

WEST VIRGINIA *BRIDGING THE GAP*
TAACCCT ROUND 3
EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT
MAY 2015 – NOVEMBER 2016



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Awarded in 2013, Bridgemont Community and Technical College (now BridgeValley Community and Technical College (CTC) – lead institution for the consortium) received a \$25,000,000 grant to support energy, advanced manufacturing, information technology, and construction trades through career pathways, enhanced academic instruction, and student support services. The nine community and technical colleges in the *Bridging the Gap* (BTG) consortium have focused on grant areas such as technical programs, learning strategies, student support services, developmental education, student recruitment, and industry sector partnerships.

This brief summary report examines project implementation at each BTG institution from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations. Successes, opportunities, and lessons learned throughout the grant process are also highlighted, from both a consortium- and institutional-level, as well identified lasting effects of the grant. The college findings conclude with each college's plan for maintaining project components beyond the grant as well as goals and objectives through the end of the grant. Student progress and perspectives are also documented.

CONSORTIUM FINDINGS

The findings below, including strengths, challenges, and lessons learned, were discussed by all colleges in the BTG consortium. Specific college findings are highlighted in the section: [BTG College Findings](#).

Accelerators and Strengths

A significant objective of the BTG grant was to align technical program offerings to industry needs. Facilitated through grant funds, colleges were able to establish relationships with local employers, workforce systems, and other organizations to identify skill gaps and education needs as well as develop partnerships with stakeholders to encourage future investments (e.g., donations, hiring commitments, and recruitment avenues). These partnerships enabled the colleges to better align program offerings and course content to the needs of employers in their regions.

Not only did grant funds facilitate partnerships with local employers, workforce systems, and other organizations, grant funds also enabled the colleges to purchase relevant and up-to-date equipment and technology. Colleges were able to leverage grant funds to expand existing programs (e.g., modify curricula) and develop new programs. The purchasing power of the grant enabled colleges to explore innovative approaches that they would not have been able to otherwise.

Consortium Strengths

- Programs Aligned to Industry Needs
- Ongoing Recognition of Non-Traditional Student Needs
- Purchasing Power of the Grant
- Stakeholder Investments and Partnerships
- Advanced Technology-Enabled Learning

Consortium Challenges

- Federal- and State-Level Communication
- Recruiting Qualified Personnel
- Student Completion and College Success
- Non-Traditional Student Demographics
- Sustainability of Grant Components

Lessons Learned

- Modify Federal Definition of Success
- Ensure Diverse College Involvement in Grant Design
- Plan College-Level Implementation Strategically
- Realign Grant Timelines to Standard Semesters

Lasting Effects of the Grant

- College Capacity Building
- Sector Strategies Enhancements
- Support Services Expansion
- Positive Student Outcomes
- Community and Technical College System Collaboration

Because non-traditional student populations were a target of this grant, colleges worked to continually recognize and accommodate their unique academic and support needs. Through the use of peer coaches and counselors, colleges were able to guide and support non-traditional students throughout their entire educational experience, reportedly resulting in increased retention. Colleges utilized block schedules and online components to increase accessibility to technical programs as many students had other obligations (e.g., children and jobs) and would not be able to attend classes otherwise. Cohort models encouraged a sense of comradery as students could support each other throughout their programs. The ability to remain flexible in program, course, and support service offerings afforded colleges the opportunity to better accommodate the diverse needs of non-traditional student populations.

Barriers and Opportunities

Like many grant programs, a number of opportunities for improvement surfaced throughout the grant period. Recruiting qualified faculty and staff, especially for grant-funded positions, was a significant challenge that all colleges faced. Grant staff indicated that recruiting these individuals for technical programs was difficult given the industry compensation and benefits, which would require these individuals to take a significant cut in salary.

Additionally, grant staff and faculty reported challenges in engaging, accommodating, and retaining the target population for the grant – non-traditional and adult learners. The demographic of student targeted through the grant typically reported barriers to education (e.g., children and full-time jobs). While the grant was structured to reduce barriers, grant staff emphasized the challenges associated with retaining these students in programs through completion – especially if the student received a job offer during the program – and keeping them engaged in their education.

BTG colleges also reported obstacles and ambiguity around sustainability of grant components. Low enrollment coupled with statewide budget cuts reduced the funds that could be dedicated to grant components that are not self-sustaining (e.g., peer coaches and counselors). While many of the colleges anticipate sustaining the majority of programs and services funded through BTG, there is still uncertainty for many personnel. This uncertainty resulted in turnover of grant-funded staff.

Finally, grant staff reported that communication from the state and federal government was inconsistent. The colleges reported misunderstandings and miscommunication regarding grant components, deliverables, terminology and definitions, and timelines creating inefficiencies in grant implementation. While this communication improved slightly over time, colleges indicated a need for more clarification and guidance during planning and design phases.

Lessons Learned

A number of lessons emerged from the staff, faculty, leadership, and instructors engaged in BTG grant implementation. For instance, grant staff indicated that college involvement in the grant design and writing process would have been beneficial. While it would have been difficult to accommodate all of the individuals engaged with the grant, colleges emphasized the need to have diverse perspectives from different college departments to ensure streamlined and efficient implementation.

From a college-level, grant implementation could have been planned more strategically. While a number of factors contributed to the delays in grant startup (e.g., hiring processes and misunderstandings regarding grant components), grant staff reported that taking time at the forefront of the project to discuss and develop a plan at the college-level and consortium-level would have been valuable.

BTG colleges also reported a need to realign grant timelines to standard college semesters. Because the grant targets post-secondary institutions, it would be practical for both the colleges and federal government to align timelines to standard semesters. This misalignment has been especially challenging as the colleges plan for the end of the grant, which falls in the middle of the semester, driving colleges to compensate personnel through to the end of the semester to ensure student completion.

Finally, and most importantly, is the need to modify the federal definition of success. The colleges and state leadership indicated that many non-traditional students will not complete because they may obtain employment in the midst of their programs. While this reflects poorly for completion/graduation rates at the college because students are not technically completing a program, the students, faculty, staff, and college as a whole deem this a success. The current definition of success may not fully capture the impact of the grant, prompting a need to reconsider this definition moving forward.

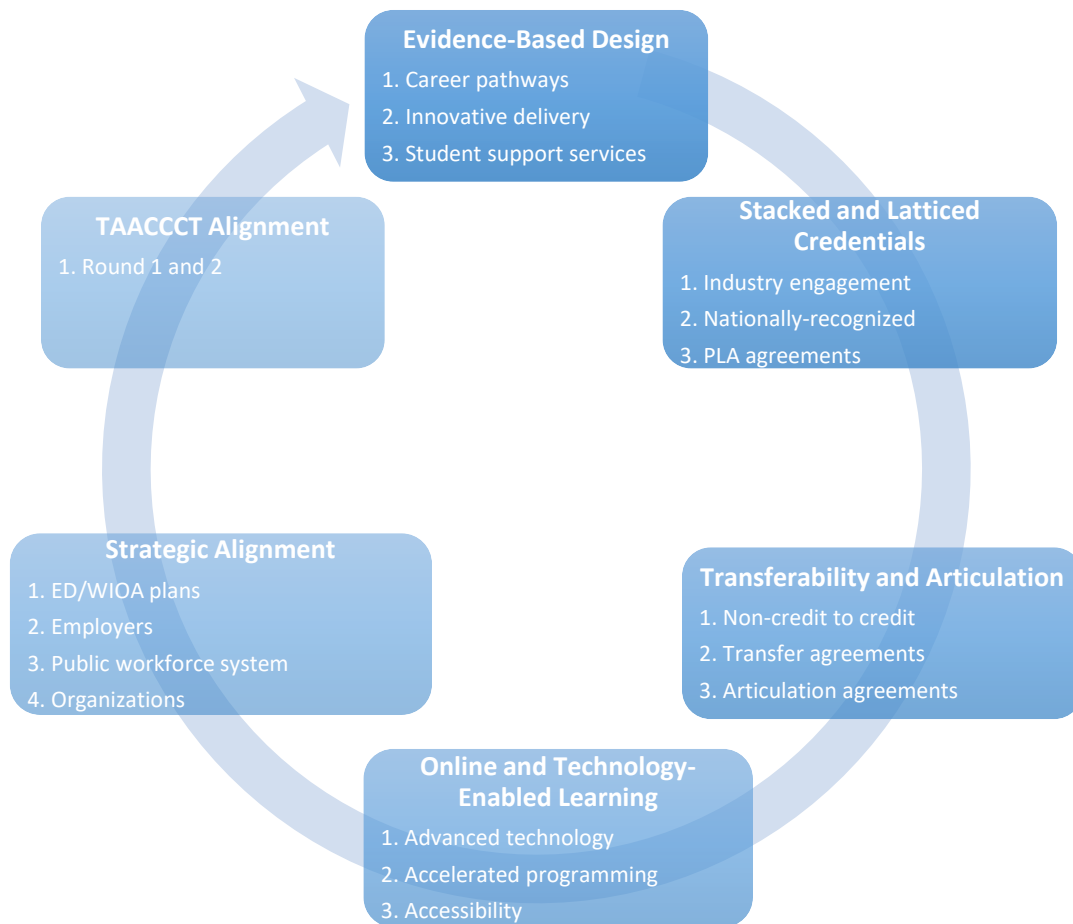
LOOKING AHEAD

As the grant moves into the final months of the implementation phase, the consortium highlighted goals and objectives that are anticipated to be accomplished. A number of statewide initiatives are expected to be finalized by the end of the grant including:

- Guided Pathways to Success
- Prior Learning Assessments
- Blackboard Analytics
- Sustainability Plans

Colleges will also work to finalize all grant spending and programmatic modifications (e.g., curriculum additions and changes) as well as professional development for faculty, instructors, and staff, in order to complete all components/deliverables within the defined TAACCCT core elements, as outlined in the original grant narrative.¹ The graphic on the following page highlights these core elements as well as the grant components within them:

¹ The BTG project was designed based on USDOL-defined core elements, identified and defined in [Appendix A](#).



LASTING EFFECTS OF THE GRANT

During calls and on-site interviews, colleges emphasized the internal capacity building and expansion that occurred as a result of the BTG grant funds. Colleges were able to expand student services, revamp developmental education, enhance sector partnerships, modify and develop curricula, and hire additional personnel, enabling the college to increase student enrollment and subsequent job placement. The colleges were able to examine internal processes and departments to identify areas for improvement and expansion. Through this process, the expansion of services and programming resulted in positive student outcomes (i.e., retention, completion, and job placement) at many colleges. These best practices will likely continue beyond the grant.

Grant funds also enabled the colleges to refocus and refine sector strategies, establishing/strengthening relationships with local industry. These partnerships resulted in a variety of opportunities for students including internships and hiring commitments as well as opportunities for the colleges, such as equipment and monetary donations.

Finally, the BTG grant encouraged the community and technical colleges to collaborate in a way that had not occurred before. Colleges were able to share resources, information, and curricula, establishing relationships that staff report will continue beyond the grant.

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

In 2013, Bridgemont Community and Technical College (now BridgeValley Community and Technical College (CTC) – lead institution for the *Bridging the Gap* consortium) received a \$25,000,000 grant through the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program to fund the West Virginia Community and Technical College System’s (WVCTCS’s) *Bridging the Gap* (BTG) project. The BTG project unites nine community colleges² with the goal of creating career pathways for four in-demand industries: energy, advanced manufacturing, information technology, and construction.³ The project seeks to enhance academic instruction and bridge student support gaps throughout the WVCTCS, while creating a culture of continuous improvement.

Per grant requirements, Bridgemont procured an independent contractor, Thomas P. Miller & Associates (TPMA), LLC,⁴ to conduct an objective evaluation of the BTG project. This evaluation will provide WVCTCS, its partners, funders, and other stakeholders with critical information regarding the effectiveness of implemented programs. The evaluation will track program implementation through March 2017 with a final six months for evaluation through September 2017.

This brief summary report examines project implementation at each BTG institution from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations. Successes, opportunities, and lessons learned throughout the grant process are also highlighted, from both a consortium- and institutional-level, and the lasting effects of the grant are identified. The college findings conclude with each college’s plan for maintaining project components beyond the grant and goals/objectives through the end of the grant. Student progress and perspectives are also documented.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This report focuses on the qualitative implementation of the BTG program from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant-funded operations.⁵ To understand program implementation and draw conclusions about successes and obstacles, this brief summary report relies on a content analysis of qualitative data from the following sources:

1. Interviews with BTG staff, faculty, leadership, and instructors from each college;
2. Focus groups with BTG students from each college;
3. Interviews with WVCTCS staff;
4. Bimonthly calls with BTG college staff, faculty, leadership, and instructors from each college; and
5. Bimonthly calls with WVCTCS staff.

The final report will include results from a quasi-experimental design that will measure BTG student outcomes (i.e., students’ employment success and completion) compared to students enrolled in similar programs at the BTG colleges.

² For more information regarding the BTG project, please see [Appendix B](#).

³ The nine colleges include Blue Ridge CTC, BridgeValley CTC, Eastern WV CTC, Mountwest CTC, New River CTC, WV Northern CC, Pierpont CTC, Southern WV CTC, and West Virginia University at Parkersburg.

⁴ The Policy & Research Group (PRG) will be conducting the impact comparison group evaluation.

⁵ It is important to note that the timeline covered in this report overlaps with multiple TAACCCT grant years – Year 2 through part of Year 4.

BTG CONSORTIUM FINDINGS

Through discussions with the BTG consortium, a number of similar findings surfaced. Colleges indicated an ability to align programs with industry needs while recognizing non-traditional student needs throughout the course of the grant. Grant funds and stakeholder investments and partnerships enabled colleges to enhance and expand program offerings as well as embed advanced technology-enabled learning in technical programs. While challenges surfaced such as communication from the state and federal government as well as student success terminology, the colleges recognized that the grant funds offered them a chance to make meaningful change within their institutions. These challenges also allowed lessons learned to emerge including modifications to the definition of student success and strengthening grant planning/design processes.

Colleges reported that the grant funds facilitated service, personnel, and program expansion and enhancement that will likely continue beyond the grant. The chance to reflect on the challenges that the colleges faced afforded staff and faculty the opportunity to identify innovative avenues for addressing obstacles. Colleges reported that these innovative approaches will continue throughout the rest of the grant and beyond.

These findings below have been reported by all BTG colleges.⁶ Specific findings for each BTG college are highlighted in the following section: [BTG College Findings](#).

ACCELERATORS AND STRENGTHS

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs and outcomes from a consortium-level. Accelerators included:

- Programs Aligned to Industry Needs
- Ongoing Recognition of Non-Traditional Student Needs
- Purchasing Power of the Grant
- Stakeholder Investments and Partnerships
- Advanced Technology-Enabled Learning

Programs Aligned to Industry Needs

Developing programs within the defined industry sectors (advanced manufacturing, energy, construction, and information technology) that are built on the identified needs of industry employers was a significant goal of the grant. With this in mind, BTG colleges worked to establish a number of employer relationships early in the grant and/or leverage existing employer relationships to ensure they were receiving input on the needs of employers in the identified industries. Colleges worked to establish Advisory Committees and, later in the grant, host Sector Partnership meetings to engage employers throughout the grant process. The information gathered from these meetings facilitated the expansion and enhancements to technical programs at the colleges. The use of grant funds allowed the colleges to purchase equipment relevant to current industry needs. The partnerships established at the colleges enabled them to provide industry-recognized credentials and programs through direct requests from employers in their regions/services areas.

⁶ It is important to note that while these findings are applicable to all BTG colleges, they will not be discussed in the [BTG College Findings](#) section as those findings highlight outcomes specific to each college.

Throughout the grant, colleges worked to host regular meetings with local employers to ensure they were continually meeting their needs. A number of technical programs were developed based on direct needs identified in the industry. Because of this, many colleges reported hiring commitments, equipment and monetary donations, and internships that resulted from partnerships with local employers. BTG colleges continue to be successful in offering technical programs that tie directly to needs identified by the target industries.

Ongoing Recognition of Non-Traditional Student Needs

BTG colleges reported ongoing recognition of non-traditional students' academic and support service needs, and have continually modified grant components to increase the flexibility, accessibility, and retention of these students in technical programs. For instance, many colleges reported utilizing block scheduling and cohort models to accommodate students with other obligations (e.g., children and jobs) as well as ensure that students have a support system within the program. Support services were enhanced at all institutions through the use of peer coaches and counselors that were utilized to guide and support students throughout their entire educational experience. Online, hybrid, and hands-on learning were used to encourage content retention (i.e., students identified hands-on learning as critical in content retention and program success – see [Student Progress](#) section for more information) and increase accessibility to course content for commuters and students with other obligations (e.g., children and jobs).

In addition, many institutions embedded course content to reflect the needs of the industry (i.e., incorporating soft skills into courses). To further ensure that BTG colleges could meet the needs of students, Prior Learning Assessments and Guided Pathways to Success are being implemented as a consortium-wide initiative. Prior Learning Assessments will enable the colleges to articulate prior work experience to college credit, including prior military experience. The Guided Pathways to Success will explicitly outline career pathways for students so they understand job projections and trends in the industry, courses requirements at the college, and approaches to expediting time to program completion. These initiatives as well as the changes and adjustments made to programs have enabled BTG colleges to remain flexible in how programs are delivered, to continually meet the needs of non-traditional students enrolled in technical programs.

Purchasing Power of the Grant

The grant funds that BTG colleges received enabled the faculty, staff, and instructors to purchase the equipment and technology necessary to enhance and expand program offerings as well as facilitate the development of new programs. The ability to purchase equipment and technology currently used in the industry that are aligned with industry standards, empowered BTG college staff, faculty, and instructors to accomplish the objective of employing non-traditional students in high-skill, high-wage jobs.

