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Talent Pipeline Management® (TPM)

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

U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Foundation

Resource 3:
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Resource 3: Leveraging TPM to Achieve Better Outcomes for Opportunity Populations

This resource describes how to use TPM to build better partnerships that result in improved outcomes for opportunity populations, defined as those who experience barriers to employment. It is part of a set of resources that, when combined with the Introduction, make up the TPM Resource Guide: Connecting Opportunity Populations to Better Career Pathways.

This document (1) provides an orientation to TPM as a framework for organizing employers and their talent supply chain partnerships in order to unlock a dual bottom line; (2) explains how TPM can be used to improve communication and promote shared understanding between employers and opportunity population-serving organizations (OPSOs)—that is, those that serve people who experience barriers to employment; and (3) describes how TPM can be leveraged by employers and OPSOs to modify their processes in ways that make their partnerships more successful, shift employer perspectives and behavior, and ultimately create a more inclusive workforce. TPM delivers better diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) outcomes, creating shared value for opportunity population talent, OPSOs and their associated practitioners, as well as employers.

The value-add of increasing workforce diversity means that more companies are identifying this area as a critical pain point that requires attention and committed resources. Addressing this issue effectively and creating more equitable workplace environments are not easy tasks, and many existing employer practices will require modifications. OPSOs are natural partners for employers that wish to act on these priorities.

TPM Organizes Employers and Their Talent Supply Chain Partners to Unlock a Dual Bottom Line

At its core, TPM is a systematic approach for getting employers to engage in collective action through a structured process of data collection and decision making. The result is authentically employer-led partnerships that unlock a dual bottom line (i.e., financially and socially), activating enhanced employer leadership and engagement in sourcing of opportunity population talent.

TPM is both a framework and a process. It is a framework in that it provides clear roles and direction for all stakeholders in the talent development ecosystem, with an emphasis on how employers need to get organized at scale. It provides a process for employers to repeatedly produce high-quality, primary source data about their workforce needs and challenges. TPM is the mechanism by which this information is shared with preferred and trusted partners, including those that serve opportunity populations, to inform co-designed talent solutions. These solutions, which can include wraparound services, result in better outcomes for opportunity populations and serve as a catalyst for changed employer perspectives and behaviors, leading to a more inclusive workforce as well as shared value for all parties.

Efforts that do not result in shared value typically lead to short-term engagements and one-off projects. In addition, employer engagement is made increasingly difficult by employer partnership fatigue. Frequently, the same employers are being asked to play different consultative roles as advisors not only for community-based organizations but also for traditional education and workforce partners, such as schools, colleges, and workforce boards.

Through TPM, employers are organized into a collaborative—hosted by an organization of their choosing—that can serve as the employer committee for one or more advisory groups and sector partnerships with which employer collaboratives choose to work. Host organizations are typically—but not exclusively—a business association like a chamber of commerce, sector association (e.g., a manufacturing partnership), or economic development organization.

Individual employers, especially larger employers, may choose to implement TPM by themselves; however, there are many advantages for employers to work together: higher visibility, shared expertise and peer learning, streamlined solutions, and greater scale (e.g., number of job openings) and leverage when working with partners. As a result, employers, especially small- to mid-size employers, may elect to be part of a collaborative. In our experience, even large firms see the benefits of working in collaboration with other employers rather than going it alone.

TPM is systematic in how it uses information to co-design talent pipelines that are consistent with career pathway models and in how it provides the context for coordinating complementary initiatives. By simplifying outreach and establishing better organization efforts, this approach can help OPSOs overcome employer engagement challenges.

Once organized, employers are guided through a six-strategy process, which establishes a talent supply chain approach that allows for achieving a positive *financial* and *social* return on investment (ROI). The six strategies are described below:

Strategy 1: Organize Employer Collaboratives—
A group of employers form an employer collaborative around one or more shared pain points and determine the critical business functions and occupations they will work together to address. Shared pain points can include improving the qualifications of new job applicants, reducing onboarding and training costs, improving retention and career advancement opportunities, and increasing workforce diversity. Business functions can include workforce roles such as nursing, machining, and software development, which allows employers to focus on the core work requirements without getting caught up in the complexities of differing job titles.

Strategy 2: Engage in Demand Planning—The employer collaborative produces data on projected new and replacement positions for the targeted jobs based on their workforce planning activities and business assumptions. This information—primary source data—is specific to the collaborative; as a result, it will often stand in contrast to data pulled from government occupational projections or data produced by analyzing job postings.

Strategy 3: Communicate Competency and Credential Requirements—In addition to collecting data on new and replacement positions, the employer collaborative develops a shared language to describe required and preferred hiring requirements for its target business functions or occupations. As part of this process, the employers in the collaborative revisit their current hiring requirements and revise them to be more competency- and skill-based. They also make important decisions about proxies such as required or preferred credentials and experience that could be constraining their ability to tap into available talent pools.

