



AMERICA'S PROMISE PROMISING PRACTICES SITE VISIT OUTCOME

EMPLOY MILWAUKEE



Program to Date (January 2017 – December 2020)

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) awarded \$6,000,000 to Employ Milwaukee, a Workforce Development Board (WDB) located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as the lead organization for the America's Promise Grant program entitled, *Compete Midwest-America's Promise Alliance (CMAPA)*. CMAPA set out to prepare 1,430 unemployed, underemployed, and dislocated workers for opportunities in 14 high-growth occupations within four targeted H1-B industries: advanced manufacturing, financial services, healthcare, and information technology (IT) and IT-related occupations. CMAPA served seven urban hubs under the Midwest Urban Strategies consortium.

The service area consisted of six cities and six counties: Kansas City, Missouri; St. Louis, Missouri; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Detroit, Michigan.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Lake County, Indiana; Wayne County, Michigan; Hennepin County, Minnesota; St. Louis County, Missouri.; Hamilton County in Ohio, and Milwaukee County in Wisconsin. CMAPA's strategy was to serve the targeted populations by engaging participants at American Job Centers through traditional adult and dislocated workers programs, and by accepting referrals from partner education and training providers and employers.

BACKGROUND

The Midwest has excellent universities and exceptional education systems; however, prior to the America's Promise grant, available training was not fully preparing the target population for the targeted occupations. Employers' expectations and educational outcomes were not aligned, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. CMAPA's partners took a deep dive into multiple data sources, including skills, competencies, and degrees/credentials for industries and

occupations. They found significant skill gaps, insufficient diversity in middle-to-high skill level jobs, and poor alignment of training and education to meet employer needs. Through the America's Promise grant, CMAPA targeted the advanced manufacturing, financial services, healthcare, and information technology (IT) industries because they are the primary economic and workforce drivers in the Midwest.

PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Employ Milwaukee is a member of the Midwest Urban Strategies (MUS) consortium. The MUS consortium was founded in 2015 as a vehicle for workforce development boards (WDBs) in the region to collaborate, leverage resources, and identify solutions that are scalable at a regional or national level. MUS was formalized as a standalone 501(c)(3) in 2017 and started with eight WDBs, seven of which are part of the CMAPA regional service area. The consortium has provided leadership and coordination of grants management across the seven sites. MUS has grown to 13 WDB members throughout the Midwest. WDBs execute a Memorandum of Understanding and pay dues to become a member of the consortium.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Employ Milwaukee and MUS have exhibited promising practices that are models for other workforce development boards and organizations looking to establish a regional approach to address workforce development. Through developing and implementing a six-state regional collaborative, Employ Milwaukee and MUS identified the following workforce development promising practices described below:

1. Development of systems and processes for consortium management across several workforce development boards in different states;
2. Implementation of co-operative learning and sharing across workforce boards facilitated by MUS to include leveraging resources and knowledge to expand and address workforce development needs within the region;
3. Regional approach to sector strategies and employer engagement; and
4. Utilizing the consortium model to integrate, sustain, and expand local and regional workforce efforts designed under CMAPA.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT: CVS, A NATIONAL PHARMACY RETAILER

Several WDB partners within CMAPA were working with CVS in their local region to place participants in the CVS Pharmacy Tech career pipeline. However, each WDB expressed challenges with specific pieces of executing the CVS partnerships. MUS was able to bring the WDB partners and CVS national representatives together to discuss what was happening in the region, their challenges with implementation, and potential strategies. An outcome from the meeting with CVS representatives was a shared process that would alleviate the challenges that WDB partners were experiencing and meet the needs of CVS. The ability to leverage the consortium and collective efforts of the WDB partners increased the overall reach and level of engagement with employer partners.

Consortium Management – Systems, Processes, and Evaluation

Utilizing software to establish systems and processes

As the lead coordinating agency on behalf of Employ Milwaukee, MUS recognized that a successful grant would need strong systems and processes to manage multiple partners, relationships, and efforts under the America's Promise Grant.

