



Training Futures: A case study of a nonprofit-community college partnership

Introduction

The Tysons Corner area, located outside Washington, D.C. in northern Virginia, is home to a maze of skyscrapers and professional office buildings. With more than 26.3 million square feet, the area has the largest concentration of professional office space in Virginia.¹ Booz Allen Hamilton, USA Today and Capital One are headquartered in Tysons Corner. Many other multinational corporations, including Northrop Grumman, Xerox and PricewaterhouseCoopers also have large offices there. Sitting among these corporate giants is Training Futures, a job training program operated through a partnership between Northern Virginia Family Service and Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA). Training Futures is a six-month office administration program that prepares low-income adults for new careers and starts them in work toward college certificates and degrees.

Ninety-four percent of Training Futures participants successfully complete the program, which is offered twice a year to about 50 participants each session. Eighty-five percent of graduates obtain jobs in entry-level administrative positions, file clerks or other professional office occupations. Eighty-four percent of graduates earn 17 credit hours from NOVA during Training Futures.²

Northern Virginia Family Service

Northern Virginia Family Service is a community-based organization headquartered in Oakton, Va. and was founded in 1924. Its mission is to empower individuals and families to improve their quality of life and to promote community cooperation and support in responding to family needs. In 1996, the program became the fiscal sponsor for Training Futures. For more information, visit www.nvfs.org

Northern Virginia Community College

One of the nation's largest community colleges, Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) has 70,000 credit students and 20,000 non-credit students enrolled each year. Students come from more than 180 countries. The college has seven campuses and employs more than 2,300 faculty and staff. For more information, visit www.nvcc.edu

Training Futures graduation ceremonies are emotional affairs because they showcase graduates' accomplishments. Training Futures participants are low-income and many are immigrants to the United States. Prior to Training Futures, they were unemployed or

¹ Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. "Area Business Report: Tyson's Corner." (March 2010). http://www.fairfaxcountypedata.org/sites/default/files/publications/ABR_tysons.pdf (accessed June 10, 2011).

² Helmer, Matt and Blair, Amy "Courses to Employment: Initial Education and Employment Outcomes Findings for Community College-Nonprofit Partnership in Northern Virginia. (June 2011). <http://www.aspenwsi.org/resource/cte-nova/>

underemployed in jobs such as cashiers and parking lot attendants. Most never attended college. The graduation ceremony marks the participants' transformation into skilled office professionals, as they mingle with high profile business professionals.

The transformational process that leads participants to re-imagine their lives and career goals is carefully planned by Training Futures. And the results are perhaps clearest during each graduation ceremony, when a few graduates, selected by their peers, take the stage before hundreds of people to deliver a commencement speech. As the speakers share their stories of immigrating to the United States, struggling with poverty and battling to gain confidence and self-esteem, it becomes clear that these graduates are not the same people they were six months earlier. In the words of one recent Training Futures graduate, "Before, it was like looking through binoculars. Now, I have a larger vision ... I see new chances."

In this case study, we profile the Training Futures program and the partnership between NOVA and Northern Virginia Family Service that makes the program and its outcomes possible. We will share information about:

- Participants and the education and employment outcomes they achieve
- Program design, including recruitment strategies, curriculum, training approach, services provided, employer involvement and funding
- The history of the program and partnership
- Training Futures' operations, including the partners' roles and responsibilities, key staff members, planning processes, and data management
- Key innovations and lessons learned from the partnership

Training Futures is the result of an effective collaborative approach to helping low-income adults succeed in community college and the workforce. We hope this case study strengthens the knowledge of investors and policymakers about this growing field of collaborative practice serving adult learners in community colleges. Because the case study discusses Training Futures' innovative practices and describes how its partners work together, it also will be helpful to workforce leaders at nonprofits and community colleges who are creating new partnerships or sustaining existing collaborations.

The Training Futures Program

The information compiled in this profile is the cumulative result of what was learned about the Training Futures program and the partnership that runs it during Courses to Employment, a three-year demonstration project, from 2008 to 2010, conducted by the Aspen Institute Workforce Strategies Initiative (AspenWSI). It was one of six partnerships between a community college and a nonprofit organization examined. Funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the project examined how these partnerships can help low-income adults achieve greater success in post-secondary education and, ultimately, the workforce. The project built upon what AspenWSI has learned from its broad body of research and evaluation, which has identified the promise of sectoral approaches for improving low-income adults' employment outcomes.

Courses to Employment Demonstration Project and Research Methodology

Six partnerships between a community college and a nonprofit – including the partnership that operates Training Futures – were selected for the Courses to Employment demonstration project, from a pool of 89 applicants, in late 2007.

Research Questions and Research Methodology

Courses to Employment explored five key questions:

- What services do partnership programs provide adult learners?
- What roles, responsibilities, tasks and services are done by colleges? By nonprofits?
- How do partnerships finance and support their work? What do these strategies cost?
- What are participants' education, employment and earnings outcomes ?
- Can these strategies achieve greater scale in addressing community-wide needs?