Strategy 4: Analyze Talent Flows—The last part of the collaborative's data collection efforts includes analyzing the current talent sourcing patterns of the employers and from where they could get talent in the future. For external pipelines, this strategy involves employers looking at the education, training, and credentialing source(s) for those workers who either applied or were hired, so they know where their current workers come from. For internal pipelines, it can be used to identify how talent within a company can be upskilled to fill needed jobs. This strategy also encompasses analyzing the capacity of current talent sources in order to answer questions like, "Can my current talent sourcing partners meet our projected demand given our current utilization of those sources (i.e., the number or percentage hired or upskilled by the collaborative from those sources)?" It also offers an opportunity to examine demographic characteristics and determine if new partnerships with providers can support efforts to diversify the talent pipeline.

Strategy 5: Build Talent Supply Chains—Using the primary source data organized by the collaborative through Strategies 2, 3, and 4—and the pain points arrived at in Strategy 1—the employers make decisions about the type of talent pipeline that is best suited to their needs (i.e., upskill existing workers, focus on external hires, or both) and with whom they will work to co-design and implement their solution(s). The data are put into action and used to co-design a talent pipeline that can meet the projected needs of employers while delivering a quality education and training experience to learners that results in employment or career advancement opportunities. Strategy 5 also allows for back-and-forth discussion between the employer collaborative and its talent sourcing partners on matters such as the required and preferred competencies and credential requirements and which partner—including the employer—is responsible for addressing them. It is also an opportunity to determine what types of supports and services offered to opportunity population talent, as well as what employer-facing services, will produce the envisioned shared value for all partners and a dual bottom line.

Strategy 6: Continuous Improvement—After implementing a solution with preferred and trusted partners, the employer collaborative collects and uses agreed-upon performance data to identify continuous improvement opportunities. This includes reviewing both leading indicators, such as enrollment and completion data, but also lagging indicators that are important to employers, such as improving the

yield rate of qualified job applicants, reducing turnover, and enhancing upskilling options. Through TPM, both the employer collaborative and its talent pipeline partners are given a process to analyze the data, identify root causes, test solutions, and scale what works—all with an eye toward improving the ROI for employers, opportunity population talent, and OPSOs.

As an end-to-end talent supply chain solution, TPM offers a framework to achieve DEI goals more effectively while integrating a dual bottom line. TPM encourages employer collaboratives to include workforce diversity as a major talent pipeline issue and to focus on expanding career opportunities for targeted populations and demographics. Throughout the TPM framework and process, employers are challenged to get their facts straight both internally but also as an employer collaborative so that they can send

clearer signals and ultimately be better partners. Companies that have established DEI goals may have divisions across the company that are not in sync with one another. For example, a company's human resources (HR) strategies to create more diverse and inclusive workforce environments naturally overlap with corporate social responsibility initiatives that are intended to achieve similar outcomes, but these two teams are not always working together. TPM is a team sport in many contexts and can help uncover inconsistencies and gaps.

Success Story:
Kaiser Permanente Innovates with Opportunity Populations

In 2017, Kaiser Permanente, one of the largest health care systems in U.S., needed to complete construction on a hospital in South Sacramento, California. The hospital's CEO told the general contractor that they would gladly pay overtime to get the project completed. But the contractor couldn't accelerate the project because there were not enough skilled workers available to do the job.

Kaiser recognizes that the construction industry has good jobs, but the existing workforce development process is ambiguous and as a result, the pipeline is more accessible to people already in construction or with family ties to the business. The current process is neither centralized nor clearly publicized. There is no concrete pipeline for others to enter the construction trades in northern California, so there are relatively few minorities in the field, in the most multicultural state in the US. The healthcare giant wants to change this.

Kaiser has over $1 billion of construction projects planned in California in the next few years. As in everything they do, their mission is to provide as much access as possible to all communities in their service area. Kaiser even created its own construction company to help meet the demand for new facilities, which has been little impacted by COVID-19 disruptions. But the shortage of construction workers, including plumbers, electricians, carpenters and HVAC technicians, is a much broader problem in California.

In August 2019, Kaiser brought together eight general contractors to see if they would collaborate on solutions for the workforce shortage. A major focus of the new construction collaborative, which has grown to 12 companies, is broadening access to opportunity populations who historically have been excluded from the industry. Specifically, Kaiser wants to extend the pipeline to recent high school grads in low income neighborhoods throughout Sacramento region and citizens returning from incarceration.

Key Takeaways

A key differentiator for TPM is that it encourages employers to get organized and work together to achieve the scale necessary for establishing effective partnerships between employers and OPSOs. This results in a dual bottom line.

TPM also enables employers to collaborate to get the facts straight prior to engaging their talent-sourcing partners. When employers organize to produce primary source data about their shared workforce needs, they can better co-design solutions to meet those needs. This is what makes TPM a powerful value-add to any partnership with OPSOs and their practitioners.

Employers also must be thoughtful about why they are prioritizing opportunity population talent and gauge which populations and opportunity population talent organizations they have access to.

TPM Improves Communication and Promotes Shared Understanding Between Employers and OPSOs and Practitioners

TPM is a useful framework for employers to develop a shared language and understanding as they collaborate as a team. What is more, TPM can help bridge the divide between employers and OPSOs by opening new lines of communication with more consistent, higher quality data backed by stronger, more sustainable employer leadership. In addition, shared understanding among partners leads to an enhanced ROI because all parties are working alongside one another to achieve the same goals. Below are just a couple examples of how TPM, through improved communication, helps promote shared understanding between employers and OPSOs and practitioners:

TPM organizes employers around critical jobs using trusted employer associations or other intermediaries.

