



YEAR 1 – EVALUATION REPORT

VINCENNES UNIVERSITY

LOGISTICS TRAINING AND EDUCATION CENTER (LTEC) INITIATIVE

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CELEBRATING YEARS

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

In 2012, Vincennes University (VU) received a grant of \$2,931,354 through the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program to fund the Logistics Training and Education Center (LTEC) Initiative. The purpose of LTEC is to prepare TAA-eligible workers and other participants for employment in the logistics industry. Ultimately, LTEC seeks to increase the number of qualified, employable candidates by providing them with increased opportunities to advance in their education and within their careers. Those following the developed career path will progress to middle-skill and higher-skill jobs while increasing their wages. The TAACCCT grant provides opportunity for VU to expand the existing center, serve a larger number of students and carry out a comprehensive evaluation of program activities, outputs and outcomes.

As part of grant requirements, VU procured an independent contractor, Thomas P. Miller and Associates, LLC (TPMA), to conduct an objective evaluation of the LTEC Initiative. This evaluation will provide VU and LTEC, its partners, its funders and other stakeholders with critical information regarding the effectiveness of implemented programs through September 2016.

This Year 1 Evaluation Report is the first in a series of evaluation reports that examines the outputs and outcomes of the program to date, as well as the underlying processes, assumptions, modifications, successes and obstacles that have led to program results thus far. It concludes with recommendations for LTEC staff and faculty to consider as part of Year 2 operations.

SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY

This first evaluation report focuses on the qualitative implementation of the LTEC Initiative in Year 1 of grant-funded operations. To understand program implementation and draw conclusions about successes and obstacles, this Year 1 Evaluation Report relies on the content analysis of qualitative data from the following sources:

1. Interviews with LTEC staff and faculty;
2. Interviews with LTEC students;
3. Interviews with LTEC-connected employers; and
4. Year 1 quarterly reports prepared and submitted by LTEC staff.

In addition, the evaluator conducted descriptive data analysis of Year 1 quarterly reports to understand outputs and activities (i.e., number of students contacted and served).

Future reports will incorporate additional evaluation methods still in development, including analysis of course evaluations, pre-/post-test knowledge gains and a quasi-experimental design that will measure student outcomes compared to similarly situated Workforce Investment Act (WIA) customers in the LTEC's footprint of service.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, LTEC has been successful in hiring necessary staff and integrating early activities into the existing processes and requirements of the Vincennes University system. LTEC has experienced somewhat of a slow start in certain planned activities, including delayed responses from regional workforce agencies and delayed collaboration with employers in the form of an Employer Leadership Group (ELG).

Like all programs, LTEC has had a range of accelerators and barriers impact Year 1 activities and outcomes. These include:

ACCELERATORS AND STRENGTHS

- Existing facility and programmatic foundation
- Physical assets
- Proximity to major logistics companies
- Staff qualifications and structure
- Focus on program sustainability and revenue sources
- Blended learning environment

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

- Distance from main campus
- Lack of referrals from workforce system
- Small and relatively new staff
- Shift in perspective on employer collaboration
- Employer understanding of program certifications
- Program curriculum and flow in development
- Student circumstances and enrollment
- Wait times from federal and university regulations

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Program Year 1 (PY1), which encompasses the period from October 1, 2012, to September 30, 2013, included a variety of program launch and administrative tasks. The number of LTEC staff increased five-fold in PY1, growing from one director to a staff of five that also includes a project manager, grant fiscal analyst, faculty member and academic advisor.

MILESTONES

LTEC's focus for Program Year 1 was largely administrative, as staff were hired and the program was formed and launched. One major Year 1 activity, the formation of the Employer Leadership Group, was still pending by the end of Year 1, although direct connections had been made between LTEC staff and a significant number of employers.

In addition to employer activities, Year 1 milestones include:

- Hired a Grant Fiscal Analyst in January 2013
- Hired a Project Manager in March 2013
- Hired first faculty member in April 2013
- Hired an Academic Advisor in May 2013
- Launched first logistics classes in Q2-2013
- Finalized procurement of a third-party evaluator in Q3-2013
- Co-hosted a Train-the-Trainer workshop, in partnership with the Material Handling Institute, in June 2013

One major PY1 activity, the formation of the Employer Leadership Group, was still pending by the end of the program year, although direct connections have been made between LTEC staff and sixteen major logistics employers: Amazon, Aurora Auto Parts, BrightPoint, Dick's Sporting Goods, Exel, Frito Lay, Genco, Global Plastics, MD Logistics, MS Companies, Ozburn-Hessey Logistics, QPSI, Regal Beloit, Ryder Logistics, UPS and Vital Solutions. Additional connections were made through partnerships with associations and at industry conferences and networking meetings.