College faculty, staff, and instructors emphasized the importance of purchasing updated and industry-relevant equipment that provided students with hands-on experiences, increasing their marketability and employability. BTG colleges used the grant funds to facilitate discussions with local employers regarding relevant equipment, as well as skill gaps and education needs. Many of these discussions reportedly resulted in meaningful partnerships with the employers. Without the USDOL-issued TAACCCT grant, BTG college staff, faculty, and instructors emphasized that they would have been unable to enhance and expand programs as well as develop new programs at their institutions.

Stakeholder Investments and Partnerships

Many of the colleges worked early in the grant to identify strategies for encouraging stakeholder investments and participation in BTG development. Colleges reported leveraging previous relationships with employers and faculty with industry experience to expand employer partnerships. Local employers, community leaders and organizations, and workforce systems were utilized for donations (e.g., monetary and equipment), student professional experiences (e.g., internships), hiring commitments, curriculum feedback, and participant recruitment. Colleges worked to establish Advisory Committee meetings and, later in the grant, hosted Sector Partnership meetings to convene these partners and provide a forum for discussion. Partnerships with large companies afforded colleges the opportunity to develop training programs for employees and establish hiring commitments for technical program graduates. College leadership indicated that these partnerships and investments will likely contribute to the sustainability of technical programs beyond the grant.

Most notably, industry engagement was identified as a significant priority of the grant and an area that colleges experienced the most impact. Colleges utilized grant funds to make connections with new industries, many of which colleges report will last well beyond the grant. Agreements were set up with local organizations and community leaders to attend Rapid Response meetings, for instance, in an effort to recruit non-traditional student populations. Partnerships with local high schools enabled colleges to create a pipeline of students that will likely contribute to technical program enrollment, and relationships with local workforce systems enabled the colleges to expand non-traditional student recruitment through utilization of the workforce system's databases and connections. The partnerships established with and investments provided by local employers, high schools, workforce systems, and other organizations afforded BTG colleges the opportunity to enhance and expand programs and other grant components (e.g., career services) in a way that was tailored to the needs of the stakeholder.

Advanced Technology-Enabled Learning

Unlike traditional classroom settings (i.e., lecture-style), the BTG project targeted advanced technology-enabled learning such as hybrid courses as well as hands-on and blended learning to engage non-traditional student populations. This structure enabled students to transform classroom content into meaningful learning experiences through hands-on experience. For example, in Information Technology programs, hands-on learning typically involved simulations and working directly with computer hardware and software. For Advanced Manufacturing programs, hands-on learning involved working on equipment used in the industry (e.g., welders and robotics). The hands-on and blended learning content was reported by students as easier to retain. The hands-on content also increased the marketability of students as hands-on learning was identified by employers as a significant factor in their decisions to hire BTG students.

The hybrid formats empowered non-traditional students to take control of their education by accessing content outside of the classroom. For these students, online components were easily accessed as many non-traditional students had other obligations (e.g., children and jobs) or commuted long distances for classes. The use of these technology solutions afforded BTG colleges the opportunity to bridge hands-on experience with online and traditional classroom learning, while incorporating technologies that were used by employers in the industry.

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at a consortium-level, these were a range of elements including:

- Federal- and State-Level Communication
- Recruiting Qualified Personnel
- Student Completion and College Success
- Non-Traditional Student Demographics
- Sustainability of Grant Components

Federal- and State-Level Communication

During the initial stages of the grant, BTG colleges reported uncertainty regarding grant components, deliverables, timelines, expectations, and terminology from both the state and federal government. WVCTCS and BTG colleges also reported inconsistencies and lack of information concerning tracking participants, participant definitions, grant implementation regulations, and grant spending protocols from the federal government. The need for clarification of grant components, requirements, regulations, and expectations impacted the colleges' abilities to plan efficiently and appropriately, according to interviewed staff. While WVCTCS since worked to inform the consortium of how their grant progress compares to expectations through quarterly meetings, updated goals documents, the online project management tool – Teamwork, and other more informal methods, BTG colleges reported that the uncertainty during the initial stages of the grant created significant delays in grant design and implementation. This was also true at the state-level as federal regulations and guidance were released after implementation of specific grant components compelling the state and consortium to regress.

Additionally, WVCTCS and the BTG colleges indicated continued ambiguity regarding federal regulations and requirements, especially around grant spending. Colleges struggled to develop budget plans that complied with federal requirements and processes for modifying those plans were lengthy. While the colleges and WVCTCS indicated a number of lessons learned from this process, clarity and consistency from the beginning could have alleviated some of the challenges that WVCTCS and the BTG colleges faced throughout the grant. Furthermore, college staff indicated a need for involvement in grant planning and writing from a diverse range of departments at the colleges but reported a shortage of involvement furthered the challenges experienced by the uncertainty of grant components.

Recruiting Qualified Personnel

BTG college staff continually emphasized the challenges associated with locating and recruiting qualified and knowledgeable instructors and faculty to develop curriculum, course structures, and schedules; identify industry needs; connect with local employers; and teach BTG technical program courses. Many candidates had limited availability or were not willing to instruct courses on weeknights and weekends, which were utilized to accommodate non-traditional students that had jobs and/or families. Qualified candidates were typically employed in the industry and were not interested in accepting cuts in salary and benefits.

For other college personnel, challenges in recruiting grant-funded support service staff emerged as many candidates were not interested in short-term positions. With this challenge, many of the colleges utilized existing staff to fill these positions, adding a significant amount of responsibility to their already full-time workload. For candidates that accepted grant-funded positions, significant turnover has been reported

within the consortium as many staff are not willing to wait for the college to determine if their position is going to be sustained beyond the grant.

Because of the challenges associated with recruiting personnel at the BTG colleges, programmatic development and progress was delayed as the colleges needed to hire personnel before proceeding to the development phase. The delays caused by not having these staff on board resulted in additional delays in sustainability planning, facilitating the turnover of grant-funded personnel at the college toward the end of the grant.

Student Completion and College Success

BTG college faculty and instructors indicated a trend among non-traditional learners of obtaining employment prior to program completion. Many non-traditional students reported a need for expedited education to enter back into the workforce as quickly as possible. These students typically indicated that they were laid off, had family obligations, or both and relied on a steady income. While the technical programs were developed to address this need of expedited education among the non-traditional learner population, the faculty and instructors had to adhere to the college's operations and processes such as how program funding is determined. At most colleges nationwide, funding is contingent upon enrollment and completion numbers. Therefore, colleges rely on this data to determine future sustainability of technical programs.

However, technical programs typically struggle to be sustained because completion numbers can remain low. Students receiving the training they need to enter back into the workforce are sought after by employers that recognize the training as addressing a need in their company. In addition, because of the opportunities that students are exposed to in their technical programs (e.g., company tours, job fairs, and networking events), employers are made aware of the talent existing at the community and technical colleges and offer students enrolled in those programs full-time jobs. In many instances, this job offer can come in the middle of a student's program but rather than wait until completion, the student is inclined to accept the offer. While this is deemed a success to the students, faculty, and instructors at the college, the state and federal government look to completion data to make funding decisions.

Federal reporting also poses challenges with identifying college success. Many of the TAACCCT participant outcomes and their associated definitions limit the types of information that can be reported. For instance, the participant outcome requesting the total number of participants who have completed a grant-funded program of study omits students that may have obtained employment in the middle of their program. This type of information is not collected in the Annual Performance Report and limits the context that can be provided. See [Appendix D](#) for a list of Participant Outcomes. This approach does not fully capture the impact of technical education on non-traditional students and has been a challenge for colleges as they attempt to shift the conversation through success stories, urging the state and federal government to change their definition of success. See [Lessons Learned: Modify Federal Definition of Success](#) for more information.

Non-Traditional Student Demographics

Grant staff and faculty reported challenges in engaging, accommodating, and retaining the target population for the grant – non-traditional and adult learners. The demographic of students targeted through the grant were typically recently laid off, unemployed, or employed with a need for upskilling – many with barriers to education (e.g., children, full-time jobs, and little money for tuition). While the

grant is structured to reduce those barriers through short-term training programs and intrusive support services, grant staff emphasized the challenges associated with engaging this population and accommodating the challenges students are facing outside of the classroom. Colleges reported accommodating these students in a number of different ways (e.g., block scheduling, online courses, and intrusive advising) but inevitably lost some students due to their barriers to education.

Student service staff reported challenges in engaging non-traditional students in campus events, activities, and services. As noted above, with other responsibilities such as children and full-time jobs, grant staff indicated that it was difficult to engage these students beyond their course responsibilities (i.e., getting students engaged outside of class). While interviewed students reported appreciation for the vast services available to them, many students did not utilize the services due to other obligations. Support service staff developed creative methods for engaging students (e.g., offering services during class times, proposing mandatory events, or reaching out to students individually to encourage participation) and will continue to explore other methods of engaging non-traditional student populations moving forward.

Sustainability of Grant Components

For the BTG colleges, sustainability of grant components has been an ongoing concern. With many of the colleges struggling to fund basic services and programs, sustainability beyond the fundamentals was a question from the beginning. As the grant moves into the final months, these concerns about sustainability continue for many colleges. While most colleges anticipate sustaining the BTG programs, there is still uncertainty whether support services and grant-funded personnel will be absorbed into the colleges' budgets.

Some of the colleges emphasized the challenges associated with grant timelines as they relate to sustainability. In order to bring the final cohorts of students through to program completion, the programs, faculty, and many of the support services must remain. However, grant funding ends in March 2017, which falls in the middle of a standard semester and forces the colleges to fund services, personnel, and programs for a few additional months.⁷ This is a significant challenge reported by many BTG colleges, especially those that do not plan to sustain all grant components. While many colleges are still finalizing decisions, others have a better sense of the components that will continue. The colleges recognize the impact of the support services, technical programs, and grant-funded staff on student achievement and success, and will continue to advocate for sustainability of these components moving forward.

Overall, the question of sustainability has been consistently discussed throughout the life of the grant and has continued to pose challenges for grant staff. The uncertainty of sustainability for grant-funded staff has led to significant turnover within the consortium, as reported by grant staff and leadership, because grant-funded staff accepted full-time positions elsewhere (both inside and outside of the college). Staff turnover led to slower grant progress as grant leadership had to spend time locating and onboarding new staff. This challenge, facilitated through uncertain sustainability, created challenges for the grant project as a whole.

⁷ While the grant received a six-month extension, the original timeline (September 30, 2016) would have still concluded during a traditional college semester.

LESSONS LEARNED

BTG colleges indicated a number of lessons learned throughout the grant process. These lessons will be used to guide future college operations and funding opportunities for the consortium as well as provide recommendations and guidance for other educational institutions considering implementing programs and services similar to those within BTG. These recommendations/lessons include:

- Modify Federal Definition of Success
- Ensure Diverse College Involvement in Grant Design
- Plan College-Level Implementation Strategically
- Realign Grant Timelines to Standard Semesters

Modify Federal Definition of Success

The basic philosophy of a community college is to serve all students and provide the education needed to obtain employment and/or continue to a higher degree. While the USDOL grants were developed to expedite the time to completion for non-traditional learners, there is still disconnect between federal, state, and college definitions of success. More specifically, the federal and state governments look to enrollment and completion data to determine the success of a program/grant project. This is reflected in the types of information (i.e., Participant Outcomes) collected by the federal government to determine project success. However, this data can be misleading as many non-traditional students may not complete a program due to obtaining employment during the program.

The colleges worked to ensure that students have opportunities to network with employers and were provided with relevant training for the industry. As such, employers in the region began to recognize the college as a resource for obtaining quality employees and sought those students for employment. Because non-traditional student populations typically had other responsibilities (e.g., families and children), it continues to be essential for students to obtain employment as quickly as possible, which may occur during a program. This, however, has impacted program completion numbers, which can impact the college's eligibility for receiving additional funding – both at the state- and federal-level. While the colleges deem job obtainment as a success at any point in program enrollment, the enrollment and completion data misrepresent the impact of these technical programs on non-traditional student populations.

The federal government has attempted to alleviate this misrepresentation through the use of evaluation, which incorporates both qualitative and quantitative information. However, funding streams still heavily rely on this data to make decisions. Therefore, a top-down shift in the definition of success could better capture the impact of grant-funded technical programs on non-traditional, adult learners.

Ensure Diverse College Involvement in Grant Design

While it may be impractical to involve all relevant individuals in grant planning and design (these individuals may not yet be hired, constrained writing timelines may prevent conversations with multiple individuals from each college, and conversations with college administrators may need to be prioritized given the financial and time commitment of large-scale grants), consulting with a variety of college departments when designing a consortium grant could be beneficial. Within consortia, there are a number of different college environments, economies, and cultures to integrate into one grant narrative. With this, feedback from the different regions and college departments could be beneficial in structuring a narrative that encompasses as many of the colleges' needs as possible. There may be outlier colleges or

unique college programs that are more difficult to integrate, but accommodating the larger need by gathering diverse perspectives to better understand the challenges at each college and better structure a solution could be a valuable process for other educational institutions considering applying for a similar large-scale grant.

Additionally, more diverse involvement in grant writing and design would help the participating colleges better understand the vision and purpose of the grant; thus, generating buy-in early in the grant. This enhanced understanding and buy-in at the beginning could streamline grant activities throughout implementation. Involving diverse perspectives in grant design could be useful as colleges and consortia consider grant writing in the future.⁸

Plan College-Level Implementation Strategically

Federal grants require a significant time commitment from the participating colleges and staff, especially during the initial planning and design phases. College buy-in, programmatic development, departmental consultation and collaboration, and the majority of hiring must take place during the initial stages to provide ample time for grant implementation. For many grants, however, the planning phase is delayed both by internal and external processes (e.g., internal hiring and external coordination) reducing the time to establish a plan, generate administrative and college buy-in, determine next steps, and ensure the appropriate staff are involved. With reduced time to plan and design, college implementation may be disjointed and inefficient moving forward.

To reduce this, colleges could enact a task force that would include representatives from all relevant departments as well as leadership to increase buy-in, streamline internal processes, and provide an all-encompassing approach to implementation. The task force could enable the college to evenly distribute the work of implementing a grant, ideally expediting time to completion of deliverables. In general, taking a more strategic approach to grant implementation is critical at the college-level.

Realign Grant Timelines to Standard Semesters

For many colleges, continuing to align with standard semesters is more straightforward from both an administrative- and system-level. Utilizing a model that falls outside of a standard term requires additional staff to manage the changes administratively and integrate the model with the college's learning management and other systems. Many community and technical colleges are unable to locate the staff to manage these changes so colleges tend to maintain the standard term structures. With this, however, challenges have emerged in regards to grant timelines. While most colleges adhere to a standard term/semester, federal grant timelines do not typically align with the college, creating challenges with design and planning, hiring personnel, launching grant components, and sustainability.

As an example, if a college is awarded a grant during the summer semester, implementation will likely be delayed as faculty and staff may not be contracted through the summer. Therefore, hiring, designing, and planning are delayed a semester, which can have a negative impact on implementation for the remainder of the grant. Additionally, if a grant ends in the middle of a college's semester, the college will likely need to sustain the grant components through the end of the semester to ensure that the students complete

⁸ It is important to note that involving diverse perspectives in the grant writing process may not always be feasible given the nature of the grant writing process (e.g., constrained timelines, specific grant requirements, etc.). In many cases, those involved in grant writing may not be involved in grant implementation. However, this could be a best practice for other educational institutions to consider when applying for a similar large-scale grant.

the grant-funded programs successfully. For many colleges, supporting and maintaining programs, services, and personnel beyond the grant is infeasible. Realigning grant timelines to standard college semesters could have positive implications for colleges as they begin to navigate federal grants and design grant programs and services.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the grant moves into the final months of the implementation phase, the consortium highlighted goals and objectives that are anticipated to be accomplished. A number of statewide initiatives are expected to be finalized by the end of the grant including Guided Pathways to Success,⁹ Prior Learning Assessments,¹⁰ and Blackboard Analytics.¹¹ These initiatives will enable the colleges to highlight specific career pathways for students, offer college credit for prior learning experience, and shift the colleges to a data-driven culture. While implementation will likely continue beyond the grant, many colleges anticipate launching these initiatives prior to the end of the grant.

BTG colleges and WVCTCS staff indicated a need to finalize sustainability plans for BTG components. Many of the colleges discussed a preliminary plan outlining the components that may be absorbed into the college, but a formal plan is necessary to ensure a smooth transition. The colleges anticipate developing sustainability plans in the coming months.

Finally, the colleges reported a need to complete grant spending prior to the end of the grant. Colleges will offer final professional development opportunities to faculty, staff, and instructors and complete all curriculum modifications/additions in an effort to utilize as much of the grant funds as the colleges can with the remaining time.

LASTING EFFECTS OF THE GRANT

It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to make value judgments about whether the degree of tangible and intangible success obtained as a result of the BTG project was sufficient to warrant the amount of public investments made, or to otherwise draw conclusions about the benefit of BTG. Qualitative evidence suggests, however, that effects of the BTG project are likely to continue through the end of the grant and beyond.¹² Although the BTG project took more time to implement than originally anticipated, the time that has been invested has positioned the colleges, partners, and program participants for continued success.

College Capacity Building

Through the BTG grant, the colleges reported the ability to examine college operations and processes in order to identify areas for improvements. The grant led the colleges to launch technical programs, update program equipment, better focus outreach strategies, implement innovative programming and delivery models, enhance support services, expand sector strategies, and remodel developmental education. The

⁹ Guided Pathways to Success is an initiative developed to maximize credit attempts, reduce credits lost, simplify course selection, and preserve flexibility. Retrieved from: <http://doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/portals/6/docs/Building%20Guided%20Pathways%20to%20Success%20-%20EAB%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

¹⁰ Prior Learning Assessments enable colleges to award individuals with previous experience credits at the college. Retrieved from: http://webhost-wp.wvnet.edu/wvctcs/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2016/06/Council_Agenda_8.20.15.pdf

¹¹ Blackboard Analytics is an interface structured to engage leaders and provide analytics to services areas, supporting goals of post-secondary education. Retrieved from: <https://www.blackboard.com/education-analytics/index.aspx>

¹² Training funds end in March 2017 and all other grant funding ends in September 2017.

colleges were able to recognize the gaps in services and programming, and leverage the BTG grant to fill those gaps through innovative programming and service models.