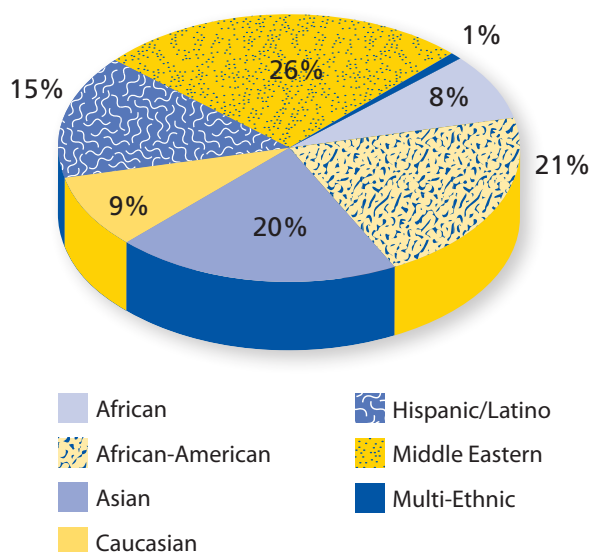
To explore these questions, AspenWSI conducted formative evaluation activities as well as participant outcome assessments for each site. The six partnerships were engaged in research activities designed to promote learning throughout the demonstration and to provide information to the larger workforce development, education, funding and policy communities.

These activities included peer learning meetings which brought together leaders from the six partnerships to share information with AspenWSI about their evolving partnerships and strategies. These meetings also provided networking opportunities for leaders to share ideas and promising practices. AspenWSI also conducted annual site visits at each partnership to interview program staff and leaders, employers, leaders from other partnering organizations, students, and representatives from the public workforce system. Throughout the project, partnerships shared documents with AspenWSI including budgets, memorandums of understanding, job descriptions and other relevant materials. Finally, AspenWSI worked with each partnership to design a participant outcome assessment exploring participants' educational and employment experiences pre- and post-training. For more data on the education and employment outcomes of Training Futures' participants, visit www.aspenwsi.org/resource/cte-nova/

Participants

All data related to Training Futures' participants provided below comes from the participant outcome data study of Training Futures conducted by AspenWSI. The participants come from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Most were recent immigrants to the United States and 74 percent were non-native English speakers. Participants who enrolled during the Courses to Employment demonstration project – which examined Training Futures and five other partnership-operated programs between 2008 and 2010 – spoke over 30 different native languages. As shown in the chart below, three different groups accounted for at least 20 percent each of participants—Middle Eastern, African-American, and Asian.

Ethnicity of Training Futures' Participants 2007-2010



Three out of four Training Futures participants were women. The median age of participants was 38 years, which is much older than the typical community college student, whose median age is 23.³

Almost half of the participants attended some college prior to Training Futures, most at colleges located outside of the United States. Only 27 percent attended college in the United States. And only 14 percent earned a certificate or degree from a U.S. post-secondary institution. At the time of enrollment, about half of the participants were employed, earning a median of \$10.29 per hour and working a

median of 30 hours per week. Seventy-nine percent lived in households with incomes less than 125 percent of the poverty line with Northern Virginia's cost of living among the highest in the United States.

Outcomes

Courses to Employment followed participants who enrolled in Training Futures between the fall of 2007 and spring of 2010, and followed their progress until the end of 2010. The vast majority of participants completed the program, earned college credit for this and obtained jobs. More details are in the following chart.

Participant Outcomes: The Success of Training Futures Participants	
Completion and Credits Earned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 93.7% completed the six-month program. ■ 84.2% earned college credit for completing Training Futures. ■ Participants receiving credit earned a median of 17 college credits.
Employment and Earnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 84.4% of graduates obtained jobs after graduation. Graduates took a median of one month to find a job following graduation. ■ In their initial job after Training Futures, graduates worked a median of 40 hours and earned a median of \$13.31 per hour. This is an increase of \$3.02 per hour and 10 hours per week for those who were working at enrollment. ■ Most of the jobs for Training Futures graduates were related to administrative work. When participants enrolled in the program, their most common job title was cashier.
Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 30.4% of Training Futures graduates enrolled in additional non-credit or for-credit coursework at NOVA after completing Training Futures. Only 14.3% of these participants previously attended NOVA. ■ Participants who continued on enrolled for a median of one additional semester, enrolled in and completed a median of two courses, and attempted and earned a median of three college credits subsequent to completing Training Futures (during the project data study period). ■ Participants most commonly enrolled in English as a Second Language, English, Information Technology/Computer, Business and Accounting classes. Participants successfully completed 76.3% of the coursework they enrolled in post-Training Futures.

** The findings on continuing education outcomes are somewhat limited — especially for 2009 and 2010 participants — because the followup went only to the end of 2010.*

³ National Center for Education Statistics. "2007–08 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study," The *National Postsecondary Student Aid Study*:08. American Association of Community Colleges analysis (2009). <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfacts.aspx> (accessed June 22, 2011).

Recruitment and Screening

Participants are recruited from throughout northern Virginia. Referrals from partnering organizations, social service agencies and community-based English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are common, as are word-of-mouth referrals from earlier graduates. To be accepted, applicants must take the Test for Adult Basic Education and demonstrate at least a seventh grade level in reading comprehension and mathematics. Participants' writing skills also are evaluated. They are required to write an essay explaining their qualifications and desire to participate. Applicants must have prior employment experience and demonstrate a level of stability in their life. Participants in crisis are referred to additional services, but they are not allowed to participate until their life situation is more stable. While Training Futures will accept individuals with a number of different barriers, applicants must demonstrate a willingness and ability to address them. For example, prior to enrollment, participants must show that they can support themselves financially during the program. Participants with children also must have child care arranged or be eligible to receive public child care assistance. Non-qualifying applicants are referred to ESL or basic adult education training and employment resources in the area so they can improve their skills before testing again or locate other programs that help them find jobs.

"What brought me here was that you can get college credits and they would help you find a job and help you build a resume and a cover letter. A lot of colleges will not do that. You get your credits, you graduate, out the door you go."