PROGRAM CHANGES

One major change to the program over the first year was a shift to a hybrid teaching model for the Essentials training programs, which introduce students to online content, reinforces that content through classroom training and then validates that content through hands-on lab work. This model was praised by a small group of interviewed students, who appreciated the opportunity to step immediately outside of the classroom and into an operational logistics laboratory. This hybrid model has been made possible, in part, by LTEC's successful receipt of donated equipment and materials that enhance the "real-world" setting.

NEEDS

For future program improvements, LTEC staff identified several needs. First is a need to improve original curricula to be adapted to in-person certificates and degrees. This content has previously been taught online and should be re-verified for relevance to today's logistics industry. This modification of curricula also needs to take into account a need for hands-on training, which was cited as an effective component for logistics education. Content experts with experience in academic certificates and degrees can assist LTEC in expanding curricula.

The program would also benefit from greater buy-in from employers who recognize the value of credentials by requiring employees to hold degrees, certificates and other certifications. As noted, LTEC staff have been successful in making connections and holding informational meetings with employers, but there are barriers to fuller participation and commitment (discussed further in the "Barriers" section below).

LOOKING AHEAD

For Program Year 2 and Year 3, LTEC staff will continue to develop and refine program components. This includes the development of career pathways, in collaboration with employers, to better help students and employers visualize the stackable sequence of credentials and their applicability to logistics careers. The precise form and format of these deliverables has yet to be determined.

LTEC staff also plan to incorporate articulated credit for military programs and transferrable skills. This portion of the program has been conceptualized and not yet developed, but it holds great potential for LTEC and for job seekers who are military veterans.

Finally, the hiring of an Academic Advisor in May 2013 will allow LTEC to increase its efforts in marketing and recruitment and in the development of articulation agreements. As of the beginning of Program Year 2, LTEC staff are developing a comprehensive marketing strategy

with a goal of 2,000 student inquiries to meet targets for enrollment. Staff are also considering the addition of a finance specialist who may help with facility and program staff scheduling and other financial-related items. Staff are also continuing to explore articulation agreements with Purdue University, University of Indianapolis, Trine University and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

LTEC INITIATIVE ACCELERATORS

Several factors have facilitated the launch of LTEC and contributed to progress to date. These include:

- Existing facility and programmatic foundation
- Physical assets
- Proximity to major logistics companies
- Staff qualifications and structure
- Focus on program sustainability and revenue sources
- Blended learning environment

Each accelerating factor is described in greater detail below.

KEY ACCELERATORS

EXISTING FACILITY AND PROGRAMMATIC FOUNDATION

Although grant funds are providing the means to expand and formalize LTEC programs, Vincennes University (VU) first launched the supply chain management program in 2008. A funding application during the first round of the TAACCCT grant program was unsuccessful but nonetheless allowed VU to formulate ideas and gain buy-in from the Town of Plainfield, Indiana, where LTEC is located. These activities allowed LTEC to gain traction and community support prior to the award of TAACCCT Round 2 funds, which led to the successful opening of the building in 2012. This lead time also allowed LTEC director to establish a foundation of employer involvement and receive equipment donations.

PHYSICAL ASSETS

In addition to traditional classroom space, LTEC is a “living laboratory” for logistics education. The building itself existed prior to TAACCCT Round 2 funds, which meant PY1 students had access to space and equipment on the first day of classes, and staff could focus grant funding on developing LTEC’s capacity.

One important capacity building effort has come in the form of equipment donations. In PY1, staff were able to secure a Raymond Deep Reach Forklift, a Toyota LP forklift, warehouse racking systems, an industrial fan, a powered conveyer and radio frequency identification (RFID) technology. Money that would have been spent on basic equipment can now be reallocated to more advanced technology.