The increased college capacity resulted in positive student outcomes, as reported by BTG grant staff. Most colleges reported increased retention/persistence, enrollment, engagement, completion/graduation, and student commitment to education. Grant staff emphasized that the capacity to examine internal operations and make positive improvements was beneficial to the colleges and students and will likely continue beyond the grant.

Sector Strategies Enhancements

The implementation of the sector strategies initiative was noted by many colleges as the most significant success of the BTG grant. The BTG colleges relied on employers for program-related donations (e.g., monetary and equipment), workplace experience for students (e.g., through internships, learn-and-earn, and apprenticeships), placing students in jobs upon program completion, and understanding the industry (e.g., through curriculum reviews and discussions). The implementation of sector strategies enabled the colleges to facilitate continuous dialogue between resources, business, and industry; address current and emerging gaps; better align state programs serving employers; maximize economic opportunities; and provide a means to engage directly with industry.¹³ The framework for sector strategies includes engagement with industry as well as other community organizations such as workforce boards, human service organizations, and economic development organizations.¹⁴

Enhancements made to career services were facilitated by the implementation of the sector strategies initiative. The connections and partnerships made with local industry through this initiative enabled the colleges to establish more opportunities for students (e.g., internships, learn-and-earn, apprenticeships, and hiring commitments). Interviewed staff reported that these opportunities increased job placement rates at many colleges within technical programs, strengthening the impact of career services at the BTG institutions.

Colleges reported that this framework significantly expanded the college's engagement with the community, increasing the referrals to the college, name recognition in the community, resource sharing, collaboration, and participation in both college and community events.

Support Services Expansion

The colleges made a variety of changes to student support services offered at their institutions through the BTG grant. These changes included the implementation of the Beacon model, intrusive advising, co-requisite model for developmental education, and enhanced career services with additional opportunities for students (e.g., learn-and-earn). The expansion of services enabled the colleges to offer more one-on-one guidance to students, which grant staff noted was beneficial for non-traditional students in particular.

The new support models enforced a more action-oriented approach to engaging students in their education. The Beacon model encouraged peer coaches to act as a liaison between new students and the

¹³ Retrieved from: www.wvedc.org/assets/images/headers/WVEDC_Leg_2015_-_M_Julian.ppt

¹⁴ See [Appendix C](#) for a framework example.

institution. These coaches guided students from the enrollment process to program completion.¹⁵ Students reported that having a peer to confide in helped them persist through the program.¹⁶

Intrusive advising encouraged faculty and staff to actively engage students through regular communication, involving and motivating students to seek help when needed.¹⁷ Grant staff noted that this model enabled students to recognize the challenges they were facing and seek guidance from college faculty and staff.

Positive Student Outcomes

Through BTG funding, all colleges reported positive student outcomes including retention, completion, graduation, and job placement. Colleges also indicated increases in enrollment since implementation of the revamped/new support services and technical programs. Because college funding and sustainability of new initiatives is contingent upon positive outcomes and enrollment numbers, the data has been reportedly critical to the college's ability to sustain services and programs moving forward. While these outcomes may not completely capture the impact of technical programs and support services on non-traditional, adult learners, the positive outcomes colleges are seeing have been valuable for sustainability discussions. See [Barriers: Student Completion and College Success](#) and [Lessons Learned: Modify Federal Definition of Success](#) for more information.

Interviewed grant staff indicated that the implementation of the Beacon model, intrusive advising, co-requisite model, and technical programs empowered the colleges to better focus on student needs. Additionally, the refocus within the consortium, facilitated through grant funds, helped put the state of West Virginia at the forefront of educational innovation according to grant staff and leadership.

Community and Technical College System Collaboration

Since the BTG grant, the West Virginia Community and Technical College System reported enhanced collaborations and opportunities for collaboration. This collaboration has included sharing resources (e.g., curriculum and equipment), discussing curriculum, and sharing information to solve consortium-wide and/or institutional-level problems. The increase in collaboration was noted as a direct result of the BTG grant and colleges anticipated continuing and strengthening this collaboration beyond the grant.

WVCTCS emphasized the importance of system collaboration in implementing statewide initiatives and maintaining cost efficiency through resource and information sharing. For example, institutions that may not have the capacity to develop curricula can utilize the assistance, guidance, and curriculum from other system colleges to expedite the process at their institution. BTG colleges expect positive outcomes from the ability to collaborate with other institutions in the state moving forward.

¹⁵ Retrieved from: <http://www.mctc.edu/student-services/beacon-project/peer-coaches>

¹⁶ See [Student Progress](#) section for more information.

¹⁷ Retrieved from: <http://undergraduate.wvu.edu/for-faculty-and-staff/academic-advising-council/academic-advising-development-collaborative>

STUDENT PROGRESS

The student-centered approach to the development of grant components – support services, technical programs, developmental education, industry engagement, and recruitment strategies – facilitated a focus on student progress in the evaluation. The findings within this section highlight elements of student progress including student feedback and perspectives.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Interviewed students reported overall satisfaction with the course and program offerings as well as support services at the BTG colleges. More specifically, students indicated satisfaction with the following:

Blended Learning Environment

Interviewed students continually reported an appreciation for the mixed teaching methods (i.e., blended learning environment). The ability to learn content in the classroom or online and practice the material through hands-on opportunities (e.g., internships and simulations), was a reported selling point for students and enabled them to retain course content easier. Interviewed students recognized that the colleges accommodated their needs by offering online courses as many students commuted and/or had other obligations (e.g., children and jobs).

For non-traditional, adult learners with previous industry experience, students indicated that the hands-on components played a significant role in their return to college. These students understood the importance of obtaining relevant knowledge and skills needed in the industry for future employment. Interviewed students reported that the structure of technical programs at the colleges facilitated the transition into post-secondary education.

Attentive and Experienced Faculty and Instructors

The attentiveness and experience of BTG technical program faculty and instructors was valuable to interviewed students. Many of the students indicated that discussions with the faculty and instructors prior to enrollment influenced their subsequent decision to enroll. The faculty and instructors were reported as knowledgeable and attentive to the students' needs and career goals, guiding students through their educational experience and providing networking opportunities with local employers.

Ample Employment Opportunities

Through the BTG grant, the most in-demand and growing industry sectors in the state were identified as a focus: construction, energy, information technology, and advanced manufacturing. These sectors had the most promising projections for growth in the coming years, providing students with ample opportunities within the various industries. Each BTG college developed programs within these four sectors that reflected the needs of the industry in their region. With this approach, colleges reported increased job placement outcomes and other opportunities for students (e.g., internships).

Interviewed students recognized the in-demand employment opportunities in the region and chose to enroll in BTG-funded programs that reflected those regional needs. Students sought after programs in industries with ample job opportunities to ensure stable employment moving

forward. Interviewed students reported that the employment opportunities available following completion of BTG-funded programs helped justify returning to college.

Extensive Student Support

The BTG grant facilitated an overhaul of student support services at the colleges. With this, many BTG colleges experienced a significant expansion of services provided at their institutions including the implementation of peer coaches and counselors. These changes enabled the college to refocus services on innovative strategies supporting student success and retention. The colleges practiced a one-on-one, student-centered approach to support services, guiding each student individually through their educational experience. The student-centered approach and vast expansion of services provided at the colleges were noted by students as a significant contributor to their success in BTG programs. Interviewed students indicated that the regular and ongoing guidance received by peer coaches and counselors empowered students to succeed in their respective BTG programs

BTG COLLEGE FINDINGS

The BTG colleges have spent the period of May 2015 through November 2016 launching and finalizing grant components. Colleges continued to implement, modify, and improve technical program offerings, developmental education models, sector partnerships, recruitment and learning strategies, and support services. Colleges implemented the co-requisite model, eliminating the traditional developmental education model that existed prior to the grant. Beacon coaches and counselors were utilized to assist and guide BTG students through their educational experience, improving retention and completion rates at the colleges. The sector strategies initiative enabled the colleges to establish and strengthen partnerships with local industry, organizations, and community leaders to ensure future sustainability and growth within BTG grant components and colleges.

Grant funds also afforded colleges the opportunity to refine and enhance recruitment strategies through targeted outreach and explore innovative programming including blended, simulated, and hybrid course offerings. The changes made at the colleges through the BTG grant, especially in the last 18 months as many deliverables and components were launched during that time, empowered grant staff to better accommodate and meet the needs of the non-traditional student population.

The colleges experienced a number of accelerators and opportunities for improvement that have impacted grant progress ranging from internal operations to external outreach and promotion. The findings below and in the following sections outline barriers and strengths specific to the colleges, and fall outside of the consortium findings highlighted above.¹⁸

BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Accelerators and Strengths

- Focused Outreach
- Experienced Faculty and Instructors

Barriers and Opportunities

- Job Placement Calculations
- Course Scheduling

BRIDGE VALLEY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Accelerators and Strengths

- Departmental Buy-In
- Veteran-Specific Support

Barriers and Opportunities

- Lack of TAA Presence
- Tracking Students Post-Program

EASTERN WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Accelerators and Strengths

- Leadership Buy-In
- Enhanced Data Collection

Barriers and Opportunities

- Improving Local Economy
- Personnel Turnover

¹⁸ It is important to note that the findings within the consortium impact all of the BTG colleges, while the college findings are specific to each of the BTG colleges. The consortium findings will not be covered again in the [BTG College Findings](#) section.

MOUNTWEST COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Accelerators and Strengths

- Cohort Model
- Community Recognition

Barriers and Opportunities

- Internal Grant Structure
- Expectation Setting

NEW RIVER COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Accelerators and Strengths

- Strengthened Workforce Development Board Relationship
- Experienced Faculty

Barriers and Opportunities

- Diverse Campus Cultures
- Staff Time Constraints

PIERPONT COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Accelerators and Strengths

- Departmental Collaboration
- Strengthened Workforce Development Board Relationship

Barriers and Opportunities

- Staff Capacity
- Shared Governance

SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Accelerators and Strengths

- Cohort Model
- Culture Shift

Barriers and Opportunities

- Local Economy
- Departmental Collaboration

WEST VIRGINIA NORTHERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Accelerators and Strengths

- Faculty Expertise
- Targeted Outreach

Barriers and Opportunities

- Staffing Constraints
- Internal Buy-In

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY AT PARKERSBURG

Accelerators and Strengths

- Strengthened Workforce Development Board Relationship
- Streamlined College Operations

Barriers and Opportunities

- Leadership Turnover
- Program Enrollment

BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The content within this section focuses on grant rollout from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations.

Grant Activities

From May 2015 through November 2016, Blue Ridge accomplished a number of grant deliverables and objectives. Significant relationships were established with local industries, most notably with Proctor and Gamble (P&G). This partnership allowed the college to expand advanced manufacturing course offerings through additional training opportunities and establish hiring commitments with the company. A partnership with First Energy has also enabled the college to expand energy course offerings based on needs identified by the company. With these partnerships and in-demand programs, grant staff and faculty from all BTG programs reported that they have met enrollment goals identified by the grant.

Within developmental education, interviewed staff indicated that the college's shift to the co-requisite model resulted in positive outcomes for students (e.g., retention). To continue to accommodate commuter students, developmental education staff developed online boot camps. These boot camps assisted and prepared students to retake the placement exam through intensive study and retesting. The online option was more accessible for students that were not able to dedicate a week to the boot camp in the summer, according to staff.

The implementation of the World of Works, Inc. (WOWI)¹⁹ career assessment within support services added another layer to the services provided at Blue Ridge. WOWI provides a robust career assessment that links to salary data, industry information, and offers career exploration assistance. The career assessment enables the college to 1) affirm the students' career path decisions or 2) caution students that their career choice may not be a good fit and suggest other options.

The grant period also experienced a continuation of services and components, including Beacon coaching and counseling, programmatic modifications and improvements, equipment purchases, sector strategies enhancements, and refined recruitment strategies.

WOWI Assessment

Blue Ridge has become certified in administering the WOWI assessment, transforming the way that career services are offered at the college. The assessment provides service staff with the ability to help students refine and/or validate their career interests through the use of a robust career assessment tool.

The college anticipates that this assessment will increase retention in programs, reducing the rate of drop out – a challenge identified within the non-traditional population at this college. Ideally, staff report that if students find their abilities and interests do not align with their career paths, as defined by assessment results, students will be inclined to change career pathways; thus, reducing program dropout.

¹⁹ Retrieved from: <http://www.wowi.com/about/wowi.php>

PROGRAM FEATURES

The content within this section discusses the accelerators that have impacted grant success and progress as well as opportunities for improvement. These findings are specific to this college and fall outside of the successes and challenges outlined the [Consortium Findings](#) section.

Accelerators and Strengths

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs, outcomes, and/or implementation at Blue Ridge. Program accelerators included:

- Focused Outreach
- Experienced Faculty and Instructors

Focused Outreach

Facilitated through BTG grant funds, Blue Ridge has been able to redefine recruitment strategies as well as community outreach at the institution. With the assistance of college-wide recruiters and community outreach staff, the college has been empowered to enhance recruitment and promotional strategies. Grant funds enabled the college to educate recruiters and outreach staff on the BTG program offerings and target specific populations to increase subsequent student enrollment and community partnerships.

Staff focused outreach through the sector strategies initiative, shifting outreach from a college to community focus (i.e., what businesses can do for the college shifted to what the college can do for the businesses). Interviewed staff emphasized that this shift encouraged the establishment of meaningful relationships and opportunities for students (e.g., internships, hiring commitments, and equipment donations). Additionally, recruitment strategies were targeted to avenues that were relevant to non-traditional populations (e.g., workforce centers, rapid response meetings, and community organizations such as the local Veterans Affairs offices). These focused outreach efforts increased non-traditional/BTG student enrollment and partnerships with BTG-related companies, according to interviewed staff.

Experienced Faculty and Instructors

While finding qualified faculty and instructors was a noted challenge throughout the consortium, the faculty and instructors that were hired through the BTG grant were identified as having significant industry-related experience. As reported by grant staff, the industry experience of faculty and instructors helped the college establish partnerships with local companies, increasing rapport by enabling the college to speak the same language as the industry partners (i.e., understand terminology, recognize challenges, discuss trends and projections). Additionally, interviewed students in BTG programs noted the experienced faculty and instructors as a selling point to the college.²⁰ The knowledge that faculty and instructors brought to the classroom encouraged many non-traditional students to enroll in BTG programs.

²⁰ See [Student Progress](#) section for more information.

Barriers and Opportunities

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at Blue Ridge, these were elements including:

- Job Placement Calculations
- Course Scheduling

Job Placement Calculations

Because Blue Ridge is accessible to/from other states (i.e., Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia), some students were likely to complete coursework at Blue Ridge but obtain employment outside of the state. As reported by Blue Ridge staff, students obtaining employment outside of the state were not factored into the WorkForce West Virginia system. Therefore, Blue Ridge reported lower job placement numbers than other institutions. While these numbers have not reflected the reality of job placement at Blue Ridge as many instructors, faculty, and staff reported successful job placement in technical programs, the data may impact future funding, increasing the importance of having a system that accurately captures job placement for institutions near state lines.

Course Scheduling

To better accommodate non-traditional students at Blue Ridge, faculty and instructors decided to offer courses on weeknights and weekends. These offerings aligned with students' availability as many have other obligations (e.g., full-time jobs or families). However, faculty and instructors reported challenges in maintaining student attendance. In some instances, student attendance decreased in technical programs prompting discussions on course scheduling.

Grant staff also reported that locating faculty and instructors that were willing to teach courses on weekends was a challenge. While Blue Ridge anticipates slight modifications to the scheduling of courses, staff still support the notion of diverse course scheduling for non-traditional students and will look into other ways to increase student engagement and incentivize faculty and instructors.

LOOKING AHEAD

The findings in this section focus on Blue Ridge's goals and objectives for the remaining months of the grant as well as anticipated sustainability plans.

Goals and Objectives

Moving into the final months of the grant, the college identified a need to spend the remaining available grant funds. The college anticipates that this goal will be completed once online components are integrated into BTG programs and instructors initiate an overhaul to the Electric Distribution Engineering Technology (EDET) program structure and curriculum. Instructors also strive to graduate all students in the program cohorts as well as continue marketing and recruitment strategies to ensure that the programs continue beyond the grant.

From a consortium-level, the Information Technology Sector Lead will work to implement Netlab²¹ – a virtual lab simulator – and encourage the BTG colleges to implement and share resources garnered from Netlab. Grant staff will also be working to close out the grant administratively by uploading grant content

²¹ Retrieved from: <https://www.netdevgroup.com/products/>

into Skills Commons, while also ensuring that grant deliverables and initiatives continue beyond the grant to maintain momentum.

Sustainability Plan

In the final year of the grant, colleges have started to solidify strategies for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. While the colleges hope to sustain all components of the grant, Blue Ridge indicated the following preliminary plan for sustainability.

Technical Programs and Learning Strategies

The success of the BTG programs has ensured sustainability of these offerings. While instructors and faculty will continue to make modifications to the programs moving forward, the programs will continue to be offered to students. The professional development opportunities that were provided through the grant enabled the faculty and instructors to make meaningful changes to the programs. While these opportunities will not be sustained, the knowledge gained will continue beyond the grant. Additionally, the resources (e.g., Netlab) and equipment acquired for these programs are self-sustaining as they have already been purchased.

Student Support Services

The implementation of Beacon coaches and counselors that provide one-on-one guidance throughout a student's entire educational experience have impacted retention and completion at Blue Ridge, as indicated by grant staff. The positive outcomes that have been yielded from the revised model to student support services have been recognized by leadership as valuable to the institution. With this, the college will sustain the support services and personnel through additional funding and/or work study programs.

