

Resource 1: Opportunity Population-Serving Organizations (OPSOs) Orientation to Employers



Talent Pipeline Management® (TPM)

TPM RESOURCE GUIDE: Connecting Opportunity Population Talent to Better Career Pathways



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION

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Resource 1: Opportunity Population-Serving Organizations (OPSOs) Orientation to Employers

This resource is an orientation to the employer community for OPSOs and professionals or practitioners—that is, those serving people who experience barriers to employment. It is part of a set of resources that, when combined with the Introduction, make up the TPM (Talent Pipeline Management®) Resource Guide: Connecting Opportunity Populations to Better Career Pathways. Building strategic and successful relationships to support opportunity populations requires employers and OPSOs to develop a mutual understanding of each other's worlds and the roles that different professionals and organizations play in making partnerships work.

The objective of this orientation is for OPSOs and their practitioners to better connect their value proposition to employer needs, resulting in more effective partnerships. By working directly—and differently—with the employer community, opportunity population practitioners and those for whom they provide services will benefit by accessing enhanced work-based learning opportunities and jobs. In addition, with clearer communication and a better understanding of one another's needs, challenges related to training, hiring, retaining, and upskilling opportunity population talent can be addressed in ways that result in shared value for all partners.

Orienting Opportunity Population-Serving Organizations to Employers, Employer Organizations, and Professional Roles

OPSOs and their practitioners seeking to engage the employer community in a partnership should start by understanding the employer ecosystem, how employers are organized and operate, where and how to engage effectively with their professionals at every level, and the importance of a compelling value proposition that will speak to employers. As a practitioner, you have likely worked with a range of employer partners, so the sections below are intended to provide a holistic understanding of the employer from which practitioners can review as needed to supplement their own knowledge and experiences.

Employers are in both the public and private sectors.

People think of employers as primarily for-profit employers in the private sector; however, an employer is any person or organization that employs people through a variety of employment relationships ranging from regular full-time employment to contractual employment. Employers are in both the public and private sectors. They can be for-profit businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government organizations, including the military, schools and colleges, as well as community-based organizations. Private sector employers can be registered as U.S. companies or as companies from other countries with locations in the United States.

Key Takeaways

Do not forget about employers in the public and nonprofit sectors. State and local agencies, schools and colleges, and community-based organizations are also employers that face their own workforce challenges.

Employers in the private sector are usually classified by industry and size with one or more physical locations or establishments.

In the private for-profit sector, employers vary widely in their size and the types of economic activities they carry out (e.g., manufacturing food products), the goods they produce, and the services they provide—across one or more physical locations. These types of economic activities and goods and services produced are called industries (e.g., manufacturing, healthcare). Physical locations that carry out one or more economic activities are called employer establishments (e.g., store, factory). Small employers—which are the largest job producers in the United States—typically carry out one major economic activity (e.g., food service) at one establishment (e.g., restaurant) within one geographic area (e.g., county). However, larger employers in the private for-profit sector, sometimes called business enterprises, carry out multiple economic activities through multiple firms with many different establishments around the world and across states, counties, and cities.

Employers in the private nonprofit sector also can vary widely. Nonprofit employers are in a wide variety of industries including education, healthcare, and social services. They can be large, diverse organizations spanning multiple industries with multiple establishments, or they can be smaller organizations with specialization in one industry and with only a single establishment.

In describing the private sector employer community, many refer to small, mid-size, or large employers based on the amount of sales and/or number of employees. There are no widely accepted definitions for sales or

number of employees to be classified in each category for specific industries in the United States. The Small Business Administration (SBA) generally refers to small businesses as those with fewer than 500 employees. Employer size is frequently reported based on the number of employees at a specific business establishment.

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is the coding system used by government statistical agencies in classifying business establishments according to their primary economic activity and goods and services they produce. This system was developed for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. business economy; however, it is used for a range of administrative purposes, including data collection for unemployment insurance and to produce labor market information (LMI) for employment trends and projections at the state and regional levels.