PROXIMITY TO MAJOR LOGISTICS COMPANIES

Although logistics is important to Southwest Indiana, where VU was first established, Central Indiana provides a particularly strategic location for LTEC. In the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area, the concentration of employment in transportation and warehousing is 54% higher than the national average. Employment in the Central Indiana's logistics industry has grown 20% since 2003 and pays out more than \$2.65 billion in earnings to its workers.¹ LTEC is located near the Indianapolis International Airport, and its interstate access eliminates barriers for students and employers who would not likely make the 2.5-hour drive from Central Indiana to Vincennes.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND STRUCTURE

Because LTEC is not co-located with the Vincennes campus, LTEC staff can be flexible and adapt to needs that arise. Among LTEC's five core staff is experience in the private logistics sector, with education and grant management, and in marketing and academics. The current LTEC instructor also brings institutional knowledge, with more than 30 years of university experience. Students interviewed in September 2013 called him "patient," "thorough," "caring" and "knowledgeable." These skills, along with the small size of the staff, allow for cross-training and informal staff development.

FOCUS ON PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY AND REVENUE SOURCES

LTEC has considered resource and sustainability needs since before the award of TAACCCT Round 2 funds, and staff continue to seek sources of community and employer support. The First Book *Book Bank*, which partners with LTEC, does not provide revenue but draws activity and provides "real-world" work for LTEC students.

Success with this program has led to a potential contract with the First Book Marketplace, which would help to generate a small profit and could help fund the program in the future. It would allow LTEC to pay part-time instructors who can also play a role as part-time staff in the for-profit warehouse. LTEC staff also plan to incorporate a student worker program that will allow students to learn in the classroom and then work in the First Book Marketplace. This arrangement would provide a means to gain experience for students who would not otherwise qualify for industry employment and could provide needed income for students who would otherwise struggle with balancing work, school and family.

¹ Data for Indiana and the Indianapolis MSA come from EMSI Analyst 3.0, 2013.2.

BLENDING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Unlike traditional college classrooms, LTEC provides students with access to a blended learning environment that incorporates online, classroom and hands-on training. This structure provides students with more options to take courses and engenders a “laboratory mentality” that transforms logistics problems in the on-site warehouse into learning experiences for students. Various hands-on techniques build both knowledge and enthusiasm in students.

To LTEC staff’s knowledge, LTEC is the only facility of its scale in the country, which can provide long-term workforce pipeline solutions and increase competitiveness for Central Indiana’s logistics industry. This model also means LTEC can be flexible and adaptive to employer needs. The two employers interviewed for this Year 1 Evaluation Report expressed differing needs; both were interested in short-term training, but one was interested in both soft skills development and longer-term, two- and four-year programs. LTEC’s current approach and planned expansion of curriculum can meet these needs in a more realistic setting than can local and national competitors.

LTEC INITIATIVE BARRIERS

Several factors have hindered the launch of the LTEC Initiative and slowed the progress to date.

These include:

- Distance from Vincennes campus
- Lack of referrals from workforce system
- Small and relatively new staff
- Shift in perspective on employer collaboration
- Employer understanding of program certifications
- Program curriculum and flow in development
- Student circumstances and enrollment
- Wait times from federal and university regulations

Each barrier to program implementation is described in greater detail below.

KEY BARRIERS

DISTANCE FROM VINCENNES CAMPUS

The LTEC's location in Plainfield, Indiana, is both a strength, as discussed earlier, and a barrier. Although its presence in Central Indiana provides direct access to the state's logistics hub, LTEC's location – more than 100 miles away from Vincennes, Indiana – creates a disconnect from the original VU campus and limits LTEC's ability to leverage the University's strongest relationships and influence, which are centered in Southwest Indiana.

Communication between LTEC and the VU main campus can be hindered by the distance between locations. Limited in-person interactions make the development of close connections and relationships between staff more challenging. In addition, identifying the proper contact person for specific LTEC needs requires greater effort and inquiry when working at a satellite location. This is especially a challenge given the different target audience and set of programs offered at LTEC compared to the VU main campus.

Location distances can also hinder the development of program staff, as training and other resources regularly available on the VU main campus are more challenging to access.

LACK OF REFERRALS FROM WORKFORCE SYSTEM

LTEC welcomes all participants interested in logistics training; however, their primary target audience, per the TAACCCT funding, is individuals who are Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)

eligible. It is through the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) that individuals are labeled as TAA-eligible and ultimately through Central Indiana's WorkOne centers that LTEC can identify TAA-eligible individuals within the area. Given the importance of the workforce system to accessing and identifying TAA-eligible participants, collaboration and communication between LTEC and key workforce players, including WorkOne and DWD, is critical to the success of the program.

