

Workforce Development Research Project - Quarterly Update

October 2024

Learning Community

- Since the last update in May, the Learning Community met in June, August, and September. At each meeting, one of the grantees presented on its program and discussed noteworthy topics and events with the group.
- The project team has experimented with a few ways to promote engagement between LC meetings with monthly poll questions related to older adults and monthly proposed discussion topics. Despite these efforts, program staff admit it has been challenging to carve out time for the online engagement. We continue to welcome ideas from the programs on how the online forum could be a resource. Please send along suggestions.
- Monthly meetings have also been an opportunity to stay apprised of research activities and address questions relevant to the programs such as, how can they help with participant survey and site visit focus group recruitment.
- The project team has developed five WFD Tip Sheets and shared them widely. They are linked on the [project website](#) and are also available [here](#). Feel free to send us ideas for resources that will support your work.

Advisory Committee

- The AC met on September 17, 2024, and kicked off with updates on Committee members' relevant publications, presentations, and media interviews. AC members are encouraged to send updates along to us to share and celebrate.
- The project team provided a brief update on the ACS Summer Convening research presentation and informal visits with grantee program staff in attendance. The team also provided an update on the Porter-Leath site visit which had just wrapped up two weeks prior to the meeting.
- The remainder of the meeting was an engaging conversation about the upcoming partner organization survey which will launch in early November. The goal is a short, targeted survey that will focus on age integration, job flexibility, and readiness for an age-diverse workforce.

Research Activities

- The participant survey is headed to the field over the course of the next two weeks in both paper and electronic versions. Participants will receive a \$25 gift card for filling out the survey to help boost the response rate.
- The partner organization survey is in draft form and will be shared with ACS, ORE, and the Advisory Committee for feedback. Site visits have highlighted the diversity across partnering sites and roles. No doubt this diversity will present both challenges and opportunities for surveying.
- We are also scheduling annual interviews with program directors in the month of October for those programs that did not have an in-person site visit this year. These interviews will allow us to collect more detailed information than we obtained in the informal conversations this past spring, get program updates and plans for 2025.

Site Visits

- The project team visited Porter-Leath in Memphis, TN in August and the two counties where the HAP Foundation (Chicago) has conducted training thus far, Peoria and Springfield, IL. These site visits have been enormously informative; **thank you** to our program hosts for helping coordinate focus groups and interviews. Thus far, we have talked with 38 individuals between the two sites.
- We are learning that many older adults are motivated to enroll by a deep sense of commitment to community and a desire to engage in purposeful activity based on values, beliefs, and community needs. Participants report that they are pleased to be learning, serving others, and socializing with fellow cohort members.
- We are developing our site visit planning for 2025, Year Two of the project, and will let you know soon which programs we will visit and consult with you about timing.

Contact Project Director, Mary Lou Ciolfi, with any questions, comments, or requests
marylou.ciolfi@maine.edu