– Training Futures Graduate

Curriculum and the "Imaginal" Learning Approach to Training

Training Futures provides six months of job training in office procedures, with a concentration in health care administration, twice a year to a total of approximately 100 participants. The cornerstone of Training Futures lies in the program's "imaginal"

education model, based on the transformational learning work of the late economist Kenneth Boulding.⁴ This model focuses on the whole person. It was crafted by the Institute for Cultural Affairs, which does community development and human development worldwide. Participants learn life, literacy and work skills in tandem. For example, they not only are trained in office procedures but must complete timesheets, participate in performance reviews, follow a professional office dress code and adhere to discipline policies around behavior, attendance and punctuality. Training Futures adapted this model in order to immerse its participants in a simulated business environment. Training Futures is located in a professional office building, enabling participants to interact with office workers when they arrive at and leave training. (For a more detailed description of imaginal learning and Training Futures' curriculum, visit AspenWSI's Courses to Employment Toolkit at www.aspenwsi.org/resource/c2e-curricula/)

This professional and corporate setting is a crucial aspect of Training Futures because participants live and breathe it daily. As participants progress through training, they are constantly reminded of the environment and career for which they are training. In the building where Training Futures is located, participants mingle with professionals in the elevator and get a feel for their future job setting. Working professionals from many local corporations and businesses mentor participants by e-mail and in person during training and after participants launch new careers. Through its employer relationships, Training Futures arranges three-week internships for all trainees, giving them a taste for their new career and providing a major source of job placements.

To support this "imaginal" learning, Training Futures staff use a "high-touch" model, with instructors also serving as coaches and training supervisors. Trainees are each assigned to one of these staff. Training Futures also provides an on-site professional counselor/case manager once a week. Participants assigned to the same supervisor hold 40-minute group meetings with that supervisor each Friday to review their week. They discuss

⁴ Boulding, Kenneth E. *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1956

challenges, highlight accomplishments, review a motivational reading assignment and collaboratively “name the week” based on a theme they saw or a notable moment they experienced.

“I love the atmosphere. I’ve been through other training things, through... other jobs. And this one here is very supportive. And it makes learning so much easier. You don’t feel threatened or criticized and you just go at your own pace. And it gives you better belief in yourself..... And it’s just like every day I wake up and it’s like I can’t wait to get here. ”

–Training Futures participant describing the training environment

Participants also meet individually with their supervisor at least twice. During the first meeting, which typically occurs during the program’s third or fourth week, the supervisor provides introductory feedback, discusses employability factors and helps the participant set goals to achieve during the program. Highly personal bonds form between staff and participants, while a high level of professionalism is maintained.

In the classroom, participants build their skills in typing, computer work, filing, customer service, business math and medical terminology. A top priority is developing participants’ communication skills by offering professional development activities. For instance, they participate in a public speaking club, based

on Toastmasters, to hone their skills and build confidence in their communication and language abilities. Because many participants are non-native English speakers, two hour-long “Accent Reduction” sessions are provided twice a week by volunteer speech pathologists.

Equally important is Training Futures’ focus on rebuilding participants’ self-perception and self-esteem. Nearly 80 percent of Training Futures’ participants had incomes below 125 percent of the poverty line; 64 percent were non-native English speakers; and the median age was 38, according to AspenWSI’s analysis of participants who enrolled between fall 2007 and spring 2010. Only slightly more than half were employed when they enrolled, and many were employed in jobs such as cashiers. Training Futures helps participants re-envision their life and career goals and see themselves as confident, highly skilled professionals. Motivational quotes help participants think positively and focus on the future. At the beginning of each class, the instructor writes a quote on the blackboard and participants discuss how it applies to their lives. During the program, participants are exposed to over 500 quotes, a process that Training Futures calls “Quotes Bombardment.” As part of this self-reflection and self-assessment process, participants also take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, an assessment used to better understand their personality and perceptions as well as others’. This assessment and the “Quotes Bombardment” help participants develop a

Training Futures Classes		
NOVA Course	TF Description	Credits
Student Development Orientation 100	College Success Skills	1 credit
Administrative Support Technology 206	Professional Development	3 credits
Administrative Support Technology 130	Office Procedures	3 credits
Business 226	Computer Applications	3 credits
Administrative Support Technology 101	Keyboarding I	3 credits
Administrative Support Technology 137	Records Management	3 credits
Health 141	Medical Terminology	1 credit

life philosophy they can continue to reflect upon and modify as they begin their new professions.

“And that’s what was so wonderful about this program. These are issues that people every day deal with for jobs. What am I going to do about day care? What am I going to do about this, that and the other? And they help you deal with your crises here and identify areas that could be a potential crisis for you later. And that was very insightful for many of us.”

–Training Futures Graduate

Case Management and Supportive Services

Each participant is assigned to a supervisor who serves as the go-to person for support services. During intake, participants sign an agreement to bring any issues that may interfere with their success in the program to their supervisor. During individual and group meetings with participants, supervisors also help participants self-identify barriers. This process helps participants learn to regularly evaluate their life so they can plan for work and school. Participants’ attendance also is carefully monitored because absence usually signals another issue or barrier.

Participants receive a variety of supportive services during training. Early on, staff members help set up carpools to meet transportation needs. Participants also receive a professional office wardrobe through a clothing closet staffed by volunteers. Participants are required to dress professionally throughout training. They also learn about dress codes, written or unwritten, so they are prepared for job interviews, networking events and new jobs.