At present, communication between LTEC and the workforce system has been slow to develop, despite LTEC staff efforts to connect with local workforce development boards about the program and access to participants. LTEC staff gave presentations, but non-responsiveness by WorkOne staff led LTEC to reach out to representatives at DWD for assistance. In December 2012 and again in July 2013, LTEC staff presented to members of DWD. Communication has improved, but referrals from WorkOne have continued to be slow moving.

Connections with the workforce system, and thus access to TAA-eligible participants, will be a continuing challenge from Year 1 into Year 2. Due to the issuance of fewer TAA-eligible certifications than in years past and slow responses or non-responses from the workforce system, staff at LTEC will need to be diligent in their follow-up and pursuit of assistance from the workforce system and may consider creative opportunities to connect with TAA-eligible participants.

SMALL AND RELATIVELY NEW STAFF

Year 1 saw the successful hiring of three new staff members – project manager, academic advisor and grant fiscal analyst. With the strengths of new staff members comes the challenges of dealing with a small staff that is relatively new.

Hiring of the staff took several months while processes were identified, with the most recent individual, the academic advisor, hired in May 2013. Searching for the right people to fill positions at LTEC meant that development of the logistics program itself did not begin with a full and concentrated effort at the start of Year 1. As new staff members join the LTEC team, each individual must be trained for their new position and brought up to speed on the project's goals, objectives and outcomes, naturally requiring more time dedicated to equipping qualified staff members and less time toward active development of the LTEC Initiative.

With four staff and one instructor dedicated to the development of the LTEC Initiative, prioritization of planning efforts and initiatives is a challenge. LTEC staff have indicated the desire to hire a finance specialist to assist with the variety and volume of tasks required and the need to focus on time management and priorities within their set roles and responsibilities.

SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE ON EMPLOYER COLLABORATION

The Employer Leadership Group (ELG) is a key component from which LTEC can receive feedback and input on curriculum development and program pathways, receive up-to-date-equipment and ultimately place program participants with employers looking to hire.

At the onset, LTEC leadership focused on targeting large employers, including Fortune 500 logistics-related companies, with the intent of forming a relatively comprehensive employer group. Engaging with larger employers, however, has proved a challenge. While there have been connections and discussions, formal agreements between employers and LTEC have been limited. This is due, in part, to competing demands for time; existing boards, groups, associations and commitments compete for employers' attention, and LTEC staff want to ensure time spent in ELG meetings is productive and valuable for all involved.

In addition, at least one large employer expressed an interest in utilizing internal training for current employees, especially at the certification and certificate levels, as opposed to a customized training program at LTEC. In part this interest results from external market demands. It also stems, however, from the current available capacity at LTEC, which may be overwhelmed with mass-scale training given the relatively small number of program staff and instructors and the relatively large volume of entry-level employees at larger companies.

As a result of the barriers to connecting with large employers, LTEC is now starting to focus its efforts around engaging selected, active employers, with the intent to form a smaller, tighter-knit group of six to eight employer representatives within the ELG. This shift in focus on employer and group size, potentially leading to a long-term strength of the ELG, has contributed in the delayed engagement of an official employer group. LTEC leadership must now work to connect with these selected logistics businesses and spur interest in collaborating on LTEC program development.

EMPLOYER UNDERSTANDING OF PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

Although not unique to the LTEC Initiative, staff have experienced difficulty in getting employers to understand and fully value certificates and certifications. Based on two employer interviews conducted in September and October 2013, there is evidence that LTEC-engaged employers find value in forklift certification and in associate's degrees but are less knowledgeable about the importance of other LTEC courses and programming. As a result, these employers have been hesitant to send current employees to training or hire prospective employees from training opportunities at LTEC. Successful communication of the knowledge, skills and abilities gained from other certification and credentialing programs – particularly once the ELG has active input into program design – may help LTEC overcome this barrier.

PROGRAM CURRICULUM AND FLOW IN DEVELOPMENT

Because the list of employer training needs is expansive, LTEC has focused on quick-development, high-impact training. This has led to an environment of just-in-time process of curriculum development. Programs are developed based on immediate employer needs, instead of proactively developing strategic programs to meet identified, future workforce demands. As a result, clear career pathways and stackable programming still needs to be created.

LTEC has developed a series of Essentials certifications, including forklift essentials, warehousing essentials, and team lead essentials, with the goal of stackable curriculum leading to an associate's degree. However, the precise pathways and curricula between the short-term and longer-term certifications still need to be finalized. In addition, pathway and program development must include feedback and engagement from regional (and national) employers, which will ideally stem from the ELG, once it is established.

STUDENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND ENROLLMENT

To date, a handful of prospective LTEC students have come from backgrounds of challenging circumstances and life issues. As a result, students need higher-than-anticipated levels of one-on-one time and personal attention from the academic advisor to assist with enrollment and program completion. Assistance can range from facilitating credit transfers and the collection of transcripts to supporting the needs for students who have little experience with academic education and challenges outside of academics.

WAIT TIMES FROM FEDERAL AND UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS

Finally, to anticipate and keep pace with employer demand, LTEC must move at the speed of business. The need to search for, identify and understand all the proper regulations and procedure documents required by the federal government has slowed the pace of program development. Protocols within the University system have also slowed LTEC decision making, requiring added time between development of program direction and implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of LTEC's strengths and barriers, what follows are recommendations to consider for program improvement.

These include:

- Conduct Strategic and Persistent Communication
- Materialize Employer Engagement
- Utilize Employer Feedback
- Segment Employers Based on Interest
- Determine Maximum Capacity and Specialization
- Maintain an Industry Focus
- Create Middle-Skill Connections and Pathways
- Focus on Time Management
- Expand Marketing by Leveraging Relationships
- Continued Focus on Long-Term Sustainability

Each recommendation for program implementation is described in greater detail below.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

CONDUCT STRATEGIC AND PERSISTENT COMMUNICATION

This recommendation refers to communicating with both the regional WorkOne offices as well as with other TAACCCT grantees, to work toward accessing TAA-eligible individuals. LTEC staff should continue working to engage WorkOne offices and the workforce system by targeting communication with specific and personal outreach to WorkOne staff. If possible, the evaluator recommends meeting with individuals from regional workforce boards in person to explain the program and its benefits. Through this, the LTEC team should look to secure director-level support and a strong buy-in from front-line staff.

In addition, LTEC can engage with fellow TAACCCT grant recipients to understand how other programs are able to access TAA-eligible participants. Through this collaboration, additional ideas and opportunities may arise for TAA-eligible access and recruitment.

MATERIALIZE EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Building and developing networks with employers is an important first step to developing the Employer Leadership Group (ELG). It is now time for LTEC to focus on preparing concrete ideas around the group's purpose. This includes having a clear idea – written out – of what the ELG

will be providing and of the mission/vision for the group. Starting a formal group such as the ELG can be challenging, and while employer engagement is key, so too is having concrete ideas that employers can react to.

LTEC can position the ELG to address areas of company/industry competitiveness by identifying company priorities and developing coalitions to improve group effectiveness. When reaching out to these employers to join the ELG, personalize the request as much as possible, including use of phone calls and avoiding “dear industry partner” or other generic email lead-ins.

During meetings, the evaluator recommends that LTEC staff provide employers with documents or information at meetings and avoid nebulous questions or topics – e.g. “What do you need?” Having employers start with a relatively blank slate for courses and pathways can be a challenge, as employers are experts in their technical field but not in the fields of education and program development. Conversations that are too broad or conceptual can be less productive and may cause employers to lose interest in participating. Therefore, LTEC staff must find the balance between flexibility and tangibility – that is, create a group dynamic that allows for program adaptation and responsiveness to employer input, but one that also displays strong leadership from LTEC staff and leads to real progress for the time spent. Developing pathways and drafting content prior to ELG meetings, and then asking for feedback, can create more productive employer discussions around the skills, topics and activities to incorporate into new courses and programs.

The evaluator encourages LTEC to move forward with current plans to engage a smaller group of select employers. It is important for these employers to be interested in developing curriculum and utilizing LTEC programs for training of current employees and/or hiring of prospective employees. Developing this core group of engaged and interested employers is important and then, if necessary, the group can be built out from there.

If funding allows, LTEC leadership may consider including ELG group management as a component of a finance specialist job description, which may include employer scheduling, group follow up, printing and organizing materials, etc.

UTILIZE EMPLOYER FEEDBACK

An opportunity prominently available through the Employer Leadership Group, but also through informal engagement with employers, is the provision of feedback. Employer feedback will be key throughout the formation and development of LTEC, and below are a few opportunity areas for focused feedback and discussion:

- How LTEC should be marketing and describing credentials to other employers, in order to create buy-in
- Fully documenting the human capital needs facing the logistics industry
- Current jobs that are challenging to fill and the skill sets that applicants are lacking
- The value and importance of soft-skills and how best to incorporate these skills into the curriculum
- The value of industry-recognized certifications

These topics can be used as agenda items and discussion points during ELG meetings. LTEC staff should then document and communicate the ways employer feedback has been used and the resulting successes.