TPM encourages employers to organize collaboratives when building a talent supply chain solution. TPM provides the collaborative with a structured end-to-end process to clearly define their most pressing workforce pain points, their critical jobs, and the geographic areas they will start with when working alongside their education and workforce partners. These partners include OPSOs such as nonprofits, community-based organizations, and staffing agencies, as well as traditional education providers (i.e., schools, community colleges, and universities).

Employers use trusted employer associations—as previously mentioned, the host organization—to implement the TPM process. This includes aggregating their primary source data, facilitating decision making among the collaborative members, and managing the resulting relationship(s) with education and workforce partners. The host organization that is staffing the employer collaborative can serve as its spokesperson, resulting in more consistent and higher quality communication while also greatly reducing the time and costs associated with engaging employers in these partnerships.

TPM is an employer-led process that develops the information that OPSOs need in order to start new or to improve existing relationships, creating career pathways for opportunity population talent.

Critical pieces of information gathered directly from employers can result in more effective partnerships with OPSOs. These partnerships better equip opportunity population talent to gain and sustain employment as well as to access career advancement opportunities.

TPM employer collaboratives do more than just identify the most critical jobs—they also provide information on projected job openings that can complement more traditional government labor-market information. Through TPM, employer collaboratives develop a shared language to describe similarities and differences in hiring requirements. For example, employers examine closely their competency and credential requirements enabling them to better communicate the right information and expectations for their most critical roles to OPSOs and identify items that may be limiting their talent pool.

TPM prepares employers for how to work productively with their education and workforce partners to co-design talent pipelines that have clearly defined roles at different stages and an agreed-upon set of performance metrics. The step-by-step process gathers needed information, which is then used to develop career pathways that allow employers to be more proactive in working with OPSOs to determine each other's respective roles. It also helps identify what employer roles or engagement opportunities are most important in producing results.

In addition, TPM provides a framework for working with OPSOs to better align resources and incentives; this improves the delivery of training and support offered to opportunity population talent and boosts employee performance.

Key Takeaways

TPM can be a powerful tool to help bridge the communication divide between employers and OPSOs. It can also promote shared understanding between the two sides. When leveraged in the right ways, TPM can scale and sustain employer engagement with OPSOs as well as significantly improve both the quality and the level of that engagement. A shared understanding of one another's roles results in saved time and resources—and better outcomes for all stakeholders.

Using TPM to Modify Processes Among Employers and OPSOs

As previously presented, TPM offers a framework and shared language for improving understanding and communication between employers and their education and workforce partners, including OPSOs and their associated practitioners.

We now explore how the TPM strategies can accomplish this aim by improving specific processes, such as (1) removing bias and barriers in hiring requirements; (2) analyzing talent flows to untapped hidden talent; (3) co-designing talent supply chain solutions and integrating wraparound supports across a value chain; and (4) measuring impact to improve performance. When these modifications are combined, the results are more successful partnerships between employers and OPSOs, a shift in employer perspectives and behavior, and ultimately a more inclusive workforce. This process creates shared value for opportunity population talent, OPSOs and the practitioners that serve them, and employers.

First and foremost, companies need to be thoughtful about why they are prioritizing workforce diversity. Several common reasons are better representation of their customer base, increased hiring efficiencies, more innovative thinking, boosted productivity, higher retention, and greater brand recognition and loyalty. Implementing successful processes that intend to increase workforce diversity should be pervasive throughout the company's practices, not just in HR processes. Part of this consideration involves employers identifying the job opportunities within their companies—specifically, their critical jobs, or those that are most important to their firms' competitiveness and performance.

The TPM Orientation, an educational opportunity to share far and wide across your community, aims to lay the groundwork for the following activities and processes; this exercise of self-evaluation is a helpful entry point. This will be further explored in the earliest stages of actual TPM implementation once employers collectively identify their pain points, of which expanding workforce diversity is an increasingly prioritized focus.

Success Story:
Vermont Manufacturers Target Opportunity Populations

Like most states in the U.S., manufacturers in Vermont suffer from a chronic labor shortage.

Before the COVID-19 recession, this worker shortage was limiting the growth of manufacturers. Employers would turn down contracts due to capacity limitations. Chronic "no shows" in the manufacturing workforce made it difficult to plan workflow or to meet customer's delivery deadlines.

In 2018, to address these problems, the Vermont Business Roundtable's TPM initiative, VTPM, organized a collaborative of 35 Vermont advanced manufacturers. Using the TPM framework, they surveyed participants, asking them to forecast their workforce needs two years out. Employers said they needed 1,600 workers to fill production jobs alone. Since this was a survey of just 35 employers, collaborative organizers knew the actual demand among Vermont's manufacturers would be much greater.

This workforce need couldn't be met through traditional channels, such as hiring recent graduates from high school CTE programs, since there programs varied in content and delivery. So the collaborative had to communicate with hard-to-reach populations who weren't aware of the high paying production job opportunities available with the right training.