Developmental Education

While the shift to a co-requisite model has been integrated into the West Virginia Code of State Rules,²² the college will be exploring how to sustain the full-time faculty that have assisted with these changes. The faculty have been critical to ensuring a successful transition from developmental education to co-requisite. The college is still inquiring about the sustainability of the faculty but anticipate the faculty being absorbed by the college.

Student Recruitment

Revamped recruitment strategies have enabled the college to focus and target student recruitment. For the BTG grant, the target was non-traditional and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) individuals, but these strategies are applicable to all programs within the college. The strategies (e.g., utilizing the Workforce Development Board, attending Rapid Response meetings, and generally finding ways to target specific populations in outreach) will continue beyond the grant as they have shown transferability to the general college.

²² W. Va. C.S.R. § 135-21

Industry Sector Partnership Strategies

Leadership and staff have experienced the impact of improved and refocused industry outreach and engagement at the institution. A number of significant partnerships have been established with local industry including P&G and First Energy resulting in additional training, internships, donations, and hiring commitments for the college. Because of this, the sector strategies initiative will continue beyond the grant and likely be embedded into other programs within the college.

BRIDGEVALLEY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The content within this section focuses on grant rollout from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations.

Grant Activities

In the past 18 months, BridgeValley has worked to modify, improve, and add courses to BTG-funded programs. For example, the Construction program was shifted from a design to management focus due to an identified employer need in the region. Faculty and instructors reported that cohorts of students graduated and many of these students were placed in jobs.

Grant staff also experienced a number of successes within support services including employer and student registration on College Central Network²³ and implementation of the *Miners Path to Success* program. BridgeValley reported 137 employers currently registered on the College Central Network with over 30 classified as BTG as well as 199 students registered on the network. The *Miners Path to Success* program, which assists students with setting goals and staying on their educational and career tracks,²⁴ served over 300 students at the college. Staff also continued to service veterans, becoming fully compliant with Principles of Excellence²⁵ as well as the Five-Star Challenge.²⁶ Through these enhancements, the college increased veteran fall to spring retention to 87 percent.

More recently, the college integrated a soft skills course into developmental education to directly meet a need identified by employers in the region. Continual modifications were made to the co-requisite structure of developmental education at the college including offering lower-level English and math offerings in collaboration with the Adult Education department.

BridgeValley, as the lead institution, hosted Prior Learning Assessment, Guided Pathways to Success, and Blackboard Analytics training sessions for BTG consortium colleges.

The Miners Path to Success

BridgeValley implemented the *Miners Path to Success* program, embedding peer coaches in the students' experience to create a positive educational experience through goal setting and regular meetings. This program is aimed at first time freshman, BTG students, and/or financial aid and academic probation students.

In Spring 2016, 317 BTG students utilized the program, with 548 total participants. After the first meeting with the peer coach, students experienced a 44 percent pass rate in Spring 2016 compared to 94 percent after the fourth meeting, demonstrating the success of the program.

²³ College Central Network is a tool that links employers to job candidates through college-based Career Centers. Retrieved from:

<https://www.collegecentral.com/>

²⁴ Retrieved from:

http://www.bridgevalley.edu/sites/default/files/BridgeValley_Site_Files/Student_Services/Student_Services/Documents/2%20DRAFT%20BridgeValley%20Student%20Handbook%2016-17.pdf and

http://www.bridgevalley.edu/sites/default/files/BridgeValley_Site_Files/BOG/Agendas/BOG%20Agenda%20November%2018,%202016.pdf

²⁵ Principles of Excellence is a guideline for institutions to follow to ensure that veterans have information, support, and protection while using their benefits. Retrieved from: http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/principles_of_excellence.asp

²⁶ The Five-Star Challenge is a call to action for West Virginia's public two-year and four-year institutions and their coordinating agencies to adopt a set of standards for supporting veterans. Retrieved from: <http://cfwvconnect.com/veterans-education/office-of-veterans-education-and-training-issues-5-star-challenge/>

PROGRAM FEATURES

The content within this section discusses the accelerators that have impacted grant success and progress as well as opportunities for improvement. These findings are specific to this college and fall outside of the successes and challenges outlined the [Consortium Findings](#) section.

Accelerators and Strengths

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs, outcomes, and/or implementation at BridgeValley. Program accelerators included:

- Departmental Buy-In
- Veteran-Specific Support

Departmental Buy-In

Through the BTG grant, college departments were empowered to innovate and work together in new ways. Technical program faculty reported that they were able to “think outside of the box” in regards to programmatic delivery models and structures. With this, grant staff indicated that departments were willing and enthusiastic about collaborating in different ways, expediting programmatic development and implementation moving forward. For example, interviewed peer coaches recognized the willingness of faculty and instructors to accommodate peer coaches in the classroom and refer students to their services. Interviewed peer coaches indicated working with the faculty and instructors regularly to ensure that students were successful in their programs. Additionally, grant staff reported the willingness of technical program faculty and developmental education staff to experiment with innovative program delivery models and structures (e.g., online and hybrid courses and the co-requisite model).

Interviewed staff indicated that the initial buy-in from college departments in BTG facilitated grant progress and success as faculty, instructors, staff, and leadership were eager to discover new and innovative ways to remove student barriers to education and promote academic achievement. Departments collaborated in different ways to creatively engage non-traditional students and reported that this cooperation would continue beyond the grant.

Veteran-Specific Support

Kanawha County, where BridgeValley’s campuses are located, is home to 10 percent of the state’s veteran population (15,692 of the 155,150 total)²⁷ – the largest in the state. With this, BridgeValley worked to create an environment for veterans that facilitated success through veteran-specific support and became fully compliant with Principles of Excellence²⁸ as well as the Five-Star Challenge.²⁹ These efforts helped students feel secure and supported throughout their educational experience, resulting in positive students outcomes (i.e., fall to spring retention increased to 87 percent and enrollment increased from 72 in January 2016 to 133 in July 2016); as reported by staff and students.

Prior to the grant, veteran support staff were present at each campus but these individuals had other full-time responsibilities on campus. While veteran students still received support, the staff were unable to

²⁷ Retrieved from: <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/VET605214/54,54039>

²⁸ Principles of Excellence is a guideline for institutions to follow to ensure that veterans have information, support, and protection while using their benefits Retrieved from: http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/principles_of_excellence.asp

²⁹ The Five-Star Challenge is a call to action for West Virginia’s public two-year and four-year institutions and their coordinating agencies to adopt a set of standards for supporting veterans. Retrieved from: <http://cfwvconnect.com/veterans-education/office-of-veterans-education-and-training-issues-5-star-challenge/>

dedicate ample time to improving veteran student experiences and outcomes (e.g., retention). Through the BTG grant, the college hired a specific staff member to specialize in veteran support services. This individual was tasked with marketing and recruiting veterans as well as supporting veterans throughout their educational experience; thus, lowering their barriers to education.

More specifically, this individual assisted veteran students with their benefits, enrollment and application processes, and provided support to students to ensure they completed their programs and obtained jobs. The Veterans Coordinator also hosted events specifically for veterans on campus including career fairs, seminars, recruiting events, and clubs. The support and guidance provided by the Veterans Coordinator enabled the college to increase enrollment and retention of veteran students as well as ensure compliance with initiatives that focused on supporting and protecting veterans.




Barriers and Opportunities

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at BridgeValley, these were elements including:

- Lack of TAA Presence
- Tracking Students Post-Program

Lack of TAA Presence

BridgeValley grant staff reported a shortage of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)-eligible individuals in the region, creating challenges in targeting and recruiting this target population for the BTG grant. As confirmed by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration, the number of petitions awarded, workers covered, and TAA participants in the state of West Virginia has decreased since 2012 – the start of the grant.³⁰ This information is outlined in the table below:³¹

	Petitions Awarded	Workers Covered	TAA Participants
2012	17	698	975
			
2015	8	191	471

As noted by grant staff, because the number of TAA individuals decreased, it became more of a challenge for BridgeValley grant staff to target these individuals. Even with assistance from the local WDBs, this population was difficult to target. BridgeValley staff reported regular discussions with the workforce system to ensure that workforce staff were familiar with technical programs at the college as well as the TAACCCT target population. College staff indicated that despite these efforts, the number of TAA individuals enrolled at the college was less than expected. The decreasing presence of TAA individuals may not have directly impacted grant progress but did create challenges in recruiting this population – a target for the TAACCCT grant. To counteract this challenge, BridgeValley targeted other non-traditional and adult learners for technical programs.

Tracking Students Post-Program

While other colleges identified tracking students post-program completion as a challenge, grant staff noted that this hurdle was more prevalent at BridgeValley. In most cases, tracking students post-program

³⁰ While BridgeValley staff indicated a shortage of TAA individuals in the region, data was only available for the state of West Virginia as a whole.

³¹ Retrieved from: https://www.doleta.gov/tradeact/TAPR_2015.cfm?state=WV

completion was reliant upon the relationship built between the technical program faculty and students. In other words, faculty were tasked with student follow-up if they could not be reached by the college in the hopes that the faculty maintained contact with students beyond program completion. However, typically students obtained employment and did not stay in contact with the college and/or faculty. Technical program faculty indicated that unless students self-reported their company of employment and associated wages post-program completion, the college typically did not have this information. Additionally, requesting this information from partner employers has been difficult as many employers do not wish to release this information to the college.

Because of these tracking challenges, identifying technical program success has been problematic for the college. Without the information to demonstrate notable wages gains and employment post-program completion, it has been difficult to confirm the success of technical programs. While faculty reported positive student outcomes from technical program enrollment, it has been challenging to support this claim with validated data. BridgeValley continues to explore ways to more accurately capture this information moving forward.

LOOKING AHEAD

The findings in this section focus on BridgeValley's goals and objectives for the remaining months of the grant as well as anticipated sustainability plans.

Goals and Objectives

Moving into the final months of the grant, the college has identified a number of goals and objectives that staff anticipate completing. This includes implementation of the Guided Pathways to Success, marketing for the Prior Learning Assessments, finalization of additional certifications within the Advanced Manufacturing sector (e.g., PMMI, NIMS, etc.), and development of a Curricular Practical Training program model. Grant staff also indicated a need to increase enrollment in BTG-funded programs and integrate additional online components into courses.

Sustainability Plan

In the final year of the grant, colleges have started to solidify strategies for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. While the colleges hope to sustain all components of the grant, BridgeValley indicated the following preliminary plan for sustainability.

Technical Programs and Learning Strategies

All of the technical programs funded by BTG will continue beyond the grant as well as the Advisory Committee meetings that support the programs. BridgeValley college leadership recognize the value of the BTG programs and have seen the impact on enrollment and job placement numbers for the college.

Student Support Services

Student support services and staff will continue beyond the grant due to the significantly positive impact of the services on student retention/persistence. Moving beyond the grant, four peer coaches will continue – compared to the six that exist now. Because of the vast veteran population in the area, the veteran services will continue beyond the grant to ensure that veteran students have the necessary support to succeed at BridgeValley.

Developmental Education

As noted in other college sections, the changes made to developmental education within the college have been written into the West Virginia Code of State Rules.³² The success of the model has solidified internal support and the college will continue to make enhancements to the model based on the students' needs.

Student Recruitment

Due to the success of the targeted outreach and retention efforts (e.g., use of peer coaches, utilization of Workforce Development Board, and other avenues to recruit TAA-eligible and non-traditional students) supported through the grant, these services will likely continue beyond the grant in some capacity. Whether this be with the current staff and structure or a modified structure, the college hopes to continue these targeted outreach efforts moving forward.

The outreach through the Workforce Development Boards within the college's service area will also be sustained beyond the grant in some capacity. Through strengthened relationships with the Workforce Development Boards, the college was able to increase workforce system familiarity with BridgeValley technical programs and communication between the college and workforce system.

Industry Sector Partnership Strategies

Because of the significant success that the college has experienced through the sector strategies initiative, these efforts will continue beyond the grant. As noted by grant staff, these efforts will likely continue to expand in regards to additional partnerships and resources that are available to students. College leadership emphasized support for the sector strategies initiatives and recognizes these partnerships as critical to program sustainability and success.

³² W. Va. C.S.R. § 135-21

EASTERN WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The content within this section focuses on grant rollout from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations.

Grant Activities

Eastern made notable progress with grant implementation in the past 18 months. Most notably, the college worked to embed credentials and their associated costs into program tuition. The embedded costs enabled students to cover these costs through financial aid, reported by staff as increasing the chances of the students completing the certification exams. The shift to embedding certification costs into tuition was reported by students as a significant selling point because many students could not afford the certification costs otherwise.

The college also outfitted the Technology Center with Learning Lab computers, enabling students to more easily access support service resources. These computers also facilitate access to tutor.com, a one-on-one learning solution for students and professionals.³³ The tutoring resources allow students to access assistance at any time, offering flexibility for student commuters and reducing the need for additional staff.

Eastern was also chosen by the Country Music Television Empowering Education Initiative³⁴ to host a concert, providing the college with a unique marketing/recruiting opportunity. This concert targeted veteran and adult learners and, from this event, the college experienced a significant amount of coverage and media traffic. For example, the Eastern webpage experienced a 3.4 percent spike in activity the week following the event.

A number of initiatives and services continued with modifications and improvements made to components to ensure students' needs were being met. These components included a continuation of Eastern Advocates and their support services, sector strategies, veteran initiatives, and District Consortium Economic Development meetings. Eastern also anticipates launching initiatives that have been in the planning and development phase in the past 18 months. These initiatives include co-requisite developmental education modeling, which will be launched in Spring 2017. Eastern has also contracted with Blackboard Analytics to begin development of templates and reports due to lack of capacity internally to dedicate to template creation (as this is a significant time commitment on the front-end).

Tutor.com

Eastern is located in a rural part of the state so many students commute at least 30 minutes to an hour to attend class. Because of this, Eastern prioritized hybrid and online learning and resources to ensure accessibility for students. This need for innovative program delivery surfaced the idea of implementing a tutoring system that can be accessed 24/7 – tutor.com.

Tutor.com is a resource that offers live, on-demand, one-on-one assistance from experts and other professionals. Since implementation of this system, Eastern grant staff reported an influx of positive feedback from students and staff, as many students indicated the resource helped them succeed in their courses.

³³ Retrieved from: <http://www.tutor.com/our-company>

³⁴ For more information, see: <http://www.cmtempoweringeducation.com/>

PROGRAM FEATURES

The content within this section discusses the accelerators that have impacted grant success and progress as well as opportunities for improvement. These findings are specific to this college and fall outside of the successes and challenges outlined the [Consortium Findings](#) section.

Accelerators and Strengths

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs, outcomes, and/or implementation at Eastern. Program accelerators included:

- Leadership Buy-In
- Enhanced Data Collection

Leadership Buy-In

From the beginning of the BTG grant, Eastern's leadership have been completely invested in the success of the grant as well as the opportunity to experiment with new and innovative methods and structures. The college President has been involved and familiar with the progress made within the grant to ensure that internal processes and decisions are expedited. Leadership support from the beginning of the grant helped Eastern move forward on a number of initiatives, including Blackboard Analytics and the developmental education co-requisite model. As reported by grant staff, statewide initiatives have been difficult to implement at Eastern due to the size and geographic location of the college (i.e., small and rural). Because of this, many of the initiatives pushed by the state were not applicable or relevant to the college. In most cases, the college did not have the internal capacity to implement additional initiatives.

With the BTG grant, leadership recognized the opportunity to implement new strategies, models, and initiatives that would not be possible otherwise. With this, the college forged ahead with initiatives such as Blackboard Analytics and the co-requisite model, setting strict plans to implement prior to the end of the grant or continue funding beyond the grant. The support and guidance from Eastern's leadership enabled the college to prioritize BTG grant components, expediting internal processes and operations to ensure implementation within the grant.

Enhanced Data Collection

The majority of Eastern's staff is made up of adjunct faculty. Because of the temporary nature of adjunct positions, data collection has always been a challenge as it is not completed with rigor or fidelity. Therefore, improvements and modifications made to courses, programs, and services were completed based on anecdotal data (e.g., select student feedback and personal perspectives). However, with the implementation of the BTG grant, staff and faculty were encouraged and empowered to solidify data collection methods to make continual improvements and modifications to new programs and services. Implementation of new grant components provided staff and faculty with the opportunity to develop new structures and best practices for collecting data.

Eastern grant staff indicated that data collection was dramatically enhanced since implementation of the BTG grant. The ability to collect data with more fidelity and rigor has enabled college staff and faculty to streamline programmatic components, making them more relevant and valuable to students. Eastern grant staff reported that these methods for making improvements to programs, courses, and services will endure beyond the grant, as they continue to be refined moving forward.

Barriers and Opportunities

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at Eastern, these were elements including:

- Improving Local Economy
- Personnel Turnover

Improving Local Economy

Grant staff reported that the local economy has started to improve since the grant was awarded in 2013. While this is a success for the community, these improvements have strained enrollment numbers at the college. The improved economic conditions of the region have removed the necessity of returning to college as many individuals are currently employed; thus, not currently seeking and valuing higher education. The availability of jobs in the region has reduced enrollment at the college, especially for technical programs that target non-traditional students seeking employment or upskilling.

In 2012, the start of the grant, there were 1,435 total job postings available in Eastern's service area in all industries.³⁵ However, in April 2016, there were a total of 19,221 total job postings available.³⁶ The number of job postings available infer the vast availability of jobs in the area, which increased drastically from 2012 to 2016, decreasing the competitiveness within the market; thus, decreasing the need for individuals to obtain post-secondary education.³⁷

Personnel Turnover

Since the beginning of the BTG grant, staff indicated the loss of a number of key personnel including two Deans (one of which being the Dean of Technical Studies), Information Technology faculty lead, and adjunct faculty. The loss of these key personnel delayed grant implementation and progress as components associated with these personnel were halted (e.g., Information Technology curriculum development and equipment purchases). While the institution is familiar with losing adjunct (which make up the majority of the college's personnel) due to the temporary nature of adjunct positions, the losses delayed course offerings and program development. More specifically, the loss of adjunct faculty impacted student enrollment and completion data in associated industry programs (e.g., Information Technology) as the courses/programs could not be offered without instructors.