Employers use their own language when describing their industry or industry sector, based on what they consider their primary economic activity. For example, some employers refer to themselves as “manufacturers” even though they have a variety of business establishments carrying out other primary economic activities, including transportation and distribution, information technology, and research and development. They may also have talent management professionals (e.g., human resources) focusing on different business functions and jobs tied to different economic activities that are relevant to them. For example, some professionals may focus on management and professional jobs at corporate headquarter facilities, while others may focus on front-line manufacturing jobs at a single manufacturing plant.

Key Takeaways

The employer community is incredibly diverse and heterogeneous. When working with larger and more diversified businesses, it is important to understand who you are working with; it can be beneficial to use language that employers themselves use. This includes identifying the workforce needs tied to a primary economic activity associated with a NAICS code, specific to a physical location (i.e., establishment), and within a geographic area (e.g., county). You also want to know the number of employees at these establishments (i.e., size) to better understand the potential scale of career opportunities provided by the employer.

Employers vary in how they organize work and how they define their critical jobs.

Employers—even in the same industry and of the same size—differ in how they organize the work to be performed. These differences show up most often in how they divide this work between different jobs, job titles, and job descriptions, with distinct levels of compensation. As a result, employers in the same industry vary significantly in how many positions (number of people employed and openings) they have for what types of jobs and with what range of compensation. For example, some healthcare providers have a coordinated care model with advanced practice nurses and registered nurses playing larger roles. This results in higher proportions of nurses relative to doctors and other allied health jobs compared with other hospitals. Another example is a manufacturer that chooses to automate its facilities, requiring higher concentrations of cross-functional maintenance technicians with higher skill requirements relative to those of production workers.

In some cases, employers from different industries may share common business functions and jobs that may be organized similarly or differently. For example, employers in healthcare, manufacturing, and retail may share similar information technology jobs in cybersecurity and network management. They may also choose to work together in addressing their similar workforce needs in these shared jobs.

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is the coding system used by government statistical agencies in classifying business establishments according to their primary work tasks. As with NAICS, this system was developed for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data. Although SOC information is useful in understanding some of the common work tasks and skill requirements for job families, it is important to understand both the similarities and the differences in how employers define their own jobs.

Even employers that similarly organize work, define jobs, and determine staffing patterns may still differ in how they define their most critical business functions and jobs. Critical jobs are those that are most important to the competitiveness and performance of employers at the enterprise and establishment levels.

Employers also differ in how they define and prioritize their pain points for these critical jobs. Pain points refer to the different types of talent management challenges and priorities such as unfilled job openings; onboarding, training, and upgrading costs; career advancement, turnover, and retention; and increasing the diversity of a workforce. Some employers may have greater challenges in recruiting qualified talent and filling job openings, whereas others have more trouble retaining employees. Other employers may face greater challenges in recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce to reflect the diversity of their customers and communities where they are located.

For example, two manufacturing businesses define their most critical business functions as engineering and machining, with the most critical jobs identified as mechanical engineers and machining technicians—despite their largest number of jobs and job openings in warehouse and distribution operations. Although the two businesses agree on their critical jobs, each ranks them differently in terms of pain point priorities that must be addressed in pursuing workforce initiatives and partnerships. One business has more difficulty recruiting qualified applicants for unfilled job openings for machining technicians, whereas the other faces the most difficulty in increasing the diversity of its engineering workforce.

Employers also may differ in how clearly they are able to define and prioritize their challenges. In some cases, employers have done a comprehensive analysis of their needs and priorities and are ready to discuss them with partners. In other cases, employers need to work with partners to review their own data and to set priorities. For example, employers may focus initially on filling open positions but then realize that many of these openings are the result of growing retention problems, which should be addressed first.

Key Takeaways

Not all employers in the same industry organize and define their most critical jobs the same way, even when they use similar job titles. Always assume that how employers organize work and define jobs will change constantly in a dynamic economy and labor market. In addition, it is unlikely that employers in the same industry agree on their most critical jobs and pain points in pursuing workforce partnerships. Also, employers may differ in how clearly they have defined their most critical pain points as starting points in developing partnerships with OPSOs.

Employers vary widely on how and where they recruit talent for their most critical jobs.