"It's no good identifying the job and career ladder opportunities if you have no one to tell this to," said Mary Anne Sheahan, executive director of the Vermont TPM Program. "We needed to communicate with opportunity populations. This is the untapped audience we knew employers needed to reach."

To start, the collaborative partnered with the Vermont Community Foundation to get the message about employment opportunities out to organizations that would be most receptive, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, and Corrections, both divisions of Vermont's Agency of Human Services and to work-based learning coordinators in schools. VTPM also reached out to non-profits like Vermont Works for Women, Refugee Resettlement and ReSource Vermont.

These organizations successfully communicated about the career opportunities along with funded regional training resources. In addition, Working Bridges of the United Way of NW Vermont also provides businesses with wraparound services to give employees support to overcome personal barriers to work.

Key Takeaways

At the onset of organizing and implementing the TPM framework, TPM can improve practices by:

TPM Orientation: Analyzing TPM's fit for an organization's DEI goals and how they fit within the broader business strategy. Learning about the role of OPSOs in making talent pipelines work, as well as identifying potential partners that serve the targeted opportunity population.

Strategy 1: Establishing and understanding those employer collaborative's pain points that center on workforce diversity and inclusion.

Strategy 2: Providing detailed information on what jobs are in critical demand and more accurate job projections.

Removing Bias and Barriers in Hiring Processes and Requirements

Once employers have a clear focus on their DEI-related pain points, the points' relation to critical jobs, and a targeted opportunity population talent pool, TPM offers a powerful framework and set of tools for employers to identify hiring requirements for these jobs, including competencies and credentials that are required or preferred. What is so important about this part of the TPM process is that it presents an opportunity for employers to examine how their hiring requirements may be limiting them from potential talent, either for individual candidates or from talent sources (e.g., OPSOs) more generally. This includes how jobs are described and how applications are reviewed.

Job Descriptions: The language used in a job description—both in the job title as well as the key words associated with the skills required to perform the job—can dramatically influence which candidates apply. Although job description bias is typically associated with gender, it can also be applied more broadly to opportunity population talent. For example, specific verbs and adjectives may deter opportunity population talent if they do not see themselves as "competitive" in the workplace or having "managed" projects or other people. In addition, credential requirements that may not be necessary to perform the key skills prioritized in a critical job can filter out otherwise qualified candidates. For example, if the targeted opportunity population talent is less likely to have obtained a four-year degree in computer science but has performed well as part of a short-term coding boot camp, then employers seeking entry-level employees for coders should make changes to their hiring requirements.

In particular, the TPM process can be used to right-size hiring requirements, which often means reducing the number of requirements or changing some requirements to preferred competencies, credentials, or experiences. Further, employers can use this process to begin to think about their role throughout the talent pipeline. Reviewing what employers prioritize as most critical to their targeted jobs gives them an opportunity to take on more of the responsibility in ensuring that the signals they send to their partners reflect the necessary requirements of the role. Ultimately this provides a greater value for all involved.

Application Review Process: How an organization goes about hiring can have a significant impact on who is ultimately selected to fill a job. Informal processes that are not standardized across applicants can unintentionally filter out qualified applicants by allowing implicit bias to seep into the review. For example, hiring managers often rely on an unstructured interview process to organically reveal the qualifications of a job candidate, but this approach will not prove consistently effective to identify strong applicants. And if an organization mostly relies on referral hiring from an already nondiverse workforce, then it is unlikely that employers will secure a diversified workforce.

To remedy these common missteps, employers should work with hiring managers as well as those who currently fill critical jobs to better capture the most prioritized competencies and skills. Bringing in subject matter experts to inform the discussion and challenge long-established thinking is a useful internal exercise. In addition, to overcome bias in the application review process, employers should consider the use of software tools that identify biased language and offer neutral language suggestions. They should also consider a structured application review and interview process that is more focused on competencies and ability to complete work tasks.

TPM promotes a focus on competency- and skill-based hiring. It provides a value-add in that it creates a structured process by which employers can challenge their prior assumptions about what competencies are needed for critical jobs and improve their ability to signal these needs to OPSOs and those they serve. Employers need to consciously examine how attaching "required" to competencies or credentials in a job description can eliminate qualified applicants, including but not limited to opportunity population talent.

The strength of a TPM collaborative is that employers can learn from their peers, who will go through a similar exercise of closely examining their hiring requirements—which are preferred versus required skills—and how implicit bias must be discovered and addressed. External partners, including OPSOs, may prove beneficial to better understanding what explicit and implicit biases are weeding out potential talent.

Success Story:
Greyston Bakery Reimagines Hiring

When people are offered a job at Greyston, there is no interview, resume or drug test involved. Instead of screening potential employees out, Greyston hires and retains good workers by investing extensively in hard and soft skills training, as well as wraparound services. Employees with health, housing, child care and transportation needs are connected to resources they need to keep them employed.

