

Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Grants
Fall, 2014 Site Visits for Third Party Evaluation Summary



by
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Introduction

The TAACCCT Round One Grant has concluded the three year implementation cycle and currently implementing a one year extension. The purpose of the extension year is to allow sites to spend the designated grant dollars. The external evaluators conducted site leadership interviews at each of the four technical institutes during the winter and spring of each year of implementation. The external evaluators will conduct two site visits during the extension year. This report summarizes the findings of the on-site interviews occurring during the fall of 2014.

Purpose

The purpose of the on-site leadership interviews was four-fold:

- To update the evaluation team on the TAACCCT grant activities;
- To determine the impact of the grant extension;
- To determine the most workable protocol for the instructors' sharing session
- To determine the protocol for the disseminating the student participant and employer surveys

Fall Site Leadership Interview Process

The TAACCCT third party evaluators met in October to determine the scope of the site leadership interviews. At this time, an agenda, a protocol, and a series of questions to guide the discussion were developed. During this interview process, the guiding questions were organized around the grant priorities, and focused on completion of the grant deliverables.

Overview of Grant Work (April, 2014 – November, 2014)

Some common themes emerged from the fall leadership site visits. Sites have completed the general grant requirements with the exception of posting the deliverables to the Skills Commons site and reporting the final participant numbers and related data to grant leadership. All technical institutes are positioned to post the deliverables to the Skills Commons site and are not expecting this to be difficult to accomplish. Reporting the required data may prove to be more challenging as sites may not have access to all the data required until September of 2015.

Positions Funded with Grant Dollars

No new positions were funded using grant money this year, though there were several position shifts. For example, one of the LATI instructors took over the responsibility of teaching all the hybrid online classes. This required LATI to hire an instructor to teach the face-to-face classes previously taught by this instructor.

At MTI, two of the three positions previously funded by the grant continue to be funded using grant dollars. The funding for one position previously funded by the grant has been shifted to the MTI budget.

STI has been funding a Mechatronics lab assistant using grant funds. This position will be shifted to assist TAACCCT round 3 work and the round 1 funding will be used to hire a lab assistant to complete the round 1 work for the remainder of the 2014-2015 school-year. Additionally, the STI round 1 leadership will be requesting that the retention coordinators' salaries that are funded using round 1 dollars be shifted from the TAACCCT round 1 budget to the STI budget.

Enrollment

Enrollment continues to be a struggle in two of the four institutes. MTI does not have participants as defined by the grant. However, it may be worth mentioning that the research and development work accomplished as a result of the preparation for the Industrial Controls courses has benefited MTI in general. Similarly, because of the curriculum development for the CAD courses, WDT was in a position to respond to an industry request to provide a screening tool for potential employees at Caterpillar. Without the planning and preparation for the CAD online hybrid classes, the instructors would not have been in a position to provide this service. WDT does have three students registered for the CAD online hybrid program this fall.

LATI and STI have significant enrollment numbers. LATI has 17 participants that either took courses during year one or two and STI has 16 participants registered this year. They had 14 students the first year and approximately 20 students registered for year two.

Three of the four institutes have a potential for graduates by the spring of 2015. LATI will have the potential for 12 graduates in May, 2015; STI will have December, 2014 graduates though the potential number of graduates is unclear; and WDT has the potential for three graduates in May, 2015. Each graduate will receive a "TAACCCT Grant round 1 Student Survey". The protocol for sending out the student survey was determined individually with site leadership and will be implemented as directed.

Similarly, employers of TAACCCT Grant round 1 completers will be surveyed in the fall of 2015. The employer surveys', like the student surveys', protocol for distribution was determined individually with site leadership and will be implemented by the external evaluators as directed by site leadership.

No new grant supported technologies were implemented in the fall of 2014.

Professional Development for Instructors

LATI is the only site that provided professional development for instructors during this time period. (April – November 2014) All TAACCCT round 1 instructors had an opportunity to attend the STATCE Conference in Mitchell in July, 2014. Also, LATI instructors have an opportunity to participate in one-hour tech byte sessions to learn about such topics as Panopto and Jenzabar.

Student Success Toolkit Implementation

Several of the institutes have implemented new components of the student success toolkit. LATI is piloting a 15-hour student success course though no agriculture students are currently enrolled. They also expanded the courses offered to include topics like diversity and financial planning. LATI is tracking students to determine if the course provides adequate support for students.

MTI implemented a new student orientation in the fall of 2014 and included a “Community Launch Day” in which approximately 60 community business members participated. This helped familiarize students new to the Mitchell community with services available to them. Additionally, MTI revamped the student success class.

Determining the Impact of the Extension

All sites have completed all of the required work of the grant with the exception of posting the deliverables to the Skills Commons Website and providing the required participant data. In some instances, the participant data may not be available until September 2015. This may cause a reporting issue since the contract for this work officially ends on September 30, 2015.

Challenges

Site leadership was asked to comment on challenges encountered during the TAACCCT round 1 implementation. Two of the four institutes mentioned enrollment as a challenge. As specified below, the only other challenges mentioned are unique to LATI’s leadership in wrap-up of grant activities and data in this extension year.

LATI: The challenges identified by LATI leadership include: posting the curriculum to the Skills Commons Website, specifically what can be posted due to copyright issues and what quality standards should be identified when posting curriculum to be shared with others.

Sustainability

LATI: The online hybrid instructor’s position will continue to be funded as LATI wants to increase the availability of online hybrid courses. Though no TAACCCT round 1 students are

taking the piloted student success course, TAACCCT round 2 students are taking this course so LATI will continue to offer this.

MTI: Groundwork that was completed to implement the courses for the TAACCCT round 1 grant, built capacity that will benefit the institute as they move forward.

STI: STI leadership will ask that the retention coordinators' salaries be shifted from TAACCCT budget to STI budget making these a permanent position.

WDT: WDT has been able to utilize the grant curriculum in a different way as they provide a screening tool for Caterpillar.

Additional site information

LATI: LATI has begun to offer dual credits with Northeast Technical High School

MTI: Building capacity for instructors and IT staff positioned MTI to offer the corporate education capacity building classes.

STI: Having the Mechatronics students create a Halloween event helped them apply the knowledge they learned in their degree program. STI leadership has tracked students taking the Academic Recovery Course. Those students were 10 – 15% more likely to avoid suspension than students that did not take the course.

WDT: Research and development for the TAACCCT grant courses allowed WDT to strengthen their instructional support and design elements for the school as a whole.

Conclusion

All site leadership has completed the required grant work and are focused on collecting the “numbers” data that is required at the end of the grant. In this extension year, the focus of the discussion shifted from meeting current grant requirements to sustainability issues ranging from shifting staff being paid by grant dollars to the institute’s budget to continuing discussions about program improvement and sustainability. Site leadership shared that being involved in the TAACCCT grant provided background information used to strengthen the online hybrid presence at their institutes. Another general positive from this work that was shared by virtually all site leadership is that the collaboration among the four technical institutes has been constructive and helpful.

General Information

- Instructor’s focus group will be held in Chamberlain on February 10th from 11:00 – 2:00.
- The final round of site visits will be conducted in mid-September, 2015.

