

# H RTP ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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## Industry Drives Training Solutions

Fourth in the series: *Four Essential Elements of High Road Training Partnerships*

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### Overview

This brief focuses on the essential element of having the industry partnership drive the training solutions needed for that industry. It describes why this is essential, what is meant by taking an industry driven approach to training solutions, and what the critical components of doing so are.

There is much good work and guidance already out there about how to develop and run effective workforce education and training programs. This brief does not repeat that here. Rather, it provides ways to refine or in some cases fundamentally re-think these programs based on what industry partnerships have been able to do when all four of the essential elements of an H RTP are in place.

A separate companion brief provides more detail on promising practices for this essential element, with examples from the field.

### Why It Is Essential the Industry Partnership Drives Training Solutions

Foundational to working on the high-road path is that the industry leads the problem solving for the workforce demands unique to that industry. They do so through dedicated and sustained partnerships that incorporate worker wisdom throughout, thereby arriving at workforce education and training programs that are uniquely suited to meet the industry's needs.

The order of this is important. Note that the development of education and training programs result from the industry partners determining the needs, and then problem solving together with strong worker voice to design, deliver, and support programs that optimally meet demand for the industry.

Having the industry drive the solutions means HRTPs can address challenges that perhaps the traditional workforce development system cannot reach. They can be designed up front to factor in operational issues and worksite culture in addition to education and training courses. The meaningful participation of worker and employer leaders in the industry partnership allows HRTPs to affect operational and cultural barriers to training, learning, and advancement like scheduling, safety, or supervisor support – issues that require workers to articulate and employers to help solve.

Having the industry partnership determine the education and training programs also allows those programs to be more comprehensive and holistic. They can include innovative supports provided on the job itself and specific to the skills the workers must master. Mentor programs that capitalize on the wisdom of co-workers on the job and other “whole person” supports are some of the ways HRTPs have successfully designed comprehensive solutions beyond traditional classes or trainings.

## What is Meant by the Partnership Drives Training Solutions?

The high-road approach will be reflected in every part of an education and training program, bringing the demand side of the jobs/skills needed together with the supply side of workers/learners. Since the industry partnership is leading the effort, the H RTP can choose to utilize training programs that already are out there, develop and deliver their own programs, or use a hybrid specific to their particular workforce needs. It means the H RTP will set the criteria for whether or not and how to utilize community college and other community based or private education and training providers.

## Critical Components

The following interrelated components enable an H RTP to drive training solutions that meet their industry needs. They cover the full spectrum of decisions from determining what types of training and education program is needed, how it is provided, and how success is supported.

- ❖ **Demand**  
Determine what needs to be taught/learned
- ❖ **Supply**  
Understand the learners and any unique needs or barriers that need to be addressed
- ❖ **Education and Training Providers**  
Decide if, when, and how to work with community colleges and other providers
- ❖ **Education and Training Methods**  
Design curriculum and contextualize learning to meet industry needs
- ❖ **Support Success and Address “Failure”**  
Address operations, work environment, and wraparound supports for learners
- ❖ **Each of these critical components are described more fully below, with promising practices and examples provided in a companion brief in this series.**

## DEMAND: Determine what needs to be taught/learned

Because the industry partnership is defining its training needs, it generates the list of in-demand jobs, skill sets, and career pathways. To determine demand, all three components should be examined—not just the requirements for key jobs that are critical to fill, but also the skill sets to succeed at those jobs and how they all relate to the available career pathways.

If career pathways do not currently exist, the partnership can work together to identify and develop them. H RTPs can go beyond linear career ladders and use career lattices where the trajectory might move across or laterally, as well as up. This allows a wider range of career advancement opportunities within their industry that may be unique to their organizations.

A “start with the jobs” approach is critical to any next decisions about what and how training solutions are developed. H RTPs invest energy up front to determine what jobs are needed based on as much detail as possible for their particular industry. When H RTPs are as specific as possible, it allows the trainings to be as relevant as possible.