The bakery, which is the global supplier of brownies for Ben & Jerry's ice cream, has virtually no hiring costs and invests about $1,900 in training new bakers. It began scaling it's mission by creating the Center for Open Hiring. One of the first companies to adopt Open Hiring principles was The Body Shop. With coaching from the Center and Greyston executives, they piloted the open hiring process in one of their distribution centers.

The Body Shop hires 200 seasonal employees to handle the holiday rush and it was always a struggle to find workers for the Raleigh site. Adapting the Open Hiring approach they simply asked people three questions: (1) Are you legal to work in the U.S.? (2) Can you stand on your feet for 8 hours? And (3) Can you lift up to 50 pounds?

And the results? Body Shop executives said they reduced recruiting resources and time by 50%. Turnover among the seasonal workers was down 53% over the previous year, and the center had higher production. It was considered the best hiring season in the distribution center in years. The Body Shop plans to expand this innovative hiring practice to other entry level positions in the future.

Key Takeaways

Strategy 3: Understanding how HR practices and processes may unintentionally limit your talent sources. This can include what hiring requirements are included in a job description to attract and evaluate candidates. Employers can use this part of the TPM process to reevaluate which hiring requirements are most critical and then potentially eliminate or shift a requirement to a preferred demonstration of skill or experience. It could also be that employers need to evaluate their hiring process, such as better assessing competencies.

Analyzing Talent Flows to Tap into Hidden Talent

TPM can be leveraged to perform a more accurate supply-and-demand analysis, which can be used to benefit opportunity population talent's inclusion in the pipeline. The TPM approach encourages employers to identify their current source(s) of qualified applicants—a process called back mapping—and is agnostic as to whether these sources are part of traditional education and workforce systems or from more nontraditional systems, both of which serve opportunity population talent. OPSOs can also be partners to more traditional talent sourcing providers to enhance access and success of those populations with eventual transition into the workforce.

If a business has not yet determined if it will target specific opportunity populations (e.g., opportunity youth, people with disabilities), it is important to gain a better understanding of the makeup of opportunity populations in your community, which practitioners serve them, any particular assets those populations offer, and how they match with your company's goals and critical jobs. Employers can survey the regional landscape for OPSOs and learn about the kinds of aid they offer to opportunity population talent.

In addition, the TPM back mapping process allows employers to uncover demographic characteristics for talent, which can assist company efforts to expand workforce diversity. Employers are sometimes surprised as to where their best talent comes from—perhaps a staffing agency, a community-based organization, or even a short-term training program provided by one of those partners, any of which could be an OPSO.

TPM is also used to better determine whether employers with critical in-demand job openings are hiring talent from OPSOs—or even if these firms are aware that OPSOs are as a potential talent source. If employer demand outweighs current supply—or if a company's existing talent suppliers do not offer the diversified candidates that employers have prioritized—it is a good opening for OPSOs to demonstrate their ability to meet projected future demand while positively contributing to a firm's DEI efforts.

This process is not limited to first-time, entry-level hires. TPM also encourages using supply analysis to examine internal pathways that demonstrate career advancement opportunities. By identifying jobs that feed into targeted critical jobs, employers can better sync upskilling opportunities for opportunity population talent. Here, OPSOs can play a critical role in identifying and offering support services that increase retention and career advancement; this will be discussed more in the subsequent section.

Success Story:
Building Pathways for Women in Construction

Memphis is a fast-growing city that is trying to reskill its workforce to meet the evolving needs of its major employers. A critical area of focus is the construction industry, which is facing a shortage of about 2,000 workers and desperately needs to attract people into the building trades. This led to the formation of the "We Build 901" collaborative based on the TPM methodology of construction companies, which includes 50 companies, contractors and subcontractors in the region.

Through discussions of employers in the collaborative it became apparent that there are relatively few women in construction and few pathways for them to enter the field. For example, FedEx a major employer in the region, employs 700 skilled trades people but only two percent are women, says Kit Crighton-Smith, project management advisor for FedEx properties and facilities and oversees their construction operations in Memphis. This led to the development of an additional collaborative of which Crighton-Smith now leads called "Women Build 901 Too."

Women Build 901 Too aims to address the fact that young women are overlooked as a prime source of talent in the region for construction and therefore are not being targeted through most outreach efforts. As a first step, they identified key community and talent partners such as the Tennessee Department of Human Services department and Agape a local nonprofit that provides holistic services for low-income families to obtain economic self-sufficiency.

The collaborative is also working with the local school district to reach middle and high school young women and share information on promising career options in construction and connect them with a female mentor if they choose to move forward in the industry.

Key Takeaways

Strategy 4: Understanding the makeup of opportunity populations in your community as well as those organizations that serve them. Analyzing talent flow to identify and tap into sources of hidden talent from nontraditional providers.

Co-Designing Talent Supply Chain Solutions and Integrating Wraparound Supports Across a Value Chain

To co-design talent supply chain solutions effectively, TPM creates a process for preferred provider designation—that is, those partners recognized by an employer collaborative as being able to meet employer requirements. Employers establish standards and subsequently identify those partners that produce results; this transparent approach better allows OPSOs to connect those they serve with job opportunities. Earning the preferred provider distinction is typically based on a partner's performance addressing the employer's pain point; capabilities and expertise to play a role in the talent pipeline; and leadership commitment to play a role in the talent pipeline and co-design solutions with employers.