MUS increased staffing capacity by hiring a program and project management consultant, director of administration (data and fiscal management), and executive director. Eventually, MUS expanded staffing to include additional leadership roles to support CMAPA and MUS's overall efforts. MUS executive leadership implemented Smartsheet software as the project management system for the consortium. As a web-based platform, Smartsheet provided MUS the ability to develop resources to organize, collect, track, and report information on the status of the grant across all seven sites in real time. This ability gave MUS the flexibility to acknowledge problem areas and to shift and address them accordingly.

In addition to the project management software, Employ Milwaukee understood that having an integrated data system would aid in grant reporting requirements and assist in telling the comprehensive story of the progress, challenges and successes of the workforce development efforts. Employ Milwaukee invested in Effort to Outcome (ETO) by Social Solutions¹ as the database for data collection across all seven sites. ETO benefits included:

- ★ Each site had access and was able to enter performance data and additional data elements to track overall project and participant progress.
- ★ The data was accessible in real time across the sites, and ETO was capable of interfacing with other data systems to reduce and/or eliminate dual entry.
- ★ It generated reports and data downloads to submit for performance reporting, internal reporting, progress and external reports for community partners, and employer reports. For instance, the return on investment reports for employer partners aided employers in creating new systems or solutions to problems.

Utilizing score cards to evaluate progress

MUS utilized ETO to develop score cards to evaluate performance of the WDB partners over the course of the grant. The score cards would be provided to partnering boards' leadership during monthly meetings. Score cards highlighted overall aggregate grant performance outcomes, data and performance outcomes specific to individual WDB partners, and program staff growth.

The score cards and information evolved over time and were a key factor in keeping leadership and consortium partners apprised of the overall project status and site-specific project status. The scorecards also helped highlight sites that experienced performance challenges, and MUS staff would assist WDBs with strategies to address or improve performance. However, the consortium adopted the policy that if a subrecipient was not meeting performance measures, its funding would be reallocated to other subrecipients that were performing. This policy helped ensure that resources would be utilized where most effective.

¹ The data systems used by Employ Milwaukee are examples of available data systems and are not endorsed by DOL.

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT: WISCONSIN REGIONAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP (WRTP), AND A LOCAL ADVANCED MANUFACTURING EMPLOYER

CMAPA worked with WRTP to provide support for new employee and incumbent training efforts that the employer was unable to invest in due to its small size. In addition, they implemented innovative training models such as incorporating instructor-led training on site at the employer's facility. Bringing the training on site helped minimize production loss which can be a concern for advanced manufacturers. Through CMAPA, WRTP was able to help the employer institute a learning culture and rethink how to deliver training to upskill its workforce and meet workforce demands.

Collaborative Regional Engagement and Knowledge Exchange Amongst WDBs to Advance Regional Workforce Development Efforts

Engagement of all levels of project leadership and program staff was crucial to foster an environment of collaboration to successfully meet CMAPA goals and advance workforce development efforts regionally. MUS held monthly virtual meetings and a quarterly in-person meeting with partnering WDB executive directors to provide updates on the overall project. Additionally, MUS discussed current and future regional workforce development efforts. MUS also met regularly with individual WDB program staff to review progress, challenges, and, if necessary, conduct periodic monitoring visits with the WDB site.

MUS held monthly group meetings with lead program staff to review goals, share promising practices, and encourage engagement across the WDB partners. To further engagement and collaboration across the MUS network, the consortium met twice a year in a member city for three to four days (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic). The meetings included WDB leadership and program staff and were designed as strategic meetings for MUS workforce efforts. The meetings also included peer-to-peer learning opportunities to discuss regional and local strategies, share best practices, and leverage expertise and knowledge of partners. When in-person meetings were not possible, MUS introduced "Zoominars" for WDB and workforce partners to discuss important topics.