Employers—especially larger employers with establishments in different states and countries—carry out talent sourcing at various levels of their organization across different geographic areas for different critical jobs. For example, larger companies use human resource (HR) professionals and recruiters at the corporate level to hire executives and upper-level professionals after a global or national search. In contrast, these same companies may decentralize the hiring of mid-level and front-line employees at their different establishments. This sourcing is overseen by HR professionals and recruiters working out of each business establishment who may recruit within more constrained geographic areas based on assumed commuting patterns or where their current employees live. For example, an employer with a manufacturing establishment located in an urban county recruits for the establishment’s welders within that county, whereas another employer in the same county adds the larger metropolitan area to its recruitment base. An additional example is a hospital that recruits nurses exclusively within a metropolitan area, whereas another recruits on a statewide or national basis.

These significant differences in talent sourcing are often lost in the LMI that education and workforce professionals use in determining employer workforce needs. Government industry and occupational projections are developed for labor market areas based on average commuting patterns between home and work. They may not reflect the talent recruiting reach of some employers, especially for higher-wage jobs or those with remote work. In addition, government statistics developed for specific service regions may not reflect the geographic areas employers use to recruit talent for jobs addressed by schools and colleges within these service regions. It is very rare that additional training providers (e.g., community-based organizations) would be included.

Key Takeaways

Not all employers with establishments located in your area recruit primarily from your area, no matter what is assumed in government LMI. And do not conclude that employers with establishments outside your area are not potential partners. Employer partnerships should be based on geographic areas defined in cooperation with employers based on where they recruit and source talent for their most critical jobs.

Employers utilize professionals in multiple roles for recruiting and developing talent.

Employers, especially large employers, utilize a variety of professionals who assume different roles in addressing their workforce needs. These professional roles go by many job titles, but include:

- **Executive Leadership.** Chief executive officers and other upper management professionals are increasingly working with HR professionals to develop strategies and initiatives to recruit, develop, and retain the best talent for their most critical jobs. This executive leadership is critical in gaining the buy-in and resources needed to establish and sustain partnerships carried out by other lower-level professionals.
- **Government and Community Relations.** These professionals take the lead roles in working with federal, state, and local governments as well as community leaders. They are typically the major points of contact for government and community initiatives, including those in workforce and education.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).** These professionals lead employer initiatives that are charitable or that focus on community or social impact. In some companies the CSR role—sometimes referred to as a corporate citizenship role—encompasses or relates to education and workforce efforts that involve direct employer and/or employer foundation funding. These initiatives can be designed with a charitable purpose or linked to a company’s business strategy (see following section on CSR).
- **Human Resource (HR) Professionals.** HR professionals are responsible for managing and coordinating core HR functions at the corporate and establishment levels, including recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new employees. They are also responsible for administering compensation and employee benefits, including employee tuition aid programs as well as training and professional development. HR professionals usually work directly with hiring managers to determine the company’s workforce needs.
- **Recruitment and Screening.** These professionals are responsible for supporting HR by marketing career opportunities, working with talent sourcing partners, identifying and recruiting applicants, and managing the application and applicant tracking and screening process for HR professionals and hiring managers. These professionals can work directly for an employer or with a recruiting company that is under contract with an employer.
- **Hiring Managers.** These managers have the responsibility for determining the hiring needs and requirements for critical jobs they manage and supervise. Hiring managers typically make the final decision on hiring and career advancement.
- **Training and Development.** These professionals are involved in the onboarding and development of new hires as well as the upskilling and career advancement of existing employees. This category includes professionals who manage specific training programs, such as apprenticeship programs.
- **Other Subject Matter Experts.** This refers to employees who are considered experts in the performance of critical work tasks and in understanding the knowledge and skills required to perform these tasks at elevated levels of proficiency. These experts are usually the most experienced and highest-performing workers employed in critical jobs and are consulted by hiring managers or HR professionals when setting hiring requirements.
- **Employee Support Professionals.** These professionals—either employed by the company or retained on contract—provide a variety of support services to current employees to improve job performance, career advancement and retention, and employee satisfaction. They are sometimes employed by a third-party partner who works directly with employees on a confidential basis on matters such as housing, financial literacy, transportation, and childcare. These professionals are particularly important to support opportunity population talent.

Many times, the varied categories of professionals are engaged with employer CSR, recruitment, and hiring initiatives at distinct stages of the pipeline. For example, one professional team is involved with high schools, colleges, and universities for addressing specific hiring

needs, while another works with community-based organizations and nonprofit partners, while still others work on career advancement for front-line personnel. It is common for these activities to be funded, supervised, and operated independent of one another.