Personnel turnover also requires locating staff and faculty to fill vacant positions. With this comes additional delays, as the new staff member must become acclimated with the college. Grant staff must reeducate new college staff on the BTG grant and components in an effort to create buy-in from the beginning. The delays caused not only from the staff and faculty that have left but the start-up time for new faculty and staff have challenged grant staff as they attempt to make progress within the grant.

³⁵ Eastern WV CTC's service area includes the West Virginia counties of Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral, Pendleton, and Tucker.

³⁶ EMSI Analyst, 2016.

³⁷ It is important to note the potential for overlap in Job Postings data. If companies post the same position more than once, that is counted in the total.

LOOKING AHEAD

The findings in this section focus on Eastern's goals and objectives for the remaining months of the grant as well as anticipated sustainability plans.

Goals and Objectives

Moving into the final months of the grant, the college has identified a number of goals and objectives that staff anticipate completing. These goals include Blackboard Analytics training and customization; Learning Lab implementation in Technology Center; promoting Guided Pathways to Success in advisor training; and hosting additional training and conferences (e.g., Quality Matters training).

Eastern will also work to continue offering the services currently available at the college such as tutor.com, veteran services, career services, and other initiatives.

Sustainability Plan

In the final year of the grant, colleges have started to solidify strategies for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. While the colleges hope to sustain all components of the grant, Eastern indicated the following preliminary plan for sustainability.

Technical Programs and Learning Strategies

Eastern anticipates sustaining most, if not all, of the technical programs funded through BTG. Many of the personnel were brought into the grant from other areas in the college to ensure future sustainability. While these decisions are budget pending, grant leadership recognize that the technical programs reflect a need in the community. The need for these programs is also being reinforced in the community upcoming plant closures, prompting employees to seek additional training.

Student Support Services

Within student services, staff reported planning for sustainability early in the grant. Because of this, staff report that all support services and personnel will likely be sustained beyond the grant. Additionally, college leadership recognize the importance of the improvements made to student support services and anticipates supporting continued expansions and enhancements moving beyond the grant.

Developmental Education

The success of the co-requisite model, as well as its integration into the West Virginia Code of State Rules,³⁸ ensures its sustainability moving forward. The college plans to implement the co-requisite model in Spring 2017 but anticipate that the new model will yield successful outcomes for students.

Student Recruitment

All of the veteran recruitment methods will be internalized and continued beyond the grant. The targeted recruitment strategies will also be sustained in some capacity due to the successes in recruiting students for BTG programs. Due to Eastern's rural location, recruitment staff and strategies are crucial for ensuring college success.

³⁸ W. Va. C.S.R. § 135-21

Industry Sector Partnership Strategies

Eastern staff reported significant successes through the implementation of the sector strategies initiative. Staff indicated that even companies that are competitors have been seen working together in sector strategy meetings to address gaps in employees and review curricula. Because of this enhanced collaboration between the college and employers as well as between employers, the sector strategies initiative will endure beyond the grant with plans to continue expansion and enhancements to the relationships established through this initiative.

MOUNTWEST COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The content within this section focuses on grant rollout from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations.

Grant Activities

Within the past 18 months, grant staff have implemented and modified technical programs, including an open lab concept for the Engineering Design Technology program. Grant staff developed an open entry, open exit model for an existing Engineering Design Technology program but state-level funding was ceased for this effort in Fall 2017. While the college continued to offer the open entry, open exit EDT program in the case that students enrolled (i.e., the open entry, open exit format for the program was already in the course catalog), the college anticipates discontinuing the format moving beyond the grant. However, the Engineering Design Technology program will still be offered in the standard two-year format moving forward. Program instructors will also be working to modify coursework based on needs identified by local employers, including the integration of 3D printing and modeling.

The Information Technology program also underwent changes after the first cohort of students completed the program in Spring 2015. Due to the accelerated model of the Information Technology program, grant staff offered students the option to complete their general education courses during the summer prior to program start to reduce the students' course loads throughout the rest of the program. Students provided positive feedback on this change and grant staff anticipate maintaining this option moving forward. Recruitment for this program has halted after the most recent cohort began coursework as the end of the grant is approaching and sustainability decisions about BTG programs will need to be made. However, staff anticipate that recruitment will likely resume in Fall 2017.

Student support services continued with additional peer coaches and counselors hired to serve BTG technical programs in the past 18 months. Because the peer coach Beacon model³⁹ was refined through TAACCCT Round 1, the college worked to maintain the model throughout the BTG grant. This was facilitated through the TAACCCT Round 1 Project Manager, who was shifted to BTG Institutional Transformation Leader in mid-2015 when the previous Institutional Transformation Leader resigned.

Within developmental education, the college worked to encourage self-sustainability by attaching fees to the summer English and math boot camps. While this fee was only \$25.00, it helped the college understand the value of the boot camps to students (i.e., the students were willing to pay the fee because they recognized the benefit) and move toward self-sustainability of this component.

Beacon Model

The Beacon model is a student success model that provides a support team to students, notably non-traditional students, to promote student success and college completion. Peer coaches act as a liaison between the college and students to guide students through their educational experience.

Through this model, grant staff reported the ability to better serve the needs of non-traditional students while improving retention rates. Peer coaches and students indicated the value of developing a one-on-one relationship with students enrolled at the college as contributing to student success and achievement.

³⁹ Beacon information retrieved from: <http://www.mctc.edu/student-services/beacon-project/>

PROGRAM FEATURES

The content within this section discusses the accelerators that have impacted grant success and progress as well as opportunities for improvement. These findings are specific to this college and fall outside of the successes and challenges outlined the [Consortium Findings](#) section.

Accelerators and Strengths

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs, outcomes, and/or implementation at Mountwest. Program accelerators included:

- Cohort Model
- Community Recognition

Cohort Model

As opposed to a more traditional model of learning that encouraged students to change courses every semester, the cohort model engaged students in a small learning community throughout their educational experience. Through the BTG grant, the college was empowered to develop a cohort model for the fast-track Information Technology program. Grant staff reported that this model has been beneficial for students completing the accelerated program as it creates a sense of community within the group. The student-centered approach created a shared learning experience for the students, encouraging the group to support each other. This support facilitated a sense of comradery within the group as many students reported developing friendships that existed outside of the classroom. Interviewed students indicated that these friendships have helped the students establish a professional network that will extend beyond the program.

Additionally, the cohort model created stability in enrollment numbers for the college. Because the students were enrolling in the same classes together, the college could anticipate the number of students that would be in specific classes. The predictability can help stabilize revenue sources and expenditures, which could be valuable for colleges. Moving forward, grant staff anticipate shifting other programs to cohort models.

Community Recognition

Through BTG funding, the college was able to perform more targeted and consistent outreach to the community, including industry employers and companies, community leaders, and other community organizations. Grant staff indicated that these efforts enabled the college to more effectively promote the college and opportunities for students, increasing recognition in the community.

Since Mountwest's split from Marshall University, the college struggled to differentiate from the university within the community. BTG grant funding helped the college launch a sector strategies initiative as well as hire personnel dedicated to promoting the college in the community. Grant staff reported that these opportunities enhanced the college's visibility in the community, resulting in a number of new partnerships.

Barriers and Opportunities

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at Mountwest, these were elements including:

- Internal Grant Structure
- Expectation Setting

Internal Grant Structure

Mountwest has been awarded a number of federal grants to fund innovative initiatives at the college. Each of the grants have different requirements and regulations promoting different reporting structures and internal processes for grant leads. In some instances, college staff indicated they are funded by one or multiple grants but report to someone outside of those grants creating uncertainty of where to allocate time. Additionally, staff reported that grant leads at the college are not structured as having a supervisory role, slowing internal processes in some instances as the lead has no authority to expedite processes and make decisions.

The varying reporting structures and internal processes impact the efficiency of internal processes as there is uncertainty of how to allocate time appropriately, expedite processes, and determine where decisions are made. For instance, college staff indicated that financial decisions are left to the Chief Financial Officer within the college, rather than the grant's leadership. While it is intuitive to authorize the college's financial officer to make grant-related financial and expenditure decisions, in most cases, the grant leads have a greater awareness of the grant's needs (e.g., equipment, personnel, and resources). As an example, equipment purchases were determined by needs identified in the industry. However, the college's financial officer may not be privy to this information, creating disconnect between the needs of the grant and the college as a whole.

The reporting structure and internal processes for grant leads was identified as a challenge by grant staff. While these structures may be practical for the college's general operations, grant processes and structures may require a different approach moving forward.

Expectation Setting

The Information Technology fast-track program, implemented through BTG, employed an accelerated format enabling students to complete coursework in 15 months. The accelerated format, while expediting time to program completion, has required a significant time commitment from the students. Students must be committed to classes five days per week, preventing outside employment. For many non-traditional students, this was difficult to accommodate as many had families and needed to maintain employment. While program faculty have attempted to set expectations for the level of commitment that is required for the Information Technology fast-track program, many students withdrew from the program due to the intensity.

Student withdrawals also negatively impacted program data as students enrolled in the program but did not complete. The disconnect between the number of students that enrolled and completed the program portrayed the program as being unsuccessful but, rather, students may not have fully understood the expectations communicated by faculty. Grant staff and faculty will continue to find ways to alleviate challenges they have faced with setting expectations for accelerated programs moving forward

LOOKING AHEAD

The findings in this section focus on Mountwest's goals and objectives for the remaining months of the grant as well as anticipated sustainability plans.

Goals and Objectives

Moving into the final months of the grant, the college identified a number of goals and objectives that staff anticipate completing. Most importantly, grant staff will urge college leadership to finalize a plan for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. Grant staff anticipate that this plan will be completed in the coming months.

Staff and faculty will also work to increase enrollment in technical programs through more efficient and targeted outreach. Marketing of other components will be accomplished as well, including marketing of the Testing Center and Prior Learning Assessments, to encourage utilization of these opportunities.

Staff and faculty will continue to enhance services currently provided at the institution, making ongoing improvements to further refine services offered. This includes implementation of an Accelerated Learning Program within developmental English. The college will also work toward self-sustaining developmental boot camps by requesting fees for participation.

Sustainability Plan

In the final year of the grant, colleges have started to solidify strategies for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. While the colleges hope to sustain all components of the grant, Mountwest indicated the following preliminary plan for sustainability.

Technical Programs and Learning Strategies

While the BTG-funded technical programs require increased enrollment to ensure sustainability in the coming years, the college anticipates sustaining the programs immediately beyond the grant. Many of the programs will have courses that are integrated online to increase accessibility for remote students, decreasing the need for additional faculty and staff. The college will also work to more efficiently promote the programs in an effort to increase enrollment. Grant staff anticipate that these solutions will help sustain programs in the future.

Student Support Services

College leadership recognize the importance of support services to student academic achievement and success. The success of the Beacon model at the college has helped the college improve student outcomes (e.g., retention). However, grant staff reported that, in some instances, grant-funded personnel have left the college due to uncertainty about whether their positions will be sustained beyond the grant. To help alleviate this uncertainty, the college has worked to obtain additional grant funding to help sustain these components beyond the BTG grant. For components that are not absorbed by other grant funding, the college's sustainability committee will meet to determine the best route moving forward.

Developmental Education

The co-requisite developmental education model has been written into state rules,⁴⁰ so this model will continue beyond the grant. With the efficiency of this model, college staff reported that this area actually has fewer faculty and courses than before the grant. Therefore, developmental education has been streamlined through the BTG grant, reducing the financial burden on the college to sustain.

Student Recruitment

BTG recruitment personnel at the college have been completely grant-funded, causing uncertainty for personnel regarding sustainability. The recruiter has been essential to BTG-specific outreach and recruitment for technical programs at the institution. However, the sustainability committee will need to determine whether to absorb the staff member beyond the grant. Staff anticipate these decisions coming to fruition in the coming months. The college-wide recruiter has been funded by the college and will continue recruiting for all Mountwest programs beyond the grant.

Industry Sector Partnership Strategies

The Executive Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations was tasked with engaging industry and developing relationships with community leaders and organizations for BTG and the college as a whole. While this individual was staffed by both the college and the grant,⁴¹ this position will continue beyond the grant. The Executive Director emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum with engaging employers beyond the grant to ensure ongoing sustainability of technical programs. Moving forward, this individual will continue to expand upon the relationships established with companies, organizations, and other community leaders.

⁴⁰ W. Va. C.S.R. § 135-21

⁴¹ This individual's responsibilities under BTG were different from responsibilities to the college as the Executive Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations. For BTG, this individual focused on employer and community outreach versus the foundation focus within his role at the college.

NEW RIVER COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The content within this section focuses on grant rollout from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations.

Grant Activities

New River enrolled cohorts of students in all BTG-funded programs in the past 18 months of the grant. With this, online, accelerated, and open entry delivery models were embedded into programs to accommodate commuter and non-traditional students. All BTG-funded programs embedded a variety of learning strategies into the courses. For instance, the Line Service, Electro-Mechanical Instrumentation, and Welding programs integrated courses online while the Line Service program launched an accelerated model. These technology-enabled learning strategies have empowered students to return to college as students are able to complete courses at their own pace.

New River also experienced progress establishing sector strategy meetings by finding more efficient ways to reach out to companies at the college (i.e., coordinating efforts), moving from developmental education to foundations courses within the co-requisite model, and finalizing the Prior Learning Assessment policy at the college. Peer and veteran coaches also continued to offer support services and hired a tutor for the Line Service program. The college also worked to finalize the establishment of a Student Success Center that offers services to students in a designated area.

In an effort to strengthen the relationship with the local Workforce Development Boards, the college also hired a New River-housed staff person to serve as the liaison between the college and workforce system. As noted below and in the call-out box, this individual was tasked with improving communication and information flow between the college and workforce system.

Finally, the college experienced turnover in personnel including the loss of the college's recruiter that served the BTG programs, instructional designer to assisted with curriculum development and modifications, and the Institutional Transformation Leader. Despite these losses, the college reported positive outcomes from the BTG-funded grant components.

Workforce Liaison

Prior to the grant, the college had minimal involvement with the workforce system. Once BTG was awarded, the college recognized an opportunity and need to more actively engage the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) in the region. The college hired a workforce liaison to bridge the college and workforce system through regular communication and recruitment assistance.

Early in the grant, the college experienced the benefits of strengthening the relationship with the workforce system and has since received over 100 referrals resulting in enrollment in the college. College staff and leadership indicated that hiring this liaison drastically improved the flow of information and general relationship with the WDB.

PROGRAM FEATURES

The content within this section discusses the accelerators that have impacted grant success and progress as well as opportunities for improvement. These findings are specific to this college and fall outside of the successes and challenges outlined the [Consortium Findings](#) section.

Accelerators and Strengths

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs, outcomes, and/or implementation at New River. Program accelerators included:

- Strengthened Workforce Development Board Relationship
- Experienced Faculty

Strengthened Workforce Development Board Relationship

In an effort to strengthen the relationship with the area Workforce Development Boards, the college hired a workforce liaison early in the grant. This person was tasked with educating the workforce boards on the BTG programs as well as offering services to assist with recruitment/marketing (e.g., spending time at the boards' offices to recruit students and answer questions). The liaison also communicated with the college regarding the needs of the workforce system (e.g., promotional materials and grant terminology clarification). As reported by college leadership, the regular and consistent communication between the workforce system and college typically did not occur. However, the strategic hire of a workforce liaison enabled the college to expand and strengthen recruitment efforts through the participation of the workforce system.

Through these efforts, the college obtained 103 referrals from the workforce system resulting in student enrollment at the college over the course of the grant. While these students were not all BTG participants, college leadership reported a better understanding of the needs of the workforce system and a more efficient flow of information between the college and workforce system, which resulted in increased student enrollment.

Experienced Faculty

Finding qualified and interested faculty and instructors was a noted challenge within the consortium. However, the faculty and instructors that were hired through the BTG grant were noted as significant contributors to the success of the college's programs due to their industry experience. As reported by grant staff and leadership, the industry-relevant experience of the faculty and instructors helped the college establish partnerships with local companies, develop and finalize program curriculum, and identify relevant equipment to purchase. The ability for the faculty and instructors to relate to company leaders and the challenges being faced in the industry, trends and projections that are being seen, and terminology that is used, enabled the college to increase rapport within the community.

Interviewed students also noted the vast industry experience of faculty and instructors influenced the student's decisions to return to college. The knowledge that the faculty and instructors could bring to the classroom encouraged many non-traditional and adult learners to enroll in BTG programs. See [Student Progress](#) section for more information.

Barriers and Opportunities

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at New River, these were elements including:

- Diverse Campus Cultures
- Staff Time Constraints

Diverse Campus Cultures

New River currently has four campuses located across multiple counties within West Virginia. While many of these campuses are located in the southeast part of the state, grant staff reported that these counties are vastly different and present different program needs at each campus. In other words, programs that are needed at one campus may not be as relevant at another campus. With this, staff reported that student populations within these counties are also diverse and require varying services and programs. These differences create challenges in coordinating across campuses and encouraging buy-in for new programs and services that may not be relevant to all campuses and students.

The different culture and environments present at these campuses have surfaced challenges in grant implementation as the campuses receive varying services and resources. This structure encouraged students to travel to different campuses to receive specific services and/or enroll in a specific program. While New River's multiple campuses enabled the college to cover a vast service area, challenges in coordinating and accommodating these different campuses surfaced a number of challenges.