The monthly grant meetings, biannual convenings, as well as the "Zoominars" provided the foundation for increased engagement across WDB partners. MUS created workgroups in local areas and across the consortium network to continue sharing best practices and strategies outside of the formalized meetings. The emphasis on regional knowledge exchanges and engagements strengthened the implementation of the workforce development efforts.

Sector Strategies and Partnerships: Regional Approach to Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement

Employ Milwaukee, through MUS, established a coordinated consortium of WDBs and workforce partners focused on regional approaches to sector strategies and employer engagement. MUS provided local and regional comparative analytics (demographic, performance, and predictive analytics) and Labor Market Information (LMI) to aid WDBs and workforce partners in identifying employers to work with locally and regionally. WDB partners shared details and discussed how these regional companies could be leveraged in support of regional sector strategies. MUS also solicited the Council for Adult and

Experiential Learning (CAEL) to provide a training and deep data dive of the local and regional LMI, identifying the gaps amongst the top employers in each target industry. WDB partners utilized this information to leverage their relationships and resources in support of establishing local workforce and training initiatives, as well as coordination with other WDB partners in the consortium to establish regional workforce efforts with employer partners.

Increasing employer engagement by placing the employer at the center of the workforce conversation

A key aspect of employer engagement across the sites and a theme throughout the regional efforts was keeping the employer at the center of the workforce development efforts. WDB partners engaged employer partners at the inception of curriculum and workforce program development. WDB partners had employers participate in a variety of roles to maintain employer engagement and buy into the partnership. Examples of employers' engagement include providing input on curriculum development, becoming adjunct professors in training programs, offering to mentor participants, committing to hire graduates from training programs, offering students employment at the beginning of training contingent on completion, and participating in earn and learn models where students are paid while being trained. Engaging employers in a variety of ways brought greater collaboration across the industry and increased support of the CMAPA in the region.

CMAPA increased employer engagement opportunities for employers and also expanded training opportunities for potential employees and current employees.

**KEY HIGHLIGHTS IDENTIFIED BY THE PARTICIPATING
WDB PARTNERS AND EMPLOYER PARTNER**

- ★ The consortium was able to leverage private and federal funding mechanisms to provide additional support to the members.
- ★ Creating camaraderie for program staff in the consortium was impactful and aided in WDBs sharing challenges, best practices, and strategies to enhance workforce development efforts.
- ★ Consortium was willing to self-reflect and make necessary corrections to have a greater impact in the region.
- ★ Consortium and its members were focused on working to benefit the region and were constantly looking for process improvements.
- ★ CMAPA and MUS removed the competition between WDBs, and created a safe space for open dialogue to foster creativity and innovation in addressing regional workforce demands.

SUSTAINING THE PROMISING PRACTICES

Consortium model – Integrate, sustain, and expand local and regional workforce development efforts

Employ Milwaukee and MUS built sustainability into the development of the consortium and subsequently into CMAPA. MUS leveraged federal and private funding mechanisms to provide additional support to the consortium. The technical assistance, knowledge exchange, and coordinated workforce efforts across multiple sites, provided by the consortium, have contributed to strong partnerships across partner WDBs who plan to continue these efforts as they grow their local and regional efforts. WDB partners also expressed that CMAPA has established innovative training models and programming that they will continue by using leveraged funds and resources. In addition, employer partners have expressed interest in sustaining and expanding current initiatives. Overall, the consortium model laid the groundwork for continued collaboration and coordination to share and develop innovative workforce solutions that can be replicated and scaled across the Midwest region through the WDB partners.

CONCLUSION

Employ Milwaukee and MUS, through the America's Promise grant, founded the expansion of a regional consortium designed to leverage resources and knowledge to advance workforce development efforts and sector strategies within the Midwest region. Through their efforts, Employ Milwaukee and MUS developed a model that highlighted regional collaboration, expanded training, and employer engagement across the advanced manufacturing, healthcare, financial services and IT sectors.