In addition to people working in these professional roles, employers often encourage employees to engage in volunteer programs. Some employees volunteer to get involved in community initiatives that include education and workforce partnerships. Other opportunities include aiding career exploration activities, serving as mentors, or participating in advisory groups. Most of the time these volunteers are participating as community members and are not operating in any official capacity on behalf of the employer.

Finally, it is important to understand how the size of a business (i.e., small, mid-size, or large) determines with which professional you will likely engage and the kinds of partnership that company can or will provide. Depending on how a company is organized, it could be that numerous teams or divisions should be involved. Professionals in small and mid-size companies have multiple roles and chiefly look to education partners to assume critical training and development functions. In addition, top executives and managers are likely more directly involved in education partnerships. For larger employers, top executive and HR leadership buy-in is critical, but these individuals may not get directly involved in partnerships. Also, top executive and HR leadership at the local establishment level (e.g., manufacturing plant managers, retail store managers) may have to get higher-level buy-in from their corporate headquarters to establish partnerships.

Key Takeaways

Except for small employers, there is rarely a single point of contact inside a company who can address and represent the full range of workforce needs a company may have. When developing partnerships with employers, always make sure to work with the right professionals or team of professionals.

Employee support professionals are critical players in partnerships with OPSOs and should be thoroughly involved. Having the right professionals involved can enhance the partnership's ability to meet more of the company's needs while also improving the experience of opportunity population talent.

Employers directly engage in workforce initiatives and partnerships as well as with trusted intermediaries, including business associations.

Employers directly engage in national, state, and local initiatives and partnerships to address their workforce needs as well as with a variety of industry and professional organizations and other public and private intermediaries. Many of these organizations are based on a membership model in which companies pay dues and expect value; others have employers engaged as one of many partners or in an advisory capacity. Examples include:

- **National, state, regional, and local chambers of commerce.** Chambers are the most widespread business-led associations in the United States and the world, but they are also incredibly diverse. They are independent business entities, but some chambers belong as members to other chambers and form what is commonly referred to as a “federation.” For example, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has a federation of more than 1,500 state, regional, and local chambers as dues-paying members. Chambers are organized in many ways and play many distinct roles. Their primary membership is the business community in their defined geographic footprint, but they can include other community partners and leaders as well (e.g., area schools and colleges). Their missions vary, but most typically focus on growing and improving their community, supporting pro-business policies, serving as the “voice” of the business community on issues of importance to companies, and networking.
- **Industry sector organizations.** These are business associations that represent employers in specific industries or sectors. These associations can be national or regional (e.g., state-based) in scope. Some examples include the National Association of Manufacturers, the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association, and the National Retail Federation.
- **Professional associations and unions.** Many times, employers and employer organizations partner with professional associations and unions to address workforce needs. These associations represent people working in specific trades and professions, such as HR professionals, engineers, real estate agents, and electricians. An example is the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM).

- **Special purpose employer organizations.** These are organizations that employers join for specific purposes, such as veterans-hiring initiatives or opportunity-youth initiatives.
- **State, regional, and local economic development organizations.** These public and quasi-public organizations promote economic development and work with employers to improve their competitiveness and growth, including improving the workforce.
- **Other intermediaries.** Examples include public and private intermediaries, such as workforce boards.

These organizations frequently serve as conveners; they host events related to education and workforce topics (e.g., addressing a skills gap or closing an achievement gap). Their role is primarily to elevate awareness of an issue but not necessarily become the lead organization when it comes to implementing a solution. The convener function is usually executed in ways that drive up business-member interest and engagement in a new partnership or initiative that is led by others.

In addition to convening employer members, intermediaries also engage directly in original research (i.e., publishing reports with new data), or they launch education and workforce initiatives. An example of the latter is when companies coalesce around a tutoring program in a high school; sponsor a mentorship program for those involved in the criminal justice system; or establish a career awareness communications campaign to address misperceptions about or stigmas associated with opportunities in their industry.