SEGMENT EMPLOYERS BASED ON INTEREST

It is important for LTEC to both be flexible and efficient regarding employer engagement. One theme derived from employer interviews is larger companies' interest in LTEC degree programs above credentials and certifications. As such, LTEC should consider, and seek additional feedback from employers on, a segmented approach to employer engagement based on interest.

By identifying employers who are solely interested in LTEC for degrees and longer-term credentials, marketing strategies can be more targeted to include the benefits of an associate's degree to the company and to individual workers. For employers who are interested in both certifications/pathways and degrees, LTEC can engage these individuals in the development of curriculum, pathways and entry- to mid-level specialized training. A similar approach can be taken with employers who are more likely to take advantage of leadership development than other logistics certifications. As the ELG grows, this type of segmentation may help keep employers engaged in "action teams" to drive curriculum development and program strategy.

DETERMINE MAXIMUM CAPACITY AND SPECIALIZATION

Before starting the program, LTEC sought employer feedback on common challenges logistics employers faced when collaborating with higher education. This feedback included the lack of responsiveness by colleges and lack of program adaptability for employees' schedules. LTEC staff have thus taken this feedback and developed a program of extreme flexibility and adaptability.

With a relatively small project team, however, LTEC should continue to be aware of project capability and capacity. While providing training for all size employers and all types of logistics occupations is ideal, identifying priorities and targeting employer size and occupation/skills

within logistics can prove helpful. Now that LTEC is staffed and activities are underway, it will be necessary for leadership to determine priorities and develop strategies to address those priorities. As noted, while flexibility is a necessary component of program success, it is sometimes more effective to give employers tangible options as a launch point for discussion, as opposed to making broader inquiries that address short-term needs.

MAINTAIN AN INDUSTRY FOCUS

A focus on the needs of single employers rather than the broader logistics industry has benefits for individual LTEC-employer relationships but also creates challenges for developing a deep understanding of a particular industry and its needs, as well as developing solutions at scale. Because different employers within the same industry have similar skill needs and draw on the same labor pool, the ELG can offer the opportunity to better understand industry-wide needs and more efficiently spread the costs of new program development across multiple firms. While customized, just-in-time training may remain a viable strategy, scalability and long-term program sustainability will require LTEC to spread the costs across multiple firms and offer programs that are applicable to the industry more broadly.

CREATE MIDDLE-SKILL CONNECTIONS AND PATHWAYS

To enhance program strength and participants, LTEC can look to create stronger middle skill connections within the program design. LTEC should consider reaching out to area Career and Technical Education programs and other youth-serving agencies and organizations seeking avenues for graduates, providing short-term students with another step for their education.

Increased clarity, especially around the middle skill steps, may help students visualize themselves with the program, increasing student enrollment. It will also help employers visualize the program, increasing employer engagement. In addition, enhancing these middle skill components can lead to improved “stackability” of program credentials and courses.

FOCUS ON TIME MANAGEMENT

With numerous activities and moving parts, it will be necessary for staff to prioritize time and initiatives. The LTEC team should continue to deliberately plan, setting milestones, tracking progress and identifying and allocating time for key initiatives. A project plan for the development of LTEC can both assist in keeping the pace of progress and help identify needs and gaps in skills that new staff could fill.

EXPAND MARKETING BY LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS

Program staff have significant opportunities for marketing LTEC through the leveraging of current relationships. These relationships include connections with schools and other education

organizations. The Employer Leadership Group will also be a valuable source for soft marketing and program advocacy. LTEC should maximize the use of these opportunities to promote the program and stir up interest within the community.

CONTINUED FOCUS ON LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

A current strength of the program – engagement with First Book Marketplace – is a vital sustainability effort that can propel the program forward and provide access to additional opportunities for sustainability. As the program matures, long-term success will require diversifying sustainability efforts and developing additional relationships and connections.

CONCLUSIONS

LTEC has been successful in Year 1 in hiring needed staff, actively making employer connections and building a foundation for increased activity for future program years. Success in Year 2 and Year 3 will require meaningful employer engagement, arising from clearer goals and expectations for the Employer Leadership Group, and persistent efforts to collaborate with regional workforce boards and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. More clearly defined career pathways, as well as a few notable successes with logistics employers who hire workers with LTEC credentials or use LTEC for training, will help LTEC make a name for itself and carve out a niche for logistics education in Central Indiana.