-term internships that will deepen participants’ exposure to careers caring for the natural world.

LEARNING LINK: http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-hopi
CONNECT: Everett F. Gomez, Case Manager, Hopi WIOA, Hopi Tribe, egomez@hopi.nsn.us

Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

A few years ago, the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (LDF) and ten other tribal nations in Wisconsin launched a formal partnership with the state’s Department of Transportation (WDOT) to create a State-Certified Apprenticeship program specifically for their tribal citizens. An outgrowth of WDOT’s Tribal Labor Advisory Committee, the program prepares Native participants for and connects them to available construction-related jobs working on state and federal highway projects across Wisconsin through job training, job matching, and ongoing technical support. Program apprentices engage in supervised, structured on-the-job learning, which is sponsored by employers, employers’ associations, and labor unions “that have the ability to hire and train in a working environment.” The pilot phase of the program saw Native apprentices constitute more than 17% of project hires, and to date 16 LDF tribal members have completed the program and landed jobs on WDOT-based projects. According to LDF, “We were reading and hearing that local employers increasingly were unable to find skilled workers in the transportation industry. This initiative represents an effective solution to this problem, and it’s putting our people to work.”

LEARNING LINK: http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-lfd
CONNECT: Jerome “Brooks” Big John, TERO Director, Lac du Flambeau Band, bbigjohn@ldftribe.com

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

▪ What partnerships do you need to forge to create an effective workforce development approach capable of achieving your nation’s building priorities? What will it take on the part of your tribal government and workforce development and related programs to create and sustain them?
▪ What is/should be the role of your nation’s political leaders in stewarding these partnerships?
▪ Evaluating your partners and potential partners, do you have a firm grasp on what they are capable of contributing and where that should fit in your workforce development approach?
▪ In what ways could your workforce development efforts be enhanced through formal partnerships with other tribal nations? What structures would be required to create those partnerships?
▪ Is your nation working in unison with your local Native CDFI(s) and TCU(s) to coordinate tribal workforce development? What does it need to do to strengthen/formalize partnerships with them?
▪ Is your nation’s TERO office aggressively working to forge partnerships with area employers to increase the likelihood they will hire qualified tribal citizens? Why/why not?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

▪ Do a “partnership audit” to identify: (1) where you have informal and formal partnerships, (2) how they could be strengthened and for what reasons, and (3) where you need new ones and why.
▪ Create a “resource bank” of education, training, and support services that your partners/potential partners provide which your people can rely on to prepare for, obtain, and sustain employment.
▪ Engage and use non-tribal employers to determine what skills they need and design your workforce education/training curricula to build those skills. Offer them incentives (i.e. tax breaks and other subsidies) to hire tribal citizens for work experience placements or permanent employment. Have your TERO office build partnerships with them to channel qualified citizens into available positions.
▪ For each partner, identify and cultivate its “champions” through intensive personal relationship building around the nation’s long-term priorities and how they are advancing them.
▪ Institutionalize partnerships to ensure their sustainability through formal MOU/MOAs, regular meetings/information sharing, and ongoing education about the partnership’s purpose.