It is common for these organizations also to be recruited as members of advisory boards or to play a role in initiatives tasked with engaging employers. Typically, these intermediaries are involved in a similar fashion to how employers are engaged but are presumed to speak on behalf of their membership and to be able to coordinate requests back to them (e.g., an increase in the number of internship offerings). Business associations are often asked to weigh in on industry workforce needs, skills and credentials requirements, labor market forecasting, etc., even if they themselves are not an employer engaged in the primary economic activity and work that is of interest to the advisory board or partnership.

It is important to note that while some business associations have an education or workforce mission and a dedicated staff for education and workforce policy and programming, this is by no means the rule. Business associations vary in terms of their capacity and willingness to engage on these issues.

It is also important to note that employers are repeatedly asked by different state education and workforce agencies, schools and colleges, and nonprofit organizations to participate in major initiatives, sector partnerships, and advisory groups. This results in employers being pulled in many different directions without knowing how these different partners work together to address their needs. Business and industry associations can play a role in organizing and coordinating employer engagement in ways that can provide benefits to both employers and OPSOs.

Key Takeaways

Many employers address their workforce needs by coordinating their efforts through a business association. These organizations vary, and some have an explicit education and workforce mission—with supporting staff—while others do not. When possible, engage them in a partnership but be sure to identify what role they can play (e.g., convener versus implementer). Associations do not always have the ability to speak directly for their members when it comes to workforce issues; however, these organizations have the potential to be valuable partners for organizing employers in trusted and sustainable workforce partnerships.

The role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) differs dramatically across companies.

Increasingly, particularly within larger companies, there are dedicated staff members who address a company's CSR efforts. Engaging with a firm's CSR professionals can be a helpful start to initiating a partnership that will benefit opportunity populations. How these professionals are organized and how a company connects its CSR efforts to its business strategy varies from one company to the next.

As stated above, initiatives linked to the CSR arm of a company are frequently designed with a charitable purpose in mind and without any direct benefit of the company itself; however, this is not always the case. What drives companies to develop or expand their CSR-focused activities varies from giving back to the community to building a positive brand around their company to attracting top talent to strengthening their business.

Rather than focus on what a company calls its approach to engaging in social initiatives, concentrate on what is most important: the outcome of this engagement.¹ It is advantageous to fully understand a company's approach to CSR-related efforts. Whereas corporate philanthropy may be less focused on the benefits to the company, CSR has more of a dual role of improving the community where a company is located and the company's profitability. What should be avoided is developing an initiative as a one-off project for a company leader that will not last beyond their tenure nor get the kind of traction that can lead to shared value for all partners involved. Partnering with those companies whose CSR missions are intrinsically linked to their business strategies and core missions will likely result in a more

productive and sustainable relationship, providing better short- and long-term outcomes for opportunity populations.

Therefore, for OPSOs and their practitioners, an analysis of how CSR is activated and how it connects with a company's overall business strategy is critical for a successful partnership. In addition, helping the company connect the dots for how CSR efforts can also produce return on investment for the business can be instrumental in making a strong value proposition for collaboration to support opportunity populations' hiring and retention.

Smaller companies, while less likely to have a dedicated CSR professional, should not be counted out. Small companies are engaged in CSR activities but perhaps less formally than their larger counterparts. They can be more agile in the company culture they create. With fewer people, it is easier to ingrain a culture of CSR in all business activities that produce community benefits as well as value for the business.

It is important to note that there is a blending of roles and responsibilities between CSR and HR professionals, particularly as it relates to diversifying a company's workforce and creating an inclusive workplace environment. HR strategies to create more diverse and inclusive workforce environments naturally overlap with CSR initiatives that are intended to achieve similar outcomes. Due to the value-add of increasing a workforce's diversity, more companies are looking to this strategy. As these two efforts form a closer link, employers are interested in being recognized as leading opportunity employers—those that proactively recruit, retain, and advance opportunity populations.

¹ https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK395637/#sec_000031

Key Takeaways

Do your homework on how a company views and engages its CSR arm or professionals, including how its HR and CSR efforts overlap, to ensure the efforts are integrated in the company's business strategy. This can ensure better outcomes and longer-term engagement than one-off projects driven by the interest of one executive.