Many OPSOs are unaccredited. Having a preferred provider status is a powerful incentive and can allow them to be more discoverable to other employers, policymakers, and others that are similarly trying to achieve better outcomes for targeted opportunity populations. Even accredited organizations can benefit from having this added employer recognition.

Once preferred providers are selected, the aforementioned employer-driven data contribute to the co-design process in which the collaborative and OPSO engage. Solutions are meant to directly address the skills and credential requirements for the identified critical jobs so that opportunity talent is well equipped to succeed in those roles. Importantly, this co-design approach should also establish the accommodations needed to tackle barriers to access and success—which might include education,

training, and support services once opportunity talent is hired, not just at the onset of employment.

TPM establishes the role of employers at different stages of the talent pipeline and clarifies what the employer commitment is and the resources they bring to the partnership, such as career preparation and pre-employment training, onboarding, career coaching, and upskilling opportunities (see Figure 1: Basic Value Stream Map). As mentioned, when employers review and prioritize the skills most critical to their targeted jobs, they assume more of the responsibility in advance of actual employment, which can lower barriers to entry. These priorities may be discovered by the OPSOs, but they are similarly co-owned by the employer partners. OPSOs and their practitioners will be armed with the knowledge of how they can fill any gaps or holes that employers do not feel they can sufficiently provide to support opportunity talent.

Employers and their OPSO partners can leverage this exercise to identify what kinds of support should be offered by the employers and at what stage, and how those activities complement any services offered by OPSOs and their practitioners; it provides a way to clearly signal the roles and responsibilities of all partners. As mentioned, this exercise is not just for the onset of employment, nor just for entry-level hires. A value-add of the TPM process is that it gives partners a framework to identify and integrate education, training, and support throughout all stages of the pipeline. These offerings can include case management services such as transportation, childcare, and housing support that can be arranged directly through OPSOs to protect employee privacy. It can also include pre-employment training for new hires or employee assistance

Figure 1: Basic Value Stream Map
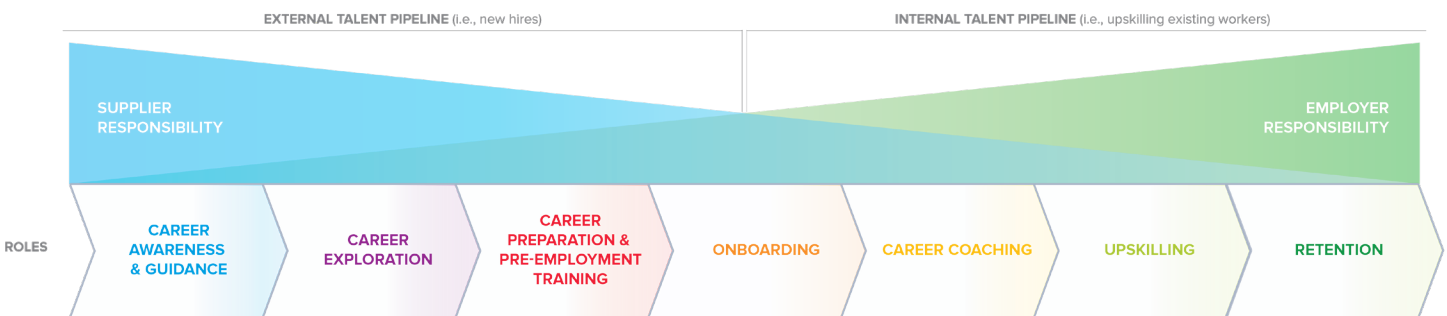
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services, such as financial wellness or literacy training, for those employers interested in upskilling. Alignment between the two partners can result in opportunity talent feeling more comprehensively supported and better equipped to become high-performing and retainable workers. It also speaks to the value creation that initiated the employer-OPSO relationship.

As mentioned, TPM incorporates a value-stream mapping process whereby employers and their preferred providers understand talent development from start to finish. What is more, it is an agile and dynamic process that allows for employers and their partners to continually revisit the talent supply chain and make needed adjustments based on changing conditions, thereby maintaining their relationship over the course of the opportunity population talent's employment. For OPSOs and their practitioners, this will include both services provided to opportunity population talent (e.g., pre-employment training, counseling services, financial wellness, literacy) as well as to the employers themselves (e.g., supervisor training, monitoring, and evaluation).

And finally, the TPM framework allows employers and their partners to align their incentives. In TPM, incentives come in many different forms and go beyond the usual funding incentives provided on the public side (e.g., competitive grants). Many OPSOs have experience with braiding public funding streams to bring together the right mix of services and outcomes; through TPM these efforts can be expanded to include private sector–controlled incentives. Private sector incentives can include priority access to work-based learning opportunities, access to equipment and facilities, scholarships, and, of course, direct funding, to name just a few. These incentives can be powerful signals of employer commitment.