As important as identifying current needs for jobs and skills is identifying the skills that will become necessary as jobs and the future of work evolve. This is particularly important as technology changes the nature of many jobs. For example, a study of the potential impact of automation in health care jobs allowed The Ed Fund, an H RTP in this initiative, to identify not only which particular activities needed to perform a particular job were expected to

change, but also which valuable skills were expected to remain necessary to do the job. This level of information allows training programs to focus their efforts in nuanced ways, including investing in skills trainings that will be valuable throughout anticipated changes.

A key aspect of this critical component of demand is not just what is known about job and skill needs, but how the H RTP comes to know it. H RTPs have generated a number of robust ways to determine the jobs/skills needed that go beyond traditional industry analyses. They also draw upon worker wisdom to better ensure the training programs are solving for the real-world needs of their industry as reflected on the ground where the work happens.

## SUPPLY: Understand the learners and any unique needs or barriers that need to be addressed

Knowing the target audience is essential to developing an effective education or training program. This includes understanding the differences between types of learners, including incumbents in the industry workforce, new entrants, and those not yet even able to work who are part of a pipeline being built for the future. Each learner type will require their own unique solutions. It also means addressing the difference between learners who are adult workers and adult learners.

Community colleges and other formal education providers excel at teaching adult *learners*. Yet, if the students are primarily adult *workers* holding down one or multiple jobs, the approach will need to reflect that and may require different pedagogy and supports. The H RTPs in this initiative have found it necessary to devise engaging methods that literally keep people awake if they are coming off a night shift or second job, ensure the instruction is relevant to their current or future work, and build in the employer supports for time off and acknowledgement from their supervisor that reinforces the workers' efforts.

H RTPs have also found it critical to understand the barriers that have kept learners from participating and/or succeeding in current or previous training programs, and then customize new approaches to address those. Worker experience and knowledge are assets in this regard. H RTPs can tap into worker wisdom to better understand barriers through internal career fairs, union steward/member programs, and simply asking the workers themselves. Barriers may include such things as transportation and work schedule challenges, costs, and the ability to "stack" credits – accumulate bite sized pieces of education that add up to an industry-recognized credential or skill

attainment designation. HRTPs have developed innovative ways to inform and support workers so that supply really can meet demand for their industry and the workers/learners.

## EDUCATION and TRAINING PROVIDERS: Decide if, when, and how to work with community colleges and other providers

Critical to determining what training solutions will best serve the industry is to first have a good sense of what is already out there, and, as importantly, how effective it has been to meet the industry need. For example, a recent study conducted for The Ed Fund found that private for-profit entities provide 60-80% of training in the private-sector health care field, but often leave graduates in debt and unable to achieve sufficient career advancement to pay off those debts, creating a disincentive for workers and a drag on the pipeline of qualified employees for high demand jobs. This illustrates a clear need to find or create training solutions that work better for both employers and workers.

The public community college system is a major resource and an obvious potential solution, given its primary role in workforce preparation overall in California. Each H RTP in this initiative has had experience either working directly with community colleges or assessing how well such collaboration could meet their industry needs.

On one hand, some HRTPs found that working with the community college system requires significant time, effort, and tenacity to achieve the flexibility that the industry partnership needs to meet its goals. College credits are not always transferable to degree or credential programs required for specific jobs and, without strong coordination with the H RTP, may not lead to skills that employers in the partnership actually need. HRTPs may also have multiple employers in their partnership who each have slightly different requirements, requiring curriculum to be “tweaked,” which is a challenge for traditional, large-scale institutions.

Furthermore, classes offered are often limited to particular campuses, which can present logistical challenges to workers, especially those juggling multiple jobs. So, while multiple campus sites may exist, they may not be practical solutions to meet a particular industry’s needs.

At the same time, some HRTPs in this initiative have developed strategic and thoughtful ways to work with community colleges, engaging the strengths of the community colleges to meet the industry partnerships’ needs. These include first figuring out whether

existing courses offered will be sufficient, whether developing customized programs would be better, identifying champions for the joint effort, and developing clear channels of communication and accountability.