Employers also vary widely in how they approach diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

Employers vary in whether they make DEI initiatives a major workforce priority. In some cases, this will not be a major priority for either CSR or workforce initiatives, or it may be a priority for only some professionals at one company location. In other cases, it will be a major priority of top leadership across the entire company and will involve clear and measurable goals with dedicated resources to get results.

Employers also vary widely in their level of experience and expertise in addressing DEI as a priority. Some employers are pioneering best practices; they are reengineering their outreach and recruitment practices and are making their workplaces more inclusive. Many of these best practices are highlighted in Resource 2. Other employers have more limited experience and expertise and are still learning which practices are the best fit for their companies. In both cases, employers can benefit from partnerships with OPSOs in developing and carrying out DEI initiatives.

Key Takeaways

Employers vary widely in their levels of commitment to DEI, how they organize and manage DEI initiatives, and their levels of experience and expertise in carrying them out. One critical issue is whether DEI is a clearly defined goal by the organization's top leadership and whether front-line professionals have the time and resources to achieve results with their partners.

Employers seek a clear value proposition.

Increasingly, employers recognize that a diverse workforce, such as one that includes opportunity population talent, results in significant business advantages including but not limited to better representation of their customer base, increased hiring efficiencies, more innovative thinking, boosted productivity, higher retention, and greater brand recognition and loyalty.

Opportunity population practitioners considering the value proposition for employers to partner with them should focus on outcomes that are of value to the employee and the employer. These should be mutually agreed upon and reflect advantages for all parties involved, which is not always the case for outcomes-focused information. For example, if a measure of success for opportunity population practitioners is job placements, but retention of those hires

is low, then job placements would not be a good measure to determine a successful partnership. A compelling value proposition will connect proposed measures of success to the employer's pain points.

Particularly when speaking to employers about potential employees, employer interest will be piqued by an individual's strengths, not the deficits. Employers will need to be aware of challenges that opportunity populations face (hence the companion resource that orients employers to OPSOs), but the focus of these partnerships is to create shared value for all parties. If the emphasis is placed on the obstacles that employers may encounter, then it is more difficult to make a compelling value proposition. The value proposition concept, and how to make a compelling one, will be further explored in Resource 3: Leveraging TPM to Achieve Better Outcomes for Opportunity Populations.

Figure 1.1 Value Proposition Template and Sample Language

<p>Speak to the employer pain point first and how solutions may involve opportunity population hiring strategies.</p>	<p>Employers—like you—in our area continue to express problems with finding a diversified and qualified workforce for jobs that are critical for your company to grow and remain competitive. We recognize there are often costly problems with recruiting, onboarding, and unwanted turnover as well as with upgrading the skills and credentials of existing workers.</p>
<p>Acknowledge what they are doing now with you and others; use this time to thank them.</p>	<p>I know you and other employers have tried a lot of different ways to address your talent needs and have partnered in many of our local initiatives. And you serve on several advisory groups. We greatly appreciate the leadership roles you are playing.</p>
<p>Suggest the idea to start a new effort or strengthen the employer's role in an existing initiative.</p>	<p>We aim to work more effectively together to achieve shared value for those we provide services to and to you to better address common workforce needs. We want to leverage a systematic approach to (1) start a new employer-led initiative to address your needs, or (2) strengthen the leadership role of employers in an existing initiative.</p>
<p>Ask what success looks like for them.</p>	<p>When thinking about your current pain points, what does success in addressing them look like for you? What goals are you seeking to set to address your current pain points?</p>
<p>Explain potential benefits to employers (i.e., what is in it for them), using asset-based language to describe opportunity population talent and a focus on outcomes.</p>	<p>Based on what you have shared about your biggest talent challenges and those indicators that constitute a successful partnership, here are ways hiring opportunity population talent can help you overcome those obstacles (e.g., better representation of their customer base, increased hiring efficiencies, more innovative thinking, boosted productivity, higher retention, greater brand recognition and loyalty, or be even more specific about the assets of the opportunity population talent targeted for this partnership). Here are ways we can mutually measure that we are on the right track should we decide to partner.</p>
<p>Get agreement to attend the first meeting.</p>	<p>Would you be willing to attend a meeting with our team to discuss our respective goals and how to get started?</p>

Recommended Actions for OPSOs and Practitioners

- 1. Gather Information about Employer Talent Sourcing Practices and Leverage Existing Employer-Led Initiatives.** Gain insight into how employers currently source talent for the jobs (i.e., via local versus regional or national/global, traditional and/or nontraditional provider partners) that are most critical to their competitiveness. Conduct a review of existing employer-led initiatives (e.g., sector initiatives)—particularly those that have expressed increasing workforce diversity as a priority—before engaging individual employers in partnerships.