What makes TPM different is that both employers and their partners are encouraged to tie incentives directly to their agreed-upon performance metrics. In other words, incentives drive performance. TPM provides a useful framework for employers to organize the right mix and level of incentives to offer; for OPSOs, it helps identify which types of incentives are most critical and result in improved performance on both supply- and demand-side metrics.

Success Story:
Bridging the Gap in Dallas County with a Comprehensive Workforce Ecosystem

Despite record unemployment in Dallas County, driven by the COVID-19 recession, employers in sectors such as logistics and manufacturing still have thousands of available jobs that they can't fill with qualified applicants. A significant contributing factor is that almost one-third of working-age Texans have a criminal record, which currently excludes them from many jobs.

In February 2020, non-profit Redemption Bridge launched the South Dallas Pilot Project in partnership with the State Fair of Texas to create a comprehensive eco-system of employers and organizations providing training and wraparound services to help ex-offenders, veterans, homeless, unemployed youth and people with disabilities overcome barriers to employment.

The South Dallas pilot will not only close the skills gap for employers in the region, but also serve opportunity populations by providing training in nationally recognized industry certifications to enable long-term employability in living wage jobs. To do this, Redemption Bridge has built out a collaborative community of businesses, educational institutions, and workforce agencies that prepares individuals for personal and professional success in the workplace.

Wes Jurey, Redemption Bridge's Executive Director, vets every partner in the system to make sure they will deliver results as a collaborative team player. In addition, all employers in the collaborative have agreed to interview candidates who have earned nationally-recognized certifications, such as certified logistics technician in a "without prejudice" process. A major goal of the initiative is to align and integrate existing support resources to enhance their impact in developing the region's talent pipeline and to increase opportunities for individuals from low income neighborhoods to secure sustainable, living wage jobs.

The project also is closely aligned with local, non-profit social enterprises who provide support with assistance for housing, transportation, addiction recovery, and reconnecting in the community.

Key Takeaways

Strategy 5: Leveraging a transparent process for preferred provider designation. Using employer information to co-design solutions that directly address the skills and credential requirements for the identified critical jobs, as well as accommodations needed to tackle barriers to access and success (e.g., coaching and mentorship as part of the onboarding process and beyond). Integrating case management services when identifying preferred providers and co-designing value streams. Value stream mapping and inclusion of a wide variety of support services, including those that are employer-facing. Aligning incentives and braiding funding to achieve best outcomes for opportunity population talent.

Measuring Impact to Improve Performance

The TPM strategies offer a playbook for employers to engage more effectively within an organization as well as across companies. One major challenge in employer and opportunity population partnerships is how to use a balanced and aligned set of performance metrics that reflect the needs of all partners, including employers. Performance and accountability metrics rarely factor in employer-facing metrics that address key pain points. TPM provides a framework for establishing a balanced set of demand- and supply-side metrics to verify progress, such as the percentage of hires from targeted populations and the percentage of targeted population hires achieving career advancement. These metrics ensure that other performance measures and related incentives (e.g., preferred provider designation) do not have any unintended consequences for expanding opportunity and equity when implementing and managing talent pipeline partnerships.

Through TPM, employers can work with OPSOs and their practitioners to co-design not only training programs and support services, but also balanced scorecards that reflect metrics that are important to opportunity population organizations as well as employers (see Figure 2: Example Aggregate Performance Scorecard). These balanced scorecards are particularly useful in that they communicate value to the employer in ways that can sustain their engagement and commitment to the partnership. In addition, this moves the employer from an advisory role to a direct beneficiary—with data and evidence to back it up. This approach results in shared accountability across partners and helps the collaborative be more transparent to government, funders, and the community.

Through TPM, employer collaboratives work with their supplier partners to develop talent pipelines based on career pathways. These pathways help to produce results based on the agreed upon metrics, including the delivery of coaching and services that contribute toward long-term success.

Figure 2: Example Aggregate Performance Scorecard

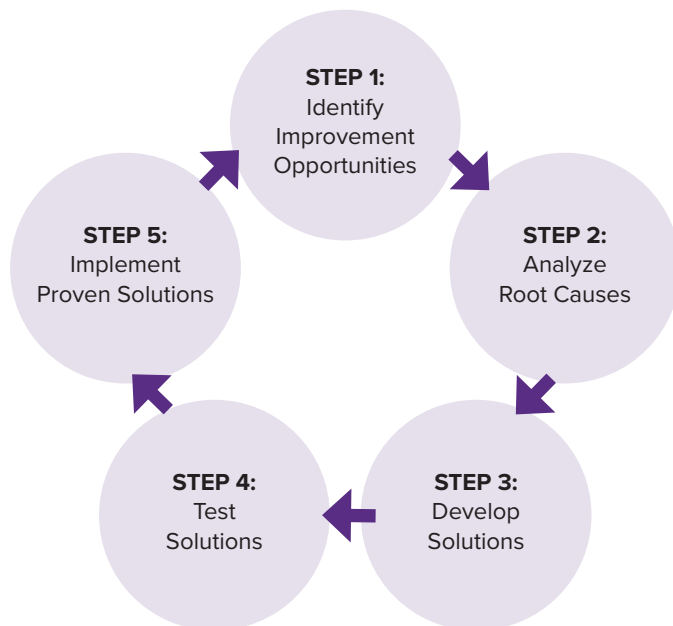| Shared Pain Point Measures	Performance	Relative to Goals	Trend
Percentage of applicants from talent providers that meet the requirements	55%	🔴	🔻
Percentage of new hires from targeted opportunity populations	20 days	🔴	🔻
Average number of days to fill open positions	128 days	🔴	🔻
Percentage of hires retained in first year of employment	75%	🟡	🔺
Percentage of employees completing career advancement from targeted opportunity populations	25%	🔴	🔺
Driver/Transition Measures	**Performance**	**Relative to Goals**	**Trend**
Number of learners enrolled in training program	95	🟡	🔺
Number of learners who complete training program	75	🟢	🔺
Percentage of completers from targeted opportunity populations	28%	🟡	🔺
Percentage of employees from targeted opportunity populations enrolling in career advancement programs	20%	🔴	🔻