Community Colleges have the resources and reach to help HRTPs scale and standardize their programs. However, the very size, uniformity and processes that support scale can inhibit the flexibility and nimbleness that make HRTPs so successful at timely and effective industry problem solving. Some HRTPs identified this as a significant challenge to utilizing community colleges as the solution to their education needs, given the way community colleges are set up both for decision making and delivery of classes. Setting up regional programs—let alone statewide programs—brings up a host of complexities to work through. Critical, then, is the HRTPs using their industry-based problem-solving process to identify gaps, needs and strategies to address these issues with education partners like community colleges.

HRTPs must also ensure that instructors have the attributes that fit the industry partnership's unique needs. When customizing courses with community colleges, some HRTPs have found it effective to develop the curriculum with a dedicated instructor and shape the expectations for the teaching role with written job expectations developed jointly with the community college. This may require more advanced planning and organization, but a number of HRTPs found that it worked very well when they formally partnered with local community colleges in this way.

When providing their own training programs, HRTPs have found it is more important to have trainers skilled at teaching adult workers than to utilize those who brought specific content or academic expertise. All HRTPs in this initiative identified the importance of trainers who could teach in formats that were less lecture- and classroom-oriented, and more problem-solving and experiential, with scenarios that the learners could relate to from their current work or life experiences. Many of the HRTPs tapped into the expertise of incumbent worker leaders, mentors, and union staff to lead the trainings. Finally, when the training program is geared to preparing the “whole person”—tapping into the lived experience and cultural understanding of the participants—the teacher assumes many roles beyond imparting content, and can be selected for their ability to relate to or draw out the learners' valuable life experiences.

## EDUCATION and TRAINING METHODS: Design curriculum and contextualize learning to meet industry needs

H RTPs have found it crucial to use curriculum that is fully germane to the knowledge and skills that workers need to master. When the industry partnership determines the education and training that is needed, they can best determine if an off-the-shelf or a more customized curriculum is best. A defining trait of H RTPs is the incorporation of worker voice throughout the partnership, and this includes in curriculum design. H RTPs have developed a number of approaches for tapping into worker wisdom to shape, deliver, and evaluate curricula.

Central to how instruction and training are provided is contextualizing the learning in ways that meet the needs of the industry partnership. While the concept of contextualized instruction is now common in adult education, H RTPs' deep connections to their industries allow them to take contextualization to a much deeper level, explicitly and consistently exposing learners to the real world of the jobs they are seeking. For some jobs, it may be important to the H RTP that, before undertaking a training program, learners fully grasp the physical or psychological demands of the job they are training for. Apprenticeships, by definition, incorporate formal on-the-job training to ensure the learning includes the skills needed in the context of the actual work that apprentices will be performing as they move through the program and career ladders. Yet even when the training is not a formal apprenticeship program, most H RTP trainings go beyond classroom education to actual practice of what the job itself entails.

This contextualizing of training also applies to needs of English-language learners. H RTPs have designed their programs so that the language skills acquired are those that are most relevant for the particular job being trained for, thereby improving the learner's chance of success both in acquiring and retaining employment. For example, the Hospitality Training Academy provides an intensive course that focuses on providing workers with skills to pass interviews and communicate effectively in customer interactions for jobs with high-road hospitality employers.

Because H RTPs strive for scale and to set standards for as much of the industry as possible, they assess how curriculum design and program delivery can promote these goals. Often the criteria for pilots or expansions include the feasibility of the delivery methods being cost-effectively brought to scale, and the extent to which an approach can reduce logistical or operational challenges if implemented industry wide. For example, providing online courses may satisfy the goals of cost-effectiveness and scalability, but it can be a poor method for mastering certain work situations. On the other hand, having high touch supports that work in developing a pilot may not be financially sustainable



once operating at scale. Having the H RTP jointly address up front how well an approach may scale up allows the partners to invest their efforts, even at early stages of a new program, in testing what they believe may ultimately bring the best large-scale results. Core to the culture of a problem-solving H RTP is continuous learning and evaluation, which are especially important when determining which delivery methods to use.