To overcome barriers outside the classroom, Training Futures employs a part-time social worker who meets with participants as needed. The social worker and other staff refer participants to other social service organizations for additional support that many participants then receive during training. Training Futures staff members also prepare a weekly memo for participants, sharing information on community resources. On occasion, Training Futures hosts service fairs where local social

support service providers share information. To promote financial literacy, the banking service Capital One visits the class to talk about how to develop and keep a budget, check a credit status, and open a checking account.

Training Futures and Northern Virginia Family Service also help participants who have an emergency, offering gas cards, groceries, etc. And they advocate on behalf of participants who are working to establish eligibility for public services such as child care assistance in the form of provider payment vouchers. Northern Virginia Family Service also offers Early Head Start pre-school, transitional housing, therapeutic foster care, health access, mental health counseling, financial counseling and homelessness prevention.

The strong bonds and relationships that participants build with one another are key. These peer networks and interpersonal relationships provide an additional base of support, helping participants remain motivated and focused, as well as offering them a means to vent frustrations, share successes and troubleshoot problems.

Career Navigation and Job Placement

Participants arrive at Training Futures with a variety of work and educational experiences. Some have previous office experience so they qualify for employment as an administrative assistant after finishing Training Futures. But many have no office experience and must start in a more entry-level job, as a file clerk, data entry, receptionist or accounts payable clerk, in order to build experience. Training Futures’ workforce development specialists (who may also serve as training supervisors and instructors) help participants figure out their career path and entry point into the industry.

From the moment a participant enters Training Futures, employment is the clear and stated goal. Training supervisors work directly with participants to develop resumes, practice interviewing skills, make internships successful and search for jobs. Supervisors also help participants address issues that may affect employability. They may help participants learn how to network, market their skills, develop personal sales pitches, demonstrate professional dress and behavior, or show enthusiasm, confidence and motivation. Internships also

give participants the opportunity to practice and further develop these skills and capacities.

Training Futures staff report that a Training Futures certificate of completion has real value in the labor market. While many participants have foreign-earned credentials, many employers do not have the time or resources to help acculturate workers to the U.S. work environment, according to Susan Craver, Training Futures' co-founder. But the certificate "legitimizes" these foreign credentials because the employer knows the participant has learned from the program what it takes to succeed in the U.S. workplace.

Training supervisors work with participants on wide-ranging job searches. Newspapers are scanned, websites are queried, cold calls are made, informational interviews are scheduled, existing employer relationships are leveraged, job fairs are attended, elevator pitches are given and Training Futures' alumni are engaged. The staff also refer graduates to new businesses and employers who have not previously hired from Training Futures.

During a job search, participants' employment status is regularly updated in Training Futures' database. Each week, staff members review who is or isn't working so they can develop job placement strategies for those still looking. When participants accept a new job offer, Training Futures celebrates this accomplishment with a "bell ringing" ceremony and the participant shares how the job was secured so others learn and are encouraged. Volunteer workforce development specialists hold a Graduate Lab once a week to assist unemployed graduates with their job search, which includes helping them stay motivated and encouraged. Staff members also lead a job club to share tips, ideas and information about job openings.

College Counseling Services: Continuing Training at NOVA after Training Futures

While employment is the program's primary goal, more and more Training Futures participants also attend college after the program. For a growing number, the program is a stepping stone to additional education at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA). Specially-trained NOVA adult college/career counselors deliver workshops,

provide individualized counseling and help current and past Training Futures participants make the transition from Training Futures to additional coursework at NOVA. During the workshops, counselors discuss standard U.S. education pathways (from certificates through doctoral programs), explain different types of financial aid and eligibility, help participants leverage prior coursework (done in their native countries or U.S. institutions), and provide general career counseling. Counselors also assist participants with financial aid re-applications for the upcoming college term. After the workshops, counselors maintain regular contact with participants and become a case manager, helping participants identify and address barriers that threaten their ability to continue at NOVA and achieve their academic goals.

Inspired by the initial success of the additional counseling that NOVA provided to participants, the college launched the Adult Career Pathways initiative for unemployed or underemployed workers, low-wage workers, work-eligible immigrants with strong English skills and young career starters with a high school degree or GED in January 2011. The program connects low-income adults with NOVA career counselors/coaches who help them develop an education plan to earn a college degree, certification or other credential. This resembles the way services are provided at Training Futures. The program has grown quickly to 250 participants, who are referred by over two dozen community agencies.

Employer Investment and Engagement

Local employers play a variety of supportive roles with Training Futures, not least of which is providing input on curriculum design. Northern Virginia Healthforce, a regional coalition of health care industry employers and stakeholders coordinated by NOVA, helped update Training Futures' curriculum to be more health care employment-focused. Employer input is sought regularly so Training Futures can continually update the program to include changing technologies and software used in professional offices.

Local employers also provide internships, participate in job fairs and hire graduates. Every year, over 100 professional volunteers visit the Training Futures' classroom to share their expertise and contribute approximately 3,500 hours of volunteer time. Business professionals serve as guest presenters, conduct mock interviews and mentor trainees. They also supervise interns and attend Training Futures' graduation ceremonies. In describing the value of having Training Futures' graduates in their workplace, employers praise the graduates' professionalism, quality of work, loyalty and bilingual skills. They also note that the attrition rate for Training Futures participants is lower than that of other individuals.