Questions to Consider:

- a. Which talent-sourcing practices do employers in my area currently use?
- b. For which jobs do employers source opportunity population talent in my area? Include both nontraditional and traditional providers.
- c. Which initiatives or partnerships are employers currently bought into that would be a good place to start, and are they using the TPM Framework?

- 2. Explore Employer Association Partnerships.** Contact employer associations in your state and local area to identify existing employer-led initiatives. Explore their willingness and capacity to establish partnerships with multiple employers that are willing to work together to address shared needs.

Questions to Consider:

- a. Which employer associations (e.g., chambers of commerce, sector associations) have the credibility to organize multiple employers in a workforce partnership?
- b. Which employer associations, if any, have a history of organizing employers successfully or are currently organizing employers that have an interest in working with opportunity population talent?
- c. To what extent are these associations familiar with or making use of the TPM Framework?

3. Engage the Right Employer Professionals. When engaging employers, ask employer representatives about their role in their organizations and make sure you have the buy-in and support of higher-level executives and the right professionals at the table who have the decision-making responsibility necessary for effective partnerships. Also, establish who would be the major point of contact for partnerships and which professionals should be engaged when addressing specific issues or priorities, including how well equipped the organization is to support opportunity population talent.

Questions to Consider:

- a. Have I secured the buy-in and support of senior leadership at one or more companies? If so, how do I know?
- b. For those employers where I have gained the buy-in and support of senior leadership, who is my point of contact and what professional role does this person play in the company?
- c. Does my point of contact have the support of a team inside the company, and if so, what are their respective professional roles? What training has been or could be provided to supervisors who will oversee opportunity population talent? Are there any potential gaps that need to be addressed?
- d. Does the company have third-party employee support professionals? If so, what role do they play?
- e. Can TPM provide a more streamlined approach for coordinating teams of professionals within multiple companies through a single point of contact at an association?

4. Get the Facts Straight First: Gather Data Directly from Employers on Their Needs and Priorities. Supplement government and other available LMI by working directly with employer association partners and the right employer professionals to identify the most critical jobs, pain points, the scale of their needs (e.g., projected job openings), and what prioritization has been given to increasing workforce diversity. Determine whether the level of need and criticality of the openings warrant establishing or expanding a program in partnership.

Questions to Consider:

- a. Am I using data to guide planning and decision making, and what is the source and assumptions underlying that data?
- b. What data, if any, are coming directly from the companies I plan to partner with (e.g., job projections, in-demand competencies and skills), and who is supplying these data within a company?
- c. For the critical jobs that are of most interest to the companies I am partnering with, is there a sufficient and consistent level of need to warrant establishing or expanding a program or partnership?

- d. If there is not a sufficient level or need, what would have to change (e.g., increase in demand by adding more employers to the partnership, or changing the focus)?
- e. If the employers and employer association(s) we are partnering with are not using TPM, can it be a useful framework to get clearer, more granular information about employer needs and priorities?

5. Determining Partnership Fit: When determining if a partnership with an employer or a group of employers is a good fit, leveraging the answers from the previous questions will position OPSOs and practitioners to enter negotiations with a better understanding of how all parties can benefit through shared value. Knowing the employer's perspective on and experience with opportunity populations can result in a more effective partnership.

Questions to Consider:

- a. What is the company's overall mission? As it relates to opportunity populations? How does that play out in the context of their hiring, onboarding, retention, and career advancement activities and practices?
- b. What is the role of CSR within the company? How does it connect to the company's overall business strategy, including but not limited to HR functions?
- c. Has the company previously sought to attract opportunity population talent as employees? If so, was it successful? Were there challenges, and if so, what was done to overcome them?
- d. Can TPM provide a framework for scaling best practices between OPSOs and practitioners and employers in ways that make jobs more accessible and sustainable for opportunity population talent?



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