Finally, TPM promotes a continuous improvement process that can help identify root causes associated with persistent gaps in opportunity and success and can promote proven solutions to address them at every stage of the talent pipeline. This occurs by using performance data (see Figure 3: Example Performance Scorecard for Tier 1 Training Providers). Data are not just useful for accountability purposes—they permit ongoing conversations between partners on how to improve the relationship in ways that manifest themselves in better outcomes for employers, OPSOs and practitioners, and, most importantly, opportunity population talent.

TPM scorecards allow employers and their partners to avoid chasing solutions and instead focus their attention on key points in the talent pipeline that need to be investigated and improved on through a commonly used improvement model (see Figure 4: TPM Continuous Improvement Process). Sometimes this means employers in the collaborative may need to look more closely at themselves in order to identify a possible breakdown in the talent supply chain partnership; this includes revisiting their data, how they communicate that data to partners, as well as their own role in supporting learners and onboarding new workers.

In TPM, continuous improvement opportunities can be found on both the supply side and the demand side; it should not be assumed the problem lies with the opportunity population talent being hired. For example, exit interviews or focus groups with existing workers and providers/case managers can be instrumentally helpful to determine any improvement opportunities for onboarding, career coaching, mentorship support, or supervisory training.

Figure 4: TPM Continuous Improvement Process

STEP 1: Identify Improvement Opportunities

STEP 2: Analyze Root Causes

STEP 3: Develop Solutions

STEP 4: Test Solutions

STEP 5: Implement Proven Solutions

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Figure 3: Example Performance Scorecard for Tier 1 Training Providers

Tier 1 Provider	Measure	Level	Relative to Expectations	Trend
Community College A	Percentage of applicants from talent providers who meet the requirements	85%	🟢	⬆
University B	Percentage of applicants from talent providers who meet the requirements	60%	🟡	⬇
University C	Percentage of applicants from talent providers who meet the requirements	40%	🔴	⬇

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Key Takeaways

Strategy 5: Establishing balanced metrics and incentives that achieve results and demonstrate shared value creation for all partners.

Strategy 6: Using an evidence-based continuous improvement process that can identify and address root causes of the opportunity and achievement gaps for those facing barriers to career and education advancement.

Recommended Actions in Using TPM to Achieve Better Outcomes for Opportunity Populations

OPSOs and their employer partners should take the following actions:

1. **Is TPM Right for You?** TPM is a useful framework to build mutual understanding and a shared language between OPSOs and their employer partners. It can be used to establish new partnerships or to enhance existing ones (e.g., sector partnerships or advisory boards). It provides a structured process for getting employers organized and having them produce consistent and granular information about their workforce needs. It also provides them with tools to partner more effectively in designing, delivering, and improving a career pathway program, including support services offered to opportunity population talent.

   Work with business associations and economic and workforce development agencies to explore implementation of TPM within the state.

   Questions to Consider:

   a. As an OPSO, what is your current employer engagement strategy? If it is an advisory board, what is the role employers are expected to play, and what professional role do participants represent?

   b. As an employer, have you been or are you currently involved in a partnership with an OPSO, and what was that experience like?

   c. Would TPM be a useful framework to promote mutual understanding and shared language between OPSOs and employers? If so, in what ways?

   d. How, if at all, is TPM different from what strategies you may have used in the past or are currently using?

   e. Can TPM be a useful organizing framework for OPSOs to better understand employer needs and align their offerings for opportunity population talent?

   f. Is TPM right for you?

   g. If so, what additional information do you need to start your TPM journey, and would you benefit from organizing a TPM Orientation or participating in a TPM Academy?

2. **Utilize TPM Best Practices and Tools.** Use TPM best practices and tools to improve opportunity population trainings or support services that achieve an ROI, including diversity and equity goals, for all stakeholders.

Questions to Consider:

a. What ways can TPM be used to address your DEI priorities?

b. When planning a training program, what is the source of information used to align with employer demand? Is it sufficient?

c. Can TPM be helpful in identifying which support services will be most advantageous to opportunity population talent?

d. In what ways can TPM be used to improve the design and delivery of career counseling?

e. Does TPM offer anything new in terms of thinking about performance management, ROI, and continuous improvement, and is that useful or relevant to you and your organization?