Staff Time Constraints

The economic conditions of New River's service area encouraged a business model that utilized current resources as often as possible. Because of this, many of the staff involved with BTG implementation were pulled from other departments and positions within the college. While this ensures sustainability moving beyond the grant, challenges with time constraints surfaced. Many of New River's staff were encouraged to prioritize their full-time responsibilities rather than BTG responsibilities to ensure that the college's basic functions continued to operate. The struggling economic conditions in the college's service area compelled the college to operate at a basic level as student enrollment was decreasing. While the BTG grant afforded the college the opportunity to try new and innovative services and programs that would not be possible otherwise, college staff reported concerns with maintaining their full-time positions resulting in less time devoted to the BTG grant.

While the college recognized the importance and need for BTG-funded technical programs and services, staff were prioritizing other full-time positions within the college. This left less time for college staff to implement BTG-funded initiatives, resulting in staff attrition and slowed grant implementation. Moving forward, and as the college receives additional federal funding, it could be beneficial to further examine staff workloads when making grant staffing decisions.

LOOKING AHEAD

The findings in this section focus on New River's goals and objectives for the remaining months of the grant as well as anticipated sustainability plans.

Goals and Objectives

Moving into the final months of the grant, the college has identified a number of goals and objectives that staff anticipate completing. The college will continue to move forward on initiatives such as marketing Prior Learning Assessments, launching Blackboard Analytics, and continuing sector strategies initiatives. The college will also work to incorporate the peer coaches' work into the college through development of manuals and, generally, exploring ways to integrate support service best practices into the college.

Within BTG-funded programs, faculty will explore ways to increase pass rates for certification exams and will integrate more hands-on components into courses. This will be a challenge to schedule as it is difficult for students to attend class on one campus. However, it is a recommendation that was provided by technical program students and one that the college will continue to investigate. The Information Technology program will also be working to establish a Cybersecurity skillset. Three courses have recently been developed within this skillset and will launch in Fall 2017.

College leadership also emphasized a need to regularly research industry trends and projections to ensure that program offerings are relevant to students and employers in the area. Because the region is still adjusting from the loss of the coal industry, the college recognizes that regularly examining needs in the industry is critical to program success.

Sustainability Plan

In the final year of the grant, colleges have started to solidify strategies for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. While the colleges hope to sustain all components of the grant, New River indicated the following preliminary plan for sustainability.

Technical Programs and Learning Strategies

Enrollment numbers in BTG-funded technical programs have been favorable. Therefore, technical programs will be sustained beyond the grant. However, program enrollment numbers will be evaluated regularly to determine ongoing sustainability.

Student Support Services

The college has tasked the career counselors and peer coaches with developing materials and manuals outlining the services provided and best practices used. While the college anticipates sustaining support service personnel through June, there is uncertainty beyond that point. In the case that support service personnel will not be sustained, the college will utilize the manuals and materials developed by career counselors and peer coaches to ensure that these best practices continue.

Developmental Education

The co-requisite model will be sustained beyond the grant as it has been written into the West Virginia Code of State Rules.⁴² The college is prioritizing sustainability of personnel and anticipates sustaining at least 95 percent of faculty and staff hired through the grant.

Student Recruitment

The promotional materials that have been purchased through the grant will be continually used to promote BTG-funded services and programs. The college-wide recruiter recently left the college creating uncertainty for grant staff regarding how technical program recruitment will look moving forward.

Industry Sector Partnership Strategies

College leadership recognize that establishing meaningful partnerships with local businesses and community organizations is critical to sustainability. Because of that, the sector strategies initiative will continue beyond the grant. Staff and faculty will continue to explore ways to expand this initiative moving forward.

⁴² W. Va. C.S.R. § 135-21

PIERPONT COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The content within this section focuses on grant rollout from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations.

Grant Activities

Pierpont has made progress improving and implementing BTG programs in the past 18 months. Technical programs funded through BTG reportedly experienced the highest enrollment at the college. Faculty and staff reported high placement for all programs, and high employer satisfaction with students being hired from Pierpont's BTG programs. A number of BTG courses and programs have been modified since the beginning of the grant to more effectively meet the needs of students. For instance, the Information Technology program launched seven courses and operated on block scheduling to accommodate non-traditional student needs (i.e., non-traditional students typically had other obligations limiting time that could be spent in the classroom). The program has been successful throughout the grant, and has reached enrollment capacity in the most recent semester.

The Applied Process program was redesigned to provide three pathway options within one degree. Faculty reported this adjustment increased student retention, as it allowed students to shift focus areas easily in the program, which staff reported many instances of in this program. The Energy program also added a gas measurement course, addressing a direct employer need. The technical programs were able to increase the hands-on components of the courses through the opening of the new Advanced Technology Center (ATC), as highlighted in the call-out box.

Pierpont continued engagement with the Workforce Development Board, increasing referrals of displaced workers, and hosting Rapid Response meetings, as described below. The college increased recruitment efforts through family weekends and open houses with tours as well as continued to facilitate partnerships in the community to develop internship opportunities for students.

The college made progress moving developmental education to a full co-requisite program, where students only complete Accuplacer assessments if they do not have ACT or SAT scores. Within this model, testing is only for placement into support courses rather than placement into remedial courses. Staff have also worked to modify remedial-type courses in specific programs, adding a technical focus to increase relevancy for BTG students.

The college hired peer coaches and reported benefits of having the additional support in student services. Interviewed faculty and students reported the peer coaches increased retention and academic success of the students they have assisted. Support service staff offered workshops, seminars, and other events to increase student participation, recruitment opportunities, and facilitate student academic success.

Advanced Technology Center

The Advanced Technology Center (ATC) was funded through BTG, which enabled the college to expand program and course offerings due to the addition of more classroom space. BTG faculty and staff reported that the ATC classrooms are set up to facilitate hands-on learning by providing space for equipment.

The ATC has also facilitated a number of partnerships with local employers. Staff were able to use the facility to increase marketing and recruiting opportunities, which sparked the attention of local employers looking to hire students from Pierpont upon completion of their degree.

PROGRAM FEATURES

The content within this section discusses the accelerators that have impacted grant success and progress as well as opportunities for improvement. These findings are specific to this college and fall outside of the successes and challenges outlined the [Consortium Findings](#) section.

Accelerators and Strengths

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs, outcomes, and/or implementation at Pierpont. Program accelerators included:

- Departmental Collaboration
- Strengthened Workforce Development Board Relationship

Departmental Collaboration

Grant staff reported working closely with other college departments involved in grant implementation, indicating this as a strong factor in the success of the BTG programs and students. For instance, during the enrollment process, the Admissions Counselor assisted students through orientation and made direct connections for them to their program's faculty. The BTG recruiter also reported having a strong relationship with program staff and collaborating to explore more effective technical program recruitment strategies. Interviewed student services staff reported regular communication with the technical program faculty to ensure students were regularly receiving the best services. Staff indicated this collaboration also increased internal buy-in, enabling smooth transitions to new models within the institution (e.g., co-requisite model).

Previously, staff would follow an internal chain of communication through departments, and responses would be communicated back down from senior staff in the department. The collaboration facilitated through BTG eliminated the necessity of the chain of communication as staff reached out directly to the necessary staff member. Increased communication and collaboration at the college was indicated by all interviewed staff to be a factor in the progress the college has been able to make through the grant.

Strengthened Workforce Development Board Relationship

Prior to the grant, Pierpont reported having a relationship with the local Workforce Development Board (WDB). However, the services provided by the WDB were not utilized by all technical programs. Though the grant, staff reported that the relationships between the WDB, Pierpont, and BTG programs have been strengthened, resulting in increased number of referrals from the WBD staff to BTG programs for displaced workers.

The strengthened relationship allowed Pierpont to be a host site for Rapid Response meetings in the area, a noted recruitment avenue for displaced workers. While college staff were not able to attend and participate in these meetings, Admissions Counselors were encouraged to present information to the meeting attendees, which staff reported increased enrollment in the programs. Pierpont indicated that they were the host of other various WDB events and meetings that staff attributed to the relationship created through BTG. These events have increased the college's involvement with the community and have provided opportunities for further outreach for BTG technical programs.

Barriers and Opportunities

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at Pierpont, these were elements including:

- Staff Capacity
- Shared Governance

Staff Capacity

Due to the capacity of technical program staff, Pierpont reported having to turn away students looking to enroll in BTG programs because the courses were full. Interviewed faculty indicated that locating adjunct support for these courses typically did not occur until the week prior to the start of classes (once faculty course loads were identified and finalized), creating challenges for course planning as faculty could not offer additional sections in time. Interviewed students expressed an interest in summer courses to expedite time to completion. However, the college is currently unable to provide summer courses for the technical programs due to scheduling constraints.

In developmental education, the change in teaching requirements through the co-requisite model (i.e., reducing coursework by offering remedial courses and college-level courses simultaneously) resulted in a loss of instructors and a shift in faculty work load due to the reduction on course offerings. Staff reported that the reduction in courses through the co-requisite model created challenges for some developmental faculty to meet their required semester workload, facilitating staffing constraints.

In addition, staff were required to split time between the grant and other functions, creating challenges with accomplishing the required tasks associated with their position. Grant staff reported filling multiple roles within the grant, leaving little time to dedicate to some responsibilities. Recruiting local veterans was reported as a challenge by interviewed staff as making connections in the community required significant time and dedication, the college did not have previously established relationships, and staff had to split time to other tasks.

Shared Governance

Pierpont administration has a shared governance with Fairmont State administration as Fairmont State is Pierpont's partner institution. This unique partnership reportedly comes with challenges to grant implementation and creating new programs at the college. As reported by grant staff, curriculum development and modifications are required to go through an approval process with both institutions, resulting in lengthy processes for improvements to technical programs.

Additionally, the institutions utilize similar developmental education structures and programs, which caused confusion for students enrolling at Pierpont. Staff reported that students struggled to recognize differences between the campuses, resulting in application and registration challenges.

Challenges were also reported with staffing for BTG components. The close relationship between the institutions, and the fact that both institutions are located on the same campus, led to more career opportunities for BTG staff and faculty. This resulted in BTG staff and faculty leaving Pierpont to obtain steady employment at Fairmont State.

LOOKING AHEAD

The findings in this section focus on Pierpont's goals and objectives for the remaining months of the grant as well as anticipated sustainability plans.

Goals and Objectives

Moving into the final months of the grant, the college has identified a number of goals and objectives that staff anticipate completing. The college looks to complete and fully implement Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) and Guided Pathways to Success (GPS). While staff reported the demand for PLA has been minimal, the college would like to implement this to the extent that is possible.

In the Information Technology (IT) department, faculty anticipate completing a Cybersecurity program by Fall 2017, in an effort to meet the demands of local businesses and industry. The IT department plans to stabilize the fee structure for the program before the end of the grant to increase sustainability. The plan is to embed the cost of certifications for students into the fee structure so it is not an additional cost incurred by the student.

Grant staff will continue to recruit and market for BTG programs and engage with industry partners regularly during final months of the grant.

Sustainability Plan

In the final year of the grant, colleges have started to solidify strategies for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. While the colleges hope to sustain all components of the grant, Pierpont indicated the following preliminary plan for sustainability.

Technical Programs and Learning Strategies

Enrollment in Advanced Manufacturing and Energy programs have doubled, and the new IT program has reported enrollment numbers at full capacity. Therefore, all technical programs will be sustained and the college plans to continue to expand programs beyond the grant. The IT program requires a fee restructuring and hiring additional faculty to be maintained, both are goals of the staff during the remainder of the grant.

Student Support Services

The college will sustain student services, as the services existed prior to the grant. However, the college will look for other funding sources to maintain grant staff that are 100 percent grant-funded (i.e., staff that are not 100 percent funded through the grant will return to the departments that are funding the remaining percentage of their salary) as these individuals will require a more significant monetary commitment from the college. Grant staff reported that the college recognizes the positive impact of student services to the students.

Developmental Education

Pierpont has restructured developmental education for the entire college. The co-requisite model, a statewide initiative, is now in the Code of State Rules.⁴³ Grant staff reported students now opt-in to taking additional support classes and highlighted the progress of students through these courses. Additionally, staff reported the new structure allows for more efficient course

⁴³ W. Va. C.S.R. § 135-21

scheduling. Therefore, the college will maintain the restructured developmental education model.

Student Recruitment

Targeted BTG student recruitment will continue beyond the grant period. Students, faculty, and staff credited the Recruiter to being very successful at finding the best students for the programs and assisting the students through enrollment in the college. Recruitment of veterans will also be sustained as the grant staff had increased success creating meaningful relationships with the community.

Industry Sector Partnership Strategies

Grant staff plan to continue and expand sector partnership strategies in all program areas. Industry partnerships were strengthened during the grant period, and new partnerships were developed due to the BTG activities. Faculty reported industry partners will continue to be engaged in curriculum development and review, as well as internship and placement opportunities for students.

SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The content within this section focuses on grant rollout from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations.

Grant Activities

Southern has made progress in several areas of grant implementation over the course of the past 18 months. Developmental education has been reported to be the most impactful change through the BTG grant, as it has impacted the college as a whole. The college no longer offers stand-alone developmental education courses, and is completely co-requisite. Interviewed staff reported that BTG students opt into receiving the supplemental instruction course even when they are not required. Southern also has seen success with math boot camps, strategically offered prior to the course withdrawal deadline, to prevent students from dropping out of developmental education courses.

The Information Technology (IT) program has been completely revamped, and is now offered as a fast-track program. Enrollment has tripled in this program, credited by faculty and staff to the restructured program content. IT faculty reported that classes are currently full and, due to staffing constraints, cannot add additional course offerings to allow more students into the program. IT has one class certified through Quality Matters, and is in the process of certifying an additional course. The IT faculty purchased two drones to use in promotion, recruitment, and outreach efforts, as described in the call out box.

Welding and Mechatronics purchased updated equipment for the programs through employer relationships and leveraging additional grant funding. The targeted outreach and recruitment of students for these programs attracted an increased number of displaced workers. Faculty reported that while most students may not fully complete the program, students received a number of certifications necessary to find employment. Welding students also competed in SkillsUSA to showcase the skills in all four Welding areas taught at Southern.

Students continued to engage with the support services staff through peer coaching, advising, and counseling services as well as workshops and other events. The advising model continued to be successful and reported increased retention and student completion outcomes for students. The college experienced turnover at the counselor position but anticipates replacing this position prior to the end of the grant.

The college engaged local employers and created a new Manufacturing Extension Partnership position to better connect with manufacturing companies in the region. To further engage local industry, Advisory Council meetings were hosted to identify employer needs and opportunities for partnerships.

Unique Course Offerings

To continue to increase enrollment in IT programs, faculty explored creative avenues for marketing and recruitment by purchasing two drones within the IT program. The interest from students in the drones resulted in development of a drone course with a built-in certification for drone flight.

The drones have been used to take aerial photos of the campus for marketing purposes. The faculty also brought the drones to recruiting and outreach events, which reportedly increased interest in the program. Faculty anticipate that purchase of the drones will have a lasting impact on the success of the IT program moving forward.

PROGRAM FEATURES

The content within this section discusses the accelerators that have impacted grant success and progress as well as opportunities for improvement. These findings are specific to this college and fall outside of the successes and challenges outlined the [Consortium Findings](#) section.

Accelerators and Strengths

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs, outcomes, and/or implementation at Southern. Program accelerators included:

- Cohort Model
- Culture Shift

Cohort Model

The Information Technology program at Southern operated with as a fast-track cohort model, keeping students who enrolled in the program at the same time together through a set path to graduation. The model enabled students who could not enroll one semester to rejoin the program the following semester, rather than wait for a full cycle of classes to complete. The courses are offered two days a week, allowing non-traditional students to maintain outside employment. Grant staff reported that this model helped triple IT program enrollment during the grant period. Through the curriculum restructuring, the faculty were also able to increase the number of certifications offered to students through the program.

Culture Shift

Implementing the changes in programs, student services, and student tracking required by the grant facilitated a shift in culture at Southern. Developmental education staff tracked student outcomes for co-requisite courses, and used the results to create buy-in from faculty and staff for the model. Previously, student outcome data was not regularly used at Southern to make curriculum and program structure decisions. Grant staff reported that the required student data tracking helped create a culture of using data to understand programs and make data-driven decisions.

The cohort advising model introduced by BTG allowed the student support services staff to have deeper involvement with the students. This model helped students have stable and continued support throughout their experience at the college, and Southern staff reported increased retention in technical programs post-implementation of this model. Grant staff reported the success of the technical program students helped facilitate structural changes college-wide.

Barriers and Opportunities

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at Southern, these were elements including:

- Local Economy
- Departmental Collaboration

Local Economy

Southern's service area⁴⁴ is experiencing high unemployment and an increasing number of businesses shutting down. In 2015, the unemployment rate increased to 10.7 percent in Southern's service area, compared to under 10 percent in 2012 when BTG was awarded.⁴⁵ As local business struggled to remain open, interviewed staff at Southern reported difficulty engaging them in sector partnerships, advisory meetings, and curriculum review. Faculty in one department reported visiting local employers individually to obtain feedback on developed curriculum, as employers could not commit to attending meetings. With local businesses struggling to maintain their current employees, hiring additional staff and partnering with Southern was reportedly impractical.

Faculty indicated the local economy had an impact on internship and job placement opportunities for students. Local employers could not hire or train students through internships, so faculty began informing students about job opportunities outside of Southern's region and even the state. Grant faculty reported that many machining companies in the area have closed or reduced staff due to the decline of the coal industry – a main source of business for many of the companies. Coal mine closings have decreased job opportunities for students but also caused a decrease in population in the area. From 2012 to 2016, coal mining jobs decreased 58 percent⁴⁶ and the area's population dropped 28 percent.⁴⁷

Departmental Collaboration

Southern staff began working on the grant activities in departmental silos, rather than working collaboratively. Interviewed staff reported challenges seeing the larger picture of the grant, and focused on their department's role without connecting with other grant staff. Learning how to work together with departments and faculty was a common lesson learned across interviewed staff. Student services and faculty both indicated that they initially did not know how to collaborate for student success, and upon collaboration found greater success.