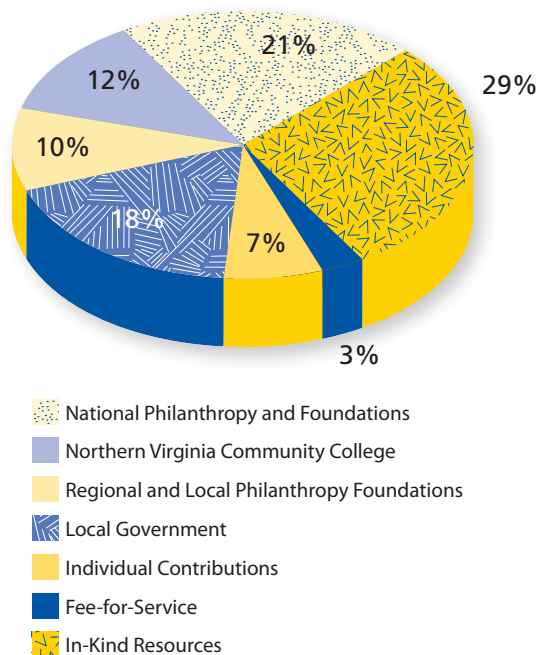
To foster close relationships with employers and businesses, Training Futures maintains a personal one-on-one engagement with their employer partners, typically connecting with human resources department staff. The program staff sends personalized thank you letters, interviews prospective internship supervisors to ensure good matches, involves employers in the highly evocative graduation ceremonies and encourages graduates to call employers and send thank you notes. Staff members record information about employers in a database to help track and improve employer contacts. All Training Futures' staff members are involved in job development and building employer relationships. Although NOVA has several employer advisory committees for college programs, Training Futures' employer engagement is currently done by Training Futures staff employed by Northern Virginia Family Service.

Training Futures Funding

Similar to other community college-nonprofit partnerships, the partnership guiding Training Futures blends multiple funding streams to operate and provide supports that participants need to succeed. In 2010, Training Futures was funded by corporate, individual, government and philanthropic donations or grants. The program typically operates on an annual budget of about \$500,000, although it often leverages additional resources (valued at over \$200,000 annually) through in-kind support

including volunteer time, reduced office space rental, donated computer equipment and donated clothing for participants. The budget below shows the percentage of revenues by funding source, including in-kind support. Not included is the over \$100,000 leveraged annually in Pell Grants and other financial aid to support the college-credit portion of participants' studies.

Training Futures 2010 Revenues by Funding Source



**NOVA also shares part of the revenue from Training Futures participants' tuition with Northern Virginia Family Service. This is not shown in this chart. The revenue-sharing arrangement is described on page 18.*

The History and Evolution of the Training Futures Program and Partnership

Training Futures, like many programs, started small and grew over time. There was a lot of trial and error, experimenting with different models, building additional capacities, and obtaining more resources to better serve participants. This section offers a step-by-step history of the program and how it got to be where it is today including how the program became immersed in a partnership between NOVA and Northern Virginia Family Service.

1996-2001: Pre-Partnership Years

In 1996, Training Futures began in Springfield, Va. when Susan Craver and Marla Burton, Training Coordinators with Training Futures, founded the program in cooperation with Northern Virginia Family Service. In 2000, a second training site was added, located in Tysons Corner, Va. in a Booz Allen Hamilton building. From 1996 to 2002, Training Futures was solely a program of Northern Virginia Family Service.

2002-2005: Beginning of the Partnership, Co-Enrollment and the Move to Health Care

In 2002, Robert Templin spoke at a Training Futures' graduation. At the time, Templin was a Senior Fellow with Venture Philanthropy Partners, an entrepreneurial venture of the Virginia-based Morino Institute that invests in nonprofits working with children in low-income communities. Moved by the graduation ceremony, Templin began brainstorming with Bill Browning, who in 2002 was employed with Training Futures, but is today Director of Business Development with Northern Virginia Community College's Workforce Development/Continuing Education Group, about ways to extend the program into a community college. That same year, a survey of Training Futures graduates found that nearly 90 percent were interested in going to college, but less than 15 percent had completed any college course work. The survey's timing could not have been better. With evidence that Training Futures participants were indeed interested in attending community college, Browning and Templin, who became NOVA's president soon after his Training Futures' speech, started working with the college and Training Futures staff at Northern Virginia Family Service to establish a partnership. Things quickly accelerated.

In 2003, leaders from NOVA and Northern Virginia Family Service established a common goal: to help unemployed and underemployed residents of northern Virginia improve their lives through education and training. The Training Futures program was reborn as a college pilot project in 2003. Leaders involved included Robert Templin, Jenny Graves, a

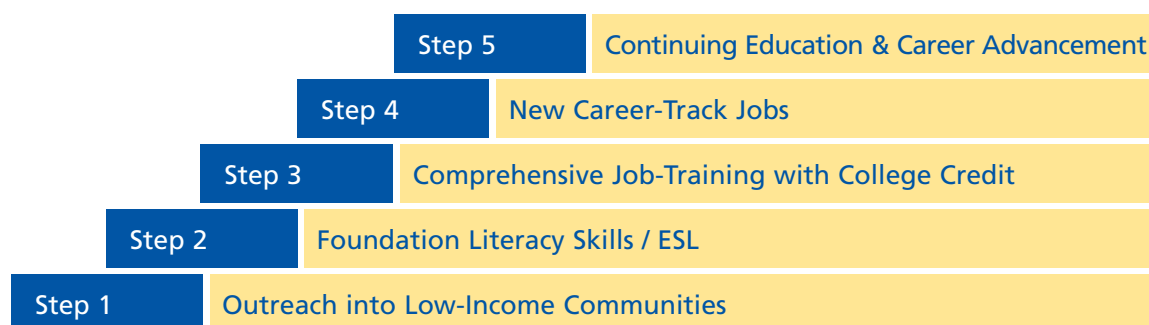
business department dean at NOVA, and Bill Browning as well as Susan Craver and Marla Burton at Training Futures.