## SUPPORT SUCCESS and ADDRESS “FAILURE”: Address operations, work environment, and wraparound supports for learners

Because H RTPs are determining the education and training needs for their industry, they also are able to provide the most comprehensive supports for success and many have adopted specific ways to deal with what may otherwise be perceived as failure by students. Vital to success is an H RTP’s ability to identify from the outset those operational considerations that can affect overall programmatic effectiveness. These include securing commitments of release time for incumbent workers, providing “backfill” to continue operations and wage replacement while an incumbent worker is in training, and providing ongoing training supports that may involve added duties for supervisors supporting apprenticeships. H RTPs have found they also must explicitly factor in the work environment and develop appropriate supports, such as mentor programs or high-touch counseling that allow workers to develop soft skills and adjust to a particular work culture.

Successful H RTPs respond to failure and promote success by keeping a long-term view, including providing multiple chances for learners to succeed if they do not finish or pass a course the first time. Having a range of career paths that may be lateral rather than just linear also allows workers and training participants to succeed at in-demand jobs and skills that may be less of a stretch for them or better suited to their interests and abilities.

H RTPs have also succeeded in developing specific “earn while learn” programs that allow workers to take the next steps to fill needed jobs without undue financial hardship on themselves or their families. This is integral to apprenticeship programs and can be pivotal for success in other programs as well. It is easier to achieve buy in when employers are directly involved in developing the joint training efforts than if the programs are designed and delivered from the workforce or education systems.

Finally, H RTPs know how critical it is to provide comprehensive wrap-around supports that help program participants contend with issues that may arise while in the program or learning the job. What these look like for any particular program can be tailored to fit directly into the design of the overall program and based on the input of what workers have identified as important.



## About This Series

Through the HRTP Initiative, the CWDB invested close to \$10 million to develop, refine, and expand the number of skill-focused, industry-based training partnerships that advance equity by linking workforce innovation to regional challenges of job quality, economic mobility and environmental sustainability. The UC Berkeley Labor Center was commissioned by the CWDB to gather key learnings from the field from the eight HRTPs that were funded in the demonstration phase of the initiative. This brief is part of a series that includes an overview and explanation of the Essential Elements of successful High Road Training Partnerships as well as promising practices and examples of those essential elements across all of the participating HRTPs. For further information on the specific projects undertaken by the HRTPs in this CWDB initiative and the impact they have had on advancing the goals of equity, climate resiliency and job quality, see the project overviews written by the UCLA Labor Center, commissioned by the CWDB to lead the evaluation process for the initiative. For more information about the HRTP initiative, see <https://cwdb.ca.gov/initiatives/high-road-training-partnerships/>.

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# H RTP Initiative

The California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) designed the High Road Training Partnership (H RTP) initiative to model a sector approach that can address critical issues of equity, job quality, and environmental sustainability. H RTPs are industry-based, worker-focused training partnerships that build skills for California's high road employers. These firms compete based on quality of product and service, achieved through innovation and investment in human capital, and generate family-supporting jobs where workers have agency and voice.

This brief is part of a series that includes an overview of the principles of partnership, snapshot profiles of each of the H RTPs participating in the initiative, an overview and explanation of the Essential Elements of successful High Road Training Partnerships, as well as promising practices and examples of those essential elements across all of the participating H RTPs.

For more information on the initiative and other briefs in this series, see <https://cwdb.ca.gov/initiatives/high-road-training-partnerships/>

## Essential Elements of an H RTP

### 1) Industry-Led Problem Solving

Foundational is that the industry leads the problem solving for the workforce demands unique to that industry. Industry includes both employers and workers or their representatives.

### 2) Partnership Itself is a Priority

Industry leaders conduct their problem solving through a dedicated and sustained partnership.

### 3) Worker Voice

Worker wisdom is explicitly incorporated throughout all aspects of the partnership.

### 4) Industry-Driven Training Solutions

The development, delivery, and reinforcement of education and training programs derive from what industry partners decide is needed.

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