Faculty reported there was a disconnect between administration and staff regarding equipment purchases and grant spending, creating difficulty planning for additions to the program and labs. Additionally, grant leadership indicated their lack of authority was a barrier to facilitating collaboration within the college (i.e., grant leadership were not part of college's reporting structure and therefore, did not have authority over other grant staff at the college).

⁴⁴ Southern WV CTC serves the following counties: Boone, Lincoln, Logan, Mingo, and Wyoming.

⁴⁵ Information drawn from Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map: <http://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet>

⁴⁶ EMSI Analyst, 2016. 5-digit.

⁴⁷ Information drawn from Census Bureau Resident Population Fact Finder: <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

LOOKING AHEAD

The findings in this section focus on Southern's goals and objectives for the remaining months of the grant as well as anticipated sustainability plans.

Goals and Objectives

Moving into the final months of the grant, the college identified a number of goals and objectives that staff anticipate completing. The college looks to finalize a sustainability plan, and Guided Pathways to Success during the remainder of the grant. Using remaining grant funds to offer additional professional development to grant staff is also a priority. Staff will look for additional funds to sustain the Tutoring Center and restructure technical math in developmental education. Support service staff anticipate transitioning all staff to the intrusive advising model after the success of the program with BTG students.

In technical programs, staff plan to obtain certifications in commercial drone flight and offer the first drone course to students. Instructors also will continue to work towards job placement and recruiting students for the courses.

Sustainability Plan

In the final year of the grant, colleges have started to solidify strategies for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. While the colleges hope to sustain all components of the grant, Southern indicated the following preliminary plan for sustainability.

Technical Programs and Learning Strategies

The IT program at Southern will be sustained following the grant due, in part, to the large enrollment numbers and to the low cost of maintaining and running the program. The faculty plan to use other grant funding to alleviate some of the costs and sustain the Welding and Mechatronics programs. However, if funding is not located for these programs, the cost of maintaining supplies and regularly updating equipment might hinder the program's sustainability. Program faculty expect to be sustained after the grant period to teach in BTG-funded programs.

Student Support Services

Southern's Tutoring Center was reported as being essential to the success of student support services and will be sustained following the grant using other grant funding. Through the success of the cohort advising model used in BTG programs, Southern plans to expand this model throughout the college. The role of the peer coaches, while seen as valuable to the grant staff, will likely not be sustained in their current roles. However, the college will attempt to incorporate the services provided by peer coaches into existing structures such as advising and career services.

Developmental Education

Southern has expanded the co-requisite model to the entire college and no longer offers stand-alone developmental education courses. Staff are currently working to sustain and continue block scheduling for the co-requisite courses. Southern has reportedly seen a culture shift around these courses, where students now request enrollment in support classes even when it is not

required. Aligned with the statewide co-requisite initiative and integration into the Code of State Rules,⁴⁸ grant staff anticipate continued improvements to the model.

Student Recruitment

The college will continue recruitment efforts following the grant period as they have been successful recruiting both internally and externally. These staff members will continue to work with student services and counselors to ensure students complete the enrollment process and begin classes at the college.

Industry Sector Partnership Strategies

Faculty and staff will continue to engage with community and industry partners as they are able, and will continue to gather feedback on curriculum development. Due to the local economy, staff found it challenging to consistently engage with local businesses and maintain advisory committees. Staff will continue to explore creative ways to obtain partner input and feedback, and are working to find additional apprenticeship and internship opportunities in the area.

⁴⁸ W. Va. C.S.R. § 135-21

WEST VIRGINIA NORTHERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The content within this section focuses on grant rollout from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations.

Grant Activities

In the past 18 months, Northern has continued progress with grant implementation. All programs have continued curriculum modifications as a result of engagement with local employers. These modifications included combining courses that overlap across programs in an effort to streamline course offerings (e.g., teaching one Electricity program, rather than electricity-related courses across multiple programs). The college launched a non-credit Welding program that has recently partnered with a local nonprofit organization, enabling students to complete a capstone project. The Computer Information Technology (CIT) program has had continued success in student enrollment and placement. Grant staff indicated that for the accelerated program, the college has increased selectivity with enrollment to increase student success in the program.

Support services added two support coaches in the past 18 months to help with student outreach and services immediately following submitting an application. Peer coaches reportedly allowed for a depth and breadth of outreach to students that did not exist prior to the grant. Peer coaches received data on student success and connected with students who have not registered for classes on time to increase retention. The college also lost a full-time career services staff member, leaving only one part-time staff member to lead efforts in the department. The college does not anticipate replacing this full-time staff person.

Northern has not shifted completely to a co-requisite model but has made significant progress in developing and restructuring this area in preparation for the shift. The college implemented two new math courses within specific programs (e.g., CIT) to facilitate earlier completion. Math faculty reported improvements in students completing these courses with the new model. Northern also piloted co-requisite courses for English, where lower testing students received additional support but all students were placed in college-level reading and writing.

The college continues to engage local employers, indicating strong sector partnership with oil and gas companies in collaboration with Pierpont. Employers have also donated equipment to the programs and provided an increased number of internships, especially in the Construction Management program. Facilitated through partnerships with industry, the college will continue to recruit for BTG programs.

Embedded Soft Skills

Due to a need identified by local employers, Northern decided to embed a soft skills course in all BTG technical programs. This course discusses résumé building and provides opportunities for mock interviews.

Because non-traditional students may not participate in support service events such as workshops and seminars, grant staff determined that making this type of course required would be the most effective way to provide students with these skills. Grant staff reported the goal of embedding this type of course in all programs offered at the college.

PROGRAM FEATURES

The content within this section discusses the accelerators that have impacted grant success and progress as well as opportunities for improvement. These findings are specific to this college and fall outside of the successes and challenges outlined the [Consortium Findings](#) section.

Accelerators and Strengths

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs, outcomes, and/or implementation at Northern. Program accelerators included:

- Faculty Expertise
- Targeted Outreach

Faculty Expertise

All technical program faculty reported careers in relevant industries prior to becoming faculty at Northern. While finding experienced and qualified faculty members was a notable challenge for the consortium, Northern was able to recruit and retain an experienced faculty group for the programs. Local coal mine and industry closings enabled the college to recruit experienced professionals for faculty positions. Other faculty reported that while they could make an increased salary in the field, they had a passion to guide the next generation of workers into their field. Some faculty were able to remain in the field by offering companies work as a consultant, allowing faculty to stay up-to-date with industry demands and changes.

Through the hire of experienced faculty, the college was able to utilize faculty for a number of reasons. Faculty reported they were able to make connections with local employers and provide students with the skills to earn meaningful internships in their fields. Faculty were also able to embed workplace skills into their courses to help students prepare for promotions, including management and writing skills. Grant staff reported that experienced faculty were better able to recruit the appropriate BTG students to their programs because the faculty knew where to find these students and could better relate to them. The opportunity to hire faculty with industry-relevant experience facilitated increased retention, enrollment, and job placement outcomes for students, as reported by grant staff and faculty.

Targeted Outreach

With BTG funding, grant staff were able to create targeted marketing and outreach initiatives to attract participants to the technical programs. The Marketing Department at the college developed commercials specifically for BTG programs, and focused the timing of commercials to air when the target population was expected to be watching television. Grant staff reported an ability to market in new markets and medias for the BTG programs that they would have been unable to without the grant funding. Northern reported the these marketing efforts increased enrollment in BTG programs.

Prior to the grant, Northern did not actively target veterans in their outreach efforts. However, through the grant, the college has been able to shift focus to this population, which staff reported to be successful in recruiting veterans. The targeted recruitment toward veterans also encouraged the college to develop support services specifically for veterans, providing veterans with advising assistance and a main contact at the college. The intentional outreach to the target student populations allowed staff to better recruit students for the BTG programs and meet their needs once they enroll.

Barriers and Opportunities

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at Northern, these were elements including:

- Staffing Constraints
- Internal Buy-in

Staffing Constraints

Northern faced challenges hiring staff for the temporary grant positions, and some grant-funded positions were never filled after the position was vacant. In an effort to increase sustainability and reduce turnover, Northern limited hiring externally for grant-funded positions. The career services position for BTG was not filled after the staff member left the college to pursue a new career opportunity. Internally filling grant positions reportedly caused capacity problems with grant staff, as they could not allocate ample time to focus on grant activities. Many staff reported a full work load prior to the grant and had to find time in their schedules to focus on the BTG activities, as other responsibilities were not reassigned.

Northern also reported challenges hiring enough faculty members to cover developmental courses and technical programs for the grant. With the changes in the developmental education math and English classes, some prior instructors no longer met the requirements to teach these courses (i.e., remedial and college-level courses were being offered simultaneously versus separately, requiring faculty to be able to teach college-level courses). In the technical programs, Northern was able to find qualified and experienced faculty but reported challenges in finding enough faculty and instructors for the technical programs.

Internal Buy-in

From the beginning of the grant, Northern reported challenges with internal processes and willingness for staff to make changes required by the grant. Grant staff created a plan of action for completing grant activities at the beginning of the grant, which was not initially approved, causing staff to have a slow start to implementing changes. For instance, grant staff reported hesitancy of other staff to alter the developmental education structure within the college. While the college will be fully co-requisite in Fall 2017, the college will not fully implement co-requisite developmental courses during the grant period. Grant leadership emphasized the need to obtain internal buy-in to successfully implement BTG grant components early in the grant as the lack of buy-in has likely negatively impacted project success at Northern.

LOOKING AHEAD

The findings in this section focus on Northern's goals and objectives for the remaining months of the grant as well as anticipated sustainability plans.

Goals and Objectives

Moving into the final months of the grant, the college has identified a number of goals and objectives that staff anticipate completing. The college will continue to move forward with Prior Learning Assessment and Guided Pathways to Success implementation. Programmatically, the college plans to become fully co-requisite with English in Fall 2017 and anticipates restructuring Welding program scheduling, introducing Construction Management into the curriculum, and solidifying a Cybersecurity program. Staff will look for additional professional development opportunities and provide training to advisors on how to more efficiently conduct intrusive advising.

Sustainability Plan

In the final year of the grant, colleges have started to solidify strategies for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. While the colleges hope to sustain all components of the grant, Northern indicated the following preliminary plan for sustainability.

Technical Programs and Learning Strategies

The college plans to sustain the instructors for technical programs and will likely keep, and possibly expand, the accelerated programs. The college anticipates incorporating additional online components to the technical programs to increase enrollment and sustainability. Staff also reported plans to expand the programs to other campuses following the grant period.

Student Support Services

Grant staff were uncertain of sustainability plans for BTG-funded student support services and await leadership decision. Peer coaches are currently part-time but it is unclear if they will be sustained following grant funding.

Developmental Education

Northern will continue to implement developmental education due to the success of students in these courses. The college will be shifting to a full co-requisite model for both math and English by Fall 2017 to align with the statewide initiative and shift to this model. Additionally, the co-requisite model has reportedly attributed to the successful implementation of the accelerated model.

Student Recruitment

Northern staff reported a loss of the Veteran Services Coordinator, with no plan to replace the coordinator in the remaining months of the grant. The targeted outreach to veterans has continued through other staff positions at the college. The college will continue targeted marketing for the BTG programs following the grant period. The college also has space for a recruiter at the local Workforce Development Board, and the staff plan to continue to recruit at that location.

Industry Sector Partnership Strategies

Faculty at Northern reported success partnering with local partners for equipment, internships, job placements, and curriculum development. Faculty plan to continue engaging with local industry sector partners following the grant period.

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY AT PARKERSBURG

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The content within this section focuses on grant rollout from May 2015 through November 2016 of grant operations.

Grant Activities

West Virginia University at Parkersburg (WVUP) has maintained and modified five BTG programs during the past 18 months. The college eliminated three technical programs due to low enrollment; however, the remaining programs have continued to develop and enroll students. Online shells have been developed for all BTG programs to easily incorporate hybrid models, and programs are modifying capstone projects to embed real-world experiences. Faculty utilized shared and similar curricula to decrease the number of courses by eliminating overlap.

WVUP also hired a dedicated staff member for industry engagement, which faculty and staff reported to be instrumental in the quality and quantity of partnerships established with employers. Employers donated equipment to the college and made recommendations for improvements to the programs (e.g., a local employer informed the college they need a welding tower standing at least 30 feet to comply with OSHA regulations). Employers also visited classrooms to engage with students and discuss the importance of gaining the necessary skills before joining the workforce.

While not BTG-funded, WVUP's Professional Advising Center provides students with a centralized location for all student support services. This center reportedly increased departmental collaboration within student services, improving students transition through the services. Staff reported that this center has enabled the college to increase advising capacity and provide better, more efficient services to students.

The college implemented the co-requisite model in January 2016. With this, the college added a *College 101: Orientation to College* course to familiarize students with the expectations of college. WVUP plans to offer a math boot camp prior to the beginning of the fall semester. The redesigned structure and schedule has reportedly expedited students through math and English courses.

The college continues to work closely with the Workforce Development Board to recruit students and facilitate industry engagement. The college has also begun recruiting and outreach efforts at Career Technical Education Centers and local high schools in an effort to help sustain the programs following grant funding.

Baccalaureate Offerings

Because WVUP is the only community college in the state of West Virginia that can offer four-year degrees, the college has leveraged that ability to begin development of curricula that can be shared across the consortium. The college is currently working on a Construction Management four-year degree that will allow students from other WVCTCs to transfer.

In addition, the college is developing a four-year online degree option with the consortium colleges to encourage students to complete higher degrees through increased accessibility. These opportunities have reportedly enabled the college to strengthen collaboration with other BTG colleges.

Blackboard Analytics

WVUP, per grant requirements, hired a Technology Transformation Leader (TTL) early in the grant to lead the consortium-wide analytics system implementation initiative. Over the past 18 months, the TTL facilitated discussions around analytics system options within the consortium, bringing vendors to present on their products and encourage a decision around the most practical option. The consortium chose Blackboard Analytics as the system that would best provide predictive modeling and analytics to each of the diverse BTG colleges.

With this, the TTL facilitated trainings and sessions with Blackboard Analytics staff to familiarize BTG college staff, faculty, and leadership with the system. A number of internal sessions were hosted by the TTL to ensure that colleges could efficiently and effectively create report templates that would be practical and relevant to their institution's needs. While this TTL recently accepted a full-time position elsewhere (the TTL was 100 percent funded through the grant), WVUP will continue to lead the effort of Blackboard Analytics system utilization within the consortium.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The Evaluation Team is conducting a separate evaluation of Blackboard Analytics system implementation across the consortium with a stand-alone Appendix to be included in the Final Evaluation Report.

PROGRAM FEATURES

The content within this section discusses the accelerators that have impacted grant success and progress as well as opportunities for improvement. These findings are specific to this college and fall outside of the successes and challenges outlined the [Consortium Findings](#) section.

Accelerators and Strengths

Strengths and accelerators are defined as elements of the BTG project that have positively impacted program outputs, outcomes, and/or implementation at WVUP. Program accelerators included:

- Strengthened Workforce Development Board Relationship
- Streamlined College Operations

Strengthened Workforce Development Board Relationship

Grant leadership emphasized that the relationship between the college and the Workforce Development Board (WDB) has been instrumental in technical program success. Representatives from the WDB visit the college on a weekly basis to inform students about the services provided, and college representatives visit the WDB twice per week for technical program recruitment and outreach. Through this partnership, WVUP staff have also been invited to attend Rapid Response meetings in the area to directly access displaced workers. Regular involvement from the WDB with recruitment and outreach activities was indicated to be one of the biggest lessons learned from the grant process, and something WVUP staff found necessary for grant success.

The relationship impacted not only outreach and recruitment, but assisted in the creation and strengthening of the industry sector strategies. Interviewed staff expressed that having a strong relationship with the WDB increased the college's involvement with the community as a whole (e.g., the WDB staff would invite WVUP staff to attend various community and industry meetings, giving them a seat at tables they did not previously have). This reportedly facilitated more meaningful connections between the college and local employers.

Streamlined College Operations

WVUP developed streamlined processes throughout the grant to increase efficiency and collaboration between and within departments. WVUP's Professional Advising Center facilitated closer relationships between student service departments, allowing student referrals between departments to be more streamlined. Staff in this area also reported working collaboratively to refine the services provided by each department. Interviewed staff and faculty reported a closer relationship between student services and the technical programs. In the technical programs, faculty streamlined course offerings and curricula to allow students to experience multiple programs throughout their pathway without increasing the time needed to complete the programs.

The college also reported a more streamlined reporting structure and documentation process developed through the grant. Due to the large reporting component of the grant, the staff worked together to create an efficient process for reporting. Interviewed staff reported the grant increasing internal collaboration that will continue to impact the college following the grant period.

Barriers and Opportunities

As with any grant program, several factors hindered or slowed grant process. For the BTG project at WVUP, these were elements including:

- Leadership Turnover
- Program Enrollment

Leadership Turnover

WVUP experienced multiple transitions in leadership positions during the grant period, including three Presidents and four Senior Vice President transitions. At each transition, the grant staff had to inform the college leadership about the BTG grant and the efforts involved with the grant. This process required a significant time commitment as the new leadership was in the process of learning about the college and could not necessarily understand, or have the time to understand, the impact of BTG on college operations.

Grant staff indicated it was difficult to get changes approved that required executive staff approval as the transitioning of staff halted all approvals. Large grants, such as BTG, require buy-in at the leadership level, which has been difficult to build at the college due to the loss of significant executive staff. The significant delays caused by these staffing transitions negatively impacted grant progress and success as reported by grant staff. WVUP had to rebuild the buy-in at multiple junctures in the grant period, delaying progress for the grant. This also consumed time grant staff could have spent working towards other aspects of the grant.