To extend Training Futures into the college, NOVA faculty first evaluated the program's curriculum. They found that two Training Futures courses – Keyboarding and Introduction to Computers – corresponded to NOVA for-credit courses. The college approved advanced standing for these two courses, enabling Training Futures graduates to earn six NOVA transfer credits upon acceptance at the college. An additional credit was added (for a total of seven) in 2003 when NOVA began offering a one-credit college orientation course required for NOVA students. To receive the transfer credits, students be accepted into the college and must pay tuition through financial aid or other means.

Training Futures' graduates received the special surprise of these credits at their 2003 graduation ceremony where Robert Templin, who had become NOVA's President, again gave the keynote speech. On each table where the graduates sat was a letter of acceptance to NOVA that included seven credits of advanced standing earned through Training Futures. "You are now admitted to NOVA, and not only that. By completing Training Futures you've earned seven college credits," Templin announced. This graduation ceremony – and others since that include the awarding of credits – are an important milestone for participants. "No one ever saw me as capable of going to college and now I'm already in college," one graduate remarked. "I never had the money to go to college," said another graduate. "Now I'm the first one in my family to go to college."

The first graduation ceremonies where these credits were awarded also were milestones for the partnership. During their initial collaboration the partners encountered challenges. Where would the Training Futures program be held now that NOVA was involved? Who would teach the courses? How would the curriculum change? Addressing these questions in a way that maintained the uniqueness and effectiveness of the Training Futures' model

Steps to Success Model



was key. That model, as described previously, uses an “imaginal learning” approach in which participants are trained in a simulated professional office environment. To maintain this model – Training Futures’ “secret sauce,” as Templin calls it – the partners agreed that the revamped program would remain off-campus in a simulated business environment and that Training Futures instructors would continue to teach the courses and control the curriculum. However, participants would be co-enrolled at Training Futures and NOVA, receiving support from both. NOVA’s state-approved co-enrollment arrangement with high schools served as a template for the new co-enrollment with Training Futures. (To see NOVA’s process for developing co-enrollment visit AspenWSI’s Courses to Employment Toolkit at www.aspenwsi.org/resource/how-c2e-partnerships-work/)

After the partners formalized aspects of their collaboration and the co-enrollment approach, they officially launched their collaboration, known as “Steps to Success”, in 2003. They signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding contract to work together and laid out three-year objectives to accomplish between 2003 and 2006. See the “Steps to Success” vision above.

These steps are designed to be a pathway for low-income northern Virginians that leads them from Training Futures into quality jobs with ongoing career and educational advancement opportunities. Between 2003 and 2005, the partners built upon this basic vision, deepening their collaboration and expanding

services to Training Futures graduates. These advances include:

- In Fall 2003, NOVA began offering four evening courses at Training Futures’ training site after a survey revealed that graduates were more likely to seek additional training at NOVA if courses were offered at a familiar location. The four courses can be combined with credits already earned from Training Futures to help graduates earn a Business Information Technology Certificate from NOVA.
- Partners redesigned the Training Futures curriculum to focus more on the health care sector, in response to rising industry demand for health care administrators. In 2005, labor market information from Northern Virginia Healthforce, a coalition coordinated by NOVA that includes health care industry employers and stakeholders, revealed a critical shortage of health care administrators. Northern Virginia Family Service subsequently conducted a needs assessment, holding 20 meetings with health care employers, to determine the entry-level job requirements for health care administrators. The new healthcare curriculum, with support from NOVA’s Medical and Alexandria campuses, includes NOVA-delivered Medical Terminology coursework as well as internships in medical settings. It is designed to help Training Futures’ graduates access entry-level health care administrative opportunities.
- NOVA created an ESL course that is contextualized around the healthcare industry and designed for people who have

been denied entry into Training Futures because of limited language skills. The course helped them gain the language proficiency needed to re-apply to Training Futures. The course eventually was discontinued and its funding redirected into a scholarship fund for Training Futures participants. In 2011, NOVA relaunched this ESL “onramp” course for people who were not admitted into Training Futures because their English language skills fell below the 7th grade level (on the Test of Adult Basic Education).

After the curriculum re-design, Training Futures launched its focus on healthcare administrative occupations in 2005.

2006-2010: 17 Credits, a New Agreement, and Revenue-Sharing

The year 2006 was monumental for Training Futures. First, the two sites in Springfield and Tysons Corner were consolidated into one site in Tysons Corner. Partners also were heavily involved in re-evaluating their collaboration. That summer, Jenny Graves, then NOVA's Interim Provost, championed a faculty-led review of the Training Futures' curriculum. The review concluded that three additional Training Futures' courses – Office Procedures, Records Management and Professional Development – could be aligned with NOVA courses after a few revisions. The partnership also began enrolling Training Futures participants directly into NOVA as part of the new “co-enrollment” model, thereby qualifying Training Futures' graduates for 17 credits at NOVA, which continues today. The courses that participants complete in Training Futures put them on a path toward a Business Information Technology Certificate at NOVA. Typically, participants must complete another nine credits of coursework to earn this certificate.

To be accredited, Training Futures classes must be taught by NOVA instructors. So in mid-2006, the partnership developed a process enabling Training Futures' instructors who are hired and salaried by Northern Virginia Family Service to become adjunct faculty at NOVA. This process, which some describe as arduous, requires getting the approvals of NOVA's provost, acting dean and human resources department. The adjunct instructor

must then be added onto the college's payroll system, although payment comes from Northern Virginia Family Service.