Program Enrollment

Three BTG technical programs have been eliminated at WVUP due to low enrollment numbers in the programs. While low enrollment numbers have been a trend that has impacted the college as a whole, the low enrollment numbers negatively impact technical program success. For instance, when programs are eliminated, students enrolled in the program must have the opportunity to complete the program. In order to progress students through eliminated programs, they must take independent study courses with an instructor. This requires instructors to dedicate time to independent study courses rather than reallocating time to other programs or additional support to students.

Interviewed staff also indicated that enrolling students in technical programs was a challenge, as potential BTG participants did not see the value in technical education. These challenges experienced by the college's recruitment staff resulted in consistently low enrollment numbers in technical programs at the college. Low enrollment numbers negatively impact technical programs as the college may be required to eliminate the program offerings. As noted above, removing programs comes with its own set of challenges. Low program enrollment created a number of obstacles for WVUP throughout the grant period.

LOOKING AHEAD

The findings in this section focus on WVUP's goals and objectives for the remaining months of the grant as well as anticipated sustainability plans.

Goals and Objectives

Moving into the final months of the grant, the college identified a number of goals and objectives that staff anticipate completing. WVUP plans to incorporate additional credentials into the existing BTG programs. Faculty plan to increase engagement with industry partners by growing industry sector partnerships and having workshops and tours with industry partners.

Staff plan to continue and finalize many ongoing aspects of the grant including: developing the Prior Learning Assessment website, increasing student recruitment, expanding industry partnerships, implementing Blackboard Analytics, and providing opportunities for staff professional development.

Sustainability Plan

In the final year of the grant, colleges have started to solidify strategies for sustainability of grant components beyond the grant. While the colleges hope to sustain all components of the grant, WVUP indicated the following preliminary plan for sustainability.

Technical Programs and Learning Strategies

The technical programs currently offered at WVUP will be sustained after the grant period. Faculty and staff are planning to increase the number of credentials offered through the programs and to introduce stacked PMMI credentials. Additionally, faculty have developed curriculum for three additional programs that could be added by the college.

Student Support Services

The advising model introduced through the BTG funding will be sustained at WVUP. The peer coaches will move under a different department in order to sustain their services, and may serve a different role following the grant period. WVUP's Professional Advising Center has improved student services at the college and anticipates continuing to improve services beyond the grant.

Developmental Education

The entire college uses the co-requisite model for developmental education and will continue following the grant period to align with the statewide initiative. The college now has no placement testing for developmental education, rather, students are placed in college-level courses either with or without support. Staff report this model better meets the needs of the students at the college.

Student Recruitment

Targeted recruiting to veterans and the dedicated staff position will continue at WVUP, as the college recognizes the value of these positions. The staff will continue recruitment efforts for the programs, including work at the WDB. Staff also anticipate continuing to be involved in any Rapid Response meetings in the area to recruit displaced workers.

Industry Sector Partnership Strategies

Staff reported that the advisory committees' involvement with the technical programs has grown due to the work of the staff through BTG funding. Staff reported that they are working more with the community as a whole and with other institutions in the area. Staff will continue the industry sector partnerships after the end of the grant funding.

CONCLUSIONS

In the past 18 months, the BTG colleges have made strides in implementing grant components such as co-requisite modeling within developmental education, innovative programming, and technology-enabled delivery methods as well as determining strategies for statewide initiatives including Prior Learning Assessments, Guided Pathways to Success, and Blackboard Analytics. While the colleges reported positive student outcomes (e.g., job placement, program completion, and program retention) due to the implementation of grant components, varying internal (e.g., processes and staffing) and external (e.g., economic conditions) challenges were faced. Success in the remaining months of the BTG grant will require implementation of finalized components and initiatives. The colleges will also focus on developing practices that encourage technical program, support service, and personnel sustainability.

APPENDIX A. TAACCCT CORE ELEMENTS

Information from this section was drawn from USDOL TAACCCT Solicitation for Grant Applications.

CORE ELEMENTS

Evidence-Based Design	Implement projects that seek to use evidence to design program strategies – new or the replication of existing strategies – that are committed to using data for continuous improvement of programs that provide workers with the education and skills to succeed in high-wage, high-skill occupations.
Stacked and Latticed Credentials	Incorporate a variety of credentials, including certificates, certifications, diplomas, and degrees. These credentials should be earned in sequence and build on previously-learned content, or “stacked,” as students progress through their programs, allowing them to build a portfolio of credentials that can serve them well as they transition from learning to work.
Transferability and Articulation of Credit	Transferability and articulation of academic credit to create career pathways for TAA-eligible workers and other adults to further their education. This can be accomplished through increased cooperation among institutions within and across state lines, as well as through linkages with programs, such as postsecondary career and technical education, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, and other programs that lead to credit-bearing coursework and employment.
Advanced Online and Technology-Enabled Learning	Incorporate online and/or technology-enabled learning strategies that provide adults an opportunity to balance the competing demands of work and family with acquiring new knowledge and skills at a time, place, and/or pace that is convenient for them.
Strategic Alignment	Demonstrate outreach to, and information on, relevant entities in the communities to be served by the project, including those that can provide data on the characteristics and skill needs of workers receiving TAA benefits and services in the community. Align programs to Governor efforts (Economic Development and WIOA state plans); employers and industry; public workforce systems; and philanthropic organizations, business-related and other non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, and labor organizations.
Alignment with Previously-Funded TAACCCT Projects	To help decrease duplication and to strengthen the geographic reach of the project, and coordinate efforts where possible.

APPENDIX B. BTG PROJECT OVERVIEW

GRANT OVERVIEW

Since 2004, when the West Virginia Legislature created the state's independent Community and Technical College (CTC) system, member institutions rapidly expanded the number of career-technical program credentials offered and awarded. The *Bridging the Gap* (BTG) grant program focuses on ways to continue the expansion of credentials offered and awarded in the state by targeting four industry areas: advanced manufacturing, energy, information technology, and construction. With this, the BTG consortium is implementing a three-pronged evidence-based design: 1) enhanced and accelerated sector-driven career pathways; 2) contextualized, online, blended, simulated, and remote academic instruction; and 3) expanded and individualized student support strategies focused on strategic recruitment, college success courses, peer coaching, career planning, and data-driven decision-making. The BTG consortium is also focusing on creating a culture of continuous improvement that will extend into the CTC system's second decade.⁵⁰

Through the grant, the BTG consortium anticipates developing seamless, stackable, and latticed industry-driven energy, advanced manufacturing, construction, and information technology career pathways; a new series of contextualized and online courses that allow individuals to earn an associate's degree; new gateway, bridge, and capstone courses; a new web-based technical program-focused Prior Learning Assessment system; and new predictive course and retention analytics protocols and systems focused on improving course and credential completion.

The BTG consortium predicts that these changes will benefit over 1,300 students included in grant outcome projections, not including future technical program students and other WVCTC students benefitting from the enhanced and improved institutional services (e.g., developmental education, career planning, coaching, and counseling).⁵¹

GRANT COMPONENTS

Through the grant, the BTG consortium provides education and training needs for a number of non-traditional student populations including: TAA-eligible, veterans, apprentices, journeypersons, underemployed, and unemployed. With this in mind, the BTG program identified six focus areas for grant implementation based on state, regional, and student needs: grant-funded technical programs, learning strategies, student support services, developmental education, student recruitment, and industry sector partnerships.

As part of accelerated sector-driven career pathways, the BTG consortium is expanding certificate offerings and accelerating credential attainment by strengthening Prior Learning Assessment and adjusting program schedules. The consortium is also implementing compressed and paired developmental education courses by adopting the co-requisite model.

⁵⁰ Drawn from the original WV BTG Consortium Project Narrative

⁵¹ Drawn from original Program Narrative

From an academic instruction perspective, the BTG program is expanding the use of contextualized learning by developing and implementing: 1) new gateway courses;⁵² 2) new bridge courses that combine technical skillsets;⁵³ 3) industry-driven apprenticeship programs; 4) expanded learn-and-earn work-based cooperative education training programs; and 5) new capstone courses to ensure that students can demonstrate knowledge of foundational, industry, and occupational-related competencies.⁵⁴ The BTG grant is also strengthening online and blended instruction as well as remote and simulated learning by developing and implementing content for use in these different learning strategies.

Strengthening student support services is a significant component of the BTG grant. The consortium has been tasked with incorporating components of Mountwest Community and Technical College's Beacon model, namely peer coaches and professional counselors that work with instructors to provide students with a number of services ranging from retention strategies to recruitment efforts.

Another significant component of the BTG grant is strengthening regional and local sector partnerships with local businesses and community leaders. Through the implementation of sector strategies at each college, staff and faculty are empowered to establish relationships with local businesses, organizations, and community leaders to build and strengthen partnerships with industry. For many colleges, internships, learn-and-earn, apprenticeships, donations, and hiring commitments have been established as part of this strategy.

⁵² Gateway courses embed basic skills development and technical instruction in the same course and provide an entry into the field; drawn from *Bridging the Gap Course Design Overview*.

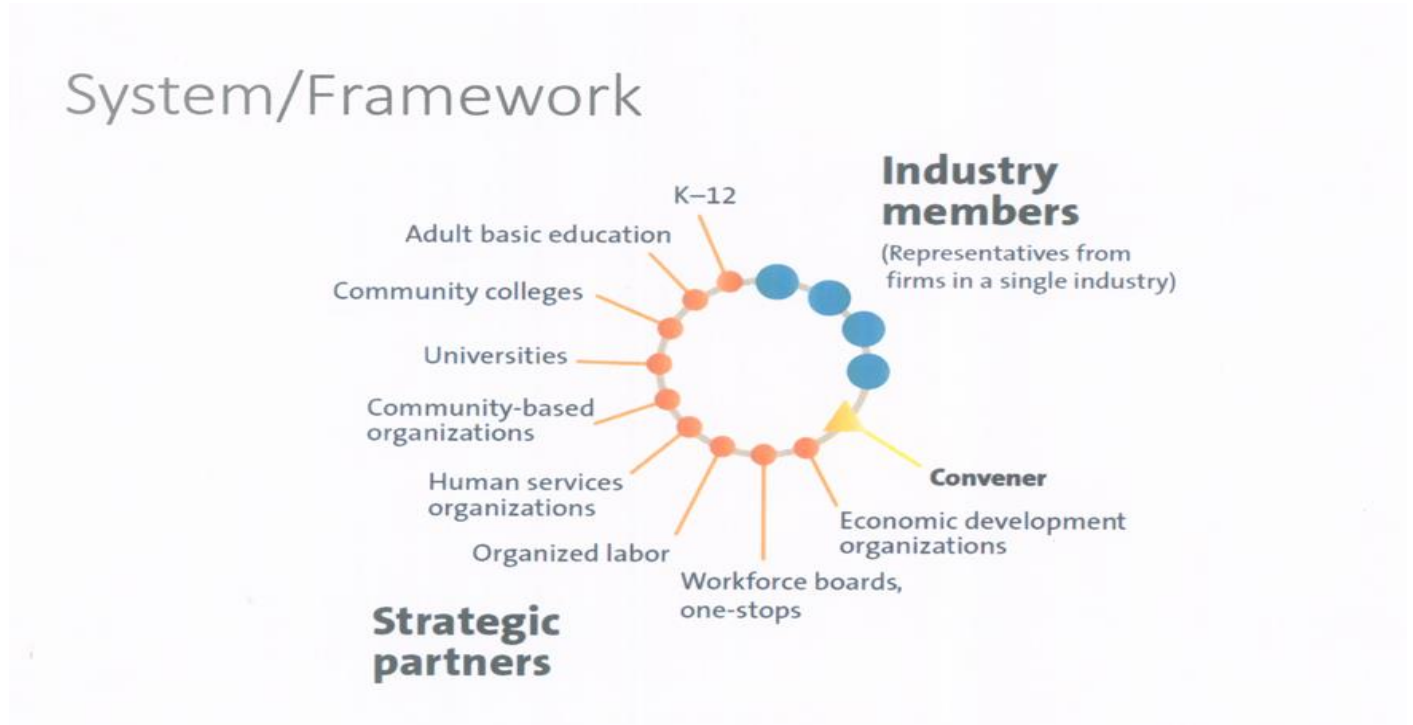
⁵³ Bridge courses provide foundational skills that will be useful in a variety of specializations within the field – drawn from *Bridging the Gap Course Design Overview*.

⁵⁴ Drawn from the original WV BTG Consortium Project Narrative, capstone courses occur at the end of the program of study and ensure that students are able to demonstrate mastery of industry/occupation related skills as defined in the *Bridging the Gap Course Design Overview*.

APPENDIX C. SECTOR STRATEGY FRAMEWORK EXAMPLE

Below is an example of the sector strategies framework for industry partners.

INDUSTRY MEMBER FRAMEWORK



Retrieved from: www.wvedc.org/assets/images/headers/WVEDC_Leg_2015_-_M_Julian.ppt

APPENDIX D. TAACCCT PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Below is a list of Participant Outcomes that grantees are required to track throughout their grant project as well as the associated definitions.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT ELEMENTS

Section A. Grantee Identifying Information	
A.1 Grantee Name	Enter the grantee name as it appears on the appropriate Notice of Obligation (NOO) or equivalent official document from the U.S. Department of Labor
A.2 Grant Number	Enter the grant number as it appears on the appropriate Notice of Obligation (NOO) or equivalent official document from the U.S. Department of Labor
A.3 Program/Project Name	Enter the name of the TACT Grant program or project
A.4 Grantee Address	Enter the mailing address as it appears on the appropriate NOO or equivalent official document from the U.S. Department of Labor
A.5 Report Year End Date	Enter the year (yyyy) for which the report is being prepared
A.6 Report Due Date	Enter the month, day, and year (mm/dd/yyyy) on which the report is due to the Department
Section B. Participant Outcomes	
B.1 Unique Participants Served/Enrollees	Enter the cumulative total number of individuals who entered any of the grant-funded programs offered to date (including certificate or degree programs or other training activities)
B.2 Total Number Who Have Completed a Grant-Funded Program of Study	Enter the total number of unique participants (B.1) who completed any grant-funded program to date
B.2a Total Number of Incumbent Workers Who Have Completed a Grant-Funded Program of Study	Enter the total number of participants employed at enrollment who complete any grant-funded program to date
B.3 Total Number Still Retained in Their Program of Study or Other Grant-Funded Program(s)	Of the total number of unique participants enrolled (B.1) who have not completed their programs, enter the total number of enrollees who were still enrolled either in their original program of study or a different grant-funded program of study at the end of the reporting year
B.4 Total Number Retained in Other Education Program(s)	Of the total number of unique participants enrolled, enter the total number of enrollees who dropped out of a grant funded program of study, but have enrolled in another education program not funded by the grant
B.5 Total Number of Credit Hours Completed	Enter the total number of credit hours to date that have been completed by participants in grant-funded certificate and degree programs
B.5a Total Number of Students Completing Credit Hours	Enter the total number of students who have enrolled that have completed any number of credit hours to date

B.6 Total Number of Earned Degrees/Certificates	Enter the total number of degrees or certificates earned to date by participants for grant-funded programs
B.6a Total Number of Students Earning Certificates (less than one year)	Enter the total number of students who earned certificates designed to be completed in one year or less
B.6b Total Number of Students Earning Certificates (more than one year)	Enter the total number of students who earned certificates designed to be completed in more than one year
B.6c Total Number of Students Earning Degrees	Enter the total number of students who earned degrees
B.7 Total Number Enrolled in Further Education After Program of Study Completion	Of the total number of participants who completed at least one grant-funded program (B.2), enter the total number of individuals to date who entered another program of study (grant-funded or not)
B.8 Total Number Employed After Program of Study Completion	Of the total number of participants who were not incumbent workers and who completed at least one grant funded program (B.2), enter the total number of individuals to date who entered unsubsidized employment in the first quarter after the quarter in which the student exits the college
B.9 Total Number Retained in Employment After Program of Study Completion	Of the total number of participants who were employed in the first quarter after the quarter in which the student exits the college (B.8), enter the total number of individuals to date who were employed in the second and third quarters after exit
B.10 Total Number of Those Employed at Enrollment Who Received a Wage Increase Post-Enrollment	Of the number of incumbent workers (those employed at enrollment) who enter a grant-funded program, enter the total number who received an increase in their wages at any time after becoming enrolled
Section C. Participant Summary Information	
C.1a Male	Enter the total number of new participants who self-identify their gender as male
C.1b Female	Enter the total number of new participants who self-identify their gender as female
C.2a Hispanic/Latino	Enter the total number of new participants who self-identify their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino
C.2b American Indian or Alaskan Native	Enter the total number of new participants who self-identify their race as American Indian or Alaskan Native
C.2c Asian	Enter the total number of new participants who self-identify their race as Asian
C.2d Black or African American	Enter the total number of new participants who self-identify their race as Black or African American
C.2e Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Enter the total number of new participants who self-identify their race as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
C.2f White	Enter the total number of new participants who self-identify their race as White
C.2g More Than One Race	Enter the total number of new participants who self-identify more than one of the racial categories outlined in Rows C.2b through C.2f above
C.3a Full-time Status	Enter the total number of new participants who are enrolled in college

	courses on a full-time basis
C.3b Part-time Status	Enter the total number of new participants who are enrolled in college courses on a part-time basis
C.4a Incumbent Workers	Enter the total number of new participants who are already employed at the time of enrollment
C.4b Eligible Veterans	Enter the total number of new participants who meet one of the conditions as a veteran
C.4c Participant Age (Mean)	Enter the mean age in years of the new participants
C.4d Persons with a Disability	Enter the total number of new participants, where known, or who self-identify that they have any "disability," as defined in Section 3(2)(a) of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12102)
C.4e Pell-Grant Eligible	Enter the number of participants who are eligible to receive federal Pell Grant assistance
C.4f TAA Eligible	Enter the number of participants who are eligible to receive Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits
C.4g Other Demographic Measures	This optional field allows grantees to enter and report on additional characteristics as needed or desired