As the fall 2006 semester approached, the leaders of Northern Virginia Family Service and NOVA formalized many aspects of the partnership, which operated under a fairly limited Memorandum of Understanding. Under a new Memorandum of Understanding, agreements were reached on faculty, class schedules, participants' applications, enrollment processes, financial aid applications, tuition and training space. These agreements, most of which remain in effect, are summarized in the table in the next section.

In 2006, the partnership also established a new revenue sharing arrangement in which tuition revenues obtained by NOVA from enrolling Training Futures' participants into the college are shared with NVFS. Under this arrangement, NOVA shares 85 percent of the tuition revenue it receives from Training Futures participants' coursework with NVFS. Current NOVA tuition rates for in-state students are \$137.75 per credit hour and fee rates are \$9.10 per credit hour (although revenues from fees are not shared). Thus, for a student who enrolls in Training Futures for all seventeen credits, NVFS is eligible to receive \$1,990.49 in revenue sharing from NOVA ($\$137.75 \text{ per credit} \times 17 \text{ credits} \times 85\%$). However, deductions are made in the payment to NVFS by NOVA in order to pay NOVA salaried faculty who teach Training Futures courses and not all Training Futures participants are enrolled for the full 17 credits.

Some Training Futures participants are ineligible for financial assistance to cover their tuition at NOVA. For these students, Northern Virginia Family Service pays tuition at NOVA for their one-credit Student Development course. These students may also receive six transfer credits based on a previous arrangement between NOVA and NVFS. In some instances, other funding sources may be leveraged to support students' tuition and fees.

In 2007, for the first time, Training Futures' graduates earned 17 credits from NOVA for completing the program. But soon the economic recession began. Hiring

freezes at hospitals and office buildings quickly affected the program, slowing the pace of job placements. As the recession deepened, Training Futures launched an “all hands-on deck” approach to job placement. All staff members reached out to employers to build the Training Futures brand and employer network. Training Futures was able to maintain consistently high placement rates even during the height of the economic recession.

In 2010, the partnership again tried some new approaches and offered additional services. First, Training Futures received a grant from the Community Foundation for the North Capitol Region, in Washington DC, to provide scholarships for 12 Training Futures graduates to work at NOVA’s medical campus toward a certificate in phlebotomy. Training Futures coursework fulfills two pre-requisites for this certificate.

Second, the partnership realized that many more participants than expected wanted to continue their education at NOVA after the Training Futures program but they sometimes found the transition difficult. In response, NOVA launched the Special Counseling Project, assigning two NOVA counselors to make this transition more seamless. The counselors reach out to past and current Training Futures’ participants to help them address barriers to continuing their education at NOVA. The college also began offering at least one course per semester – Business 100 (Introduction to Business) – at the Training Futures site in order to encourage Training Futures graduates to pursue additional education at NOVA and to ease their transition into NOVA campus-based courses.

NOVA and Northern Virginia Family Service now have been involved in the Training Futures’ partnership, for nearly a decade. Summarizing the partnership, Bill Browning said “Our relationship progressed from a friendly but non-committal relationship, to a short-term partnership pilot, to a long-term ‘commitment’ over the first four years.”

In the next section, we go behind-the-scenes to see how leaders and staff from the partner institutions make the collaboration work seamlessly for participants.

Behind the Scenes: How the Partnership Works

Making any partnership work requires trust, planning, compromise and a willingness to do what is needed to achieve the shared mission. Partnerships across institution types, such as community colleges and nonprofits, can be particularly challenging because cultures, work styles and personalities can differ. Merging and/or aligning timelines and administrative processes also requires planning and organization. The partnership overseeing Training Futures also faced these challenges. To make this partnership and its program successful requires a lot of work to ensure that participants’ many and varied academic and non-academic needs are met. This includes making the college system and bureaucracy more flexible and responsive to adult learners’ needs. Balancing the need to follow the rules imposed on a college system with a desire to maintain the character, values and effective program characteristics of the Training Futures model, can be challenging.

From NOVA’s perspective, Training Futures’ way of doing things often differs from the college’s way. For example, the dates of Training Futures’ two-cohort, 60-week training schedule differ each year and never align with NOVA’s college calendar. But the partners agree that Training Futures’ schedule is one of the things that makes the program effective.

“The college must operate under uncompromising state, accreditation and federal rules. A lot of work goes into figuring out how to stay within the regulatory framework without tampering with Training Futures’ secret sauce.”

– Robert Templin, President of NOVA

Because the partners are committed to serving Training Futures participants and meeting their needs, these kinds of issues are discussed and resolved in a way that promotes the program’s effectiveness. This commitment, deeply rooted in the partnering institutions’ leadership, is essential to making the collaboration work. The cross-

institution leadership team includes Templin, Craver, Burton and Peter Maphumulo, the supervising NOVA Provost, as well as Sharon LeGrande, program director at Northern Virginia Family Service. These leaders' close involvement and strong buy-in is pivotal to ensuring the collaboration's continued development. Together, leaders from each institution promote the partnership's vision to stakeholders within and beyond their organizations, and enable staff on-the-ground to carry-out activities to ensure Training Futures works for participants and continuously improves.

As noted earlier, the partners continually evaluate participants' needs and challenges, then figure out who will address those issues and how. Their strategies and assigned roles and responsibilities have, over time, been written into the Memorandum of Understanding as well as a joint planning tool that the partners use to organize their many shared tasks. In addition, the processes developed to better serve Training Futures participants have produced the program's unique culture and working style, one that is not solely the college's or the nonprofit's.

This section highlights key staff members who make the collaboration work and offers an example of the behind-the-scenes registration and enrollment processes that help Training Futures' participants avoid common college

problems with registration and financial aid. It then describes a tool the partners use to plan their work together and details some of the roles and responsibilities the partners assume, based on the current Memorandum of Understanding. The section concludes with a discussion about how the partnership manages and tracks participant data.

Enrolling, Registering and Applying for Financial Aid at NOVA: Key Staffing and Planning

Key staff oversee administrative procedures that enable participants to transition into the community college system through enrollment, registration and financial aid applications. And they do a lot of troubleshooting to meet state and college regulations and requirements. For example, because Training Futures is a six-month program and operates on a different schedule than a standard college semester schedule, the program's registration forms, grade reports and other processes had to be re-designed. NOVA President Robert Templin refers to the NOVA staff who perform these crucial functions as "boundary crossers." These "boundary crossers," such as the College Liaison, work with numerous staff members at the college and at Training Futures on enrollment, registration and financial aid applications.

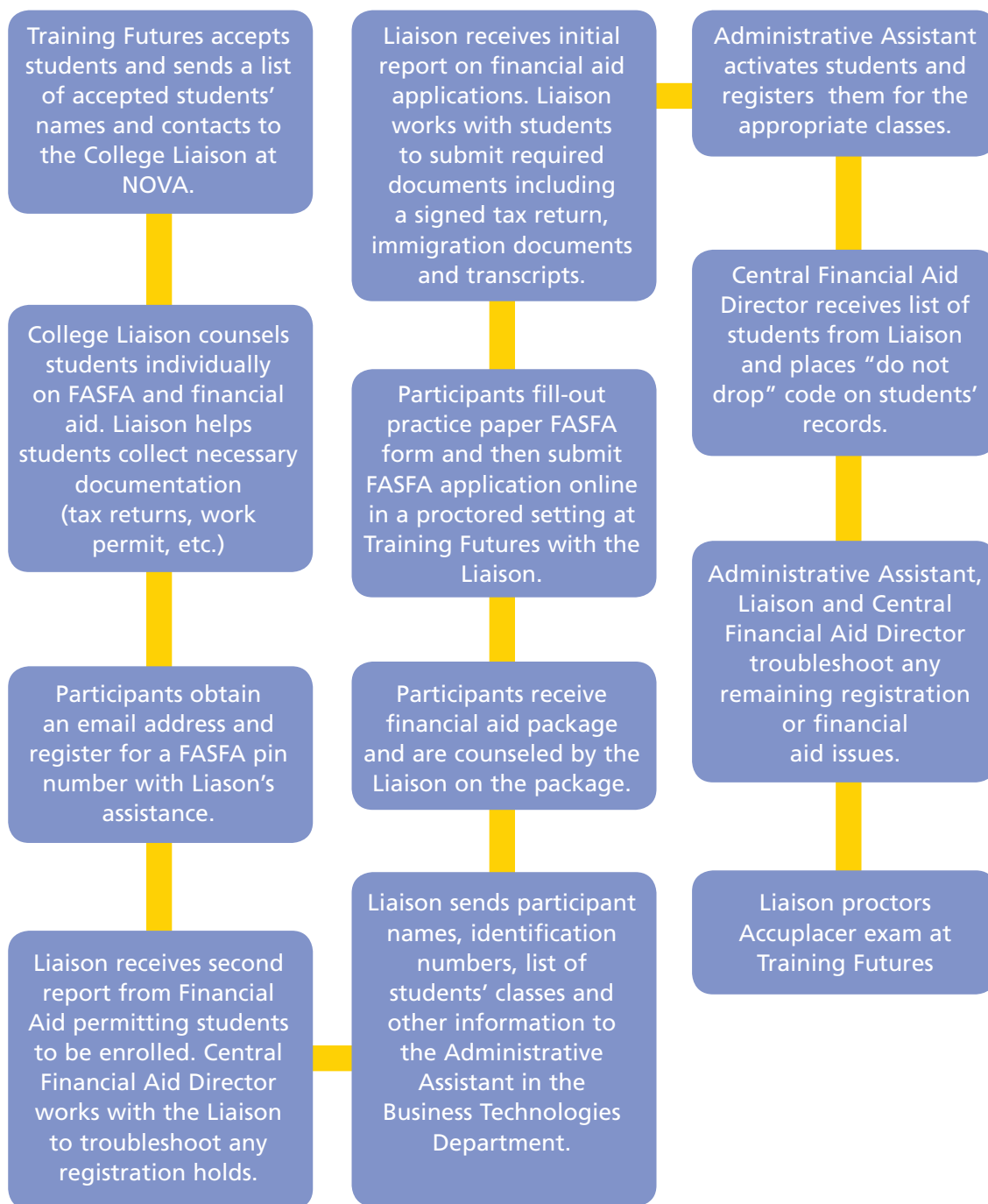
Key Staff in the Training Futures Partnership		
Job Title	Institution	Key Role
College Liaison	NOVA	Serves as Training Futures' point of contact at NOVA, helping participants with financial aid and registration.
Administrative Assistant in the Business Technologies Division	NOVA	Works with the Liaison and Financial Aid Office to register participants and troubleshoot financial aid and enrollment issues. Helps Training Futures' instructors with state application process to become adjunct faculty.
Central Financial Aid Director	NOVA	Helps process financial aid applications and remove registration holds. Places "do not drop" on participants' records.
College Counselors	NOVA	Provides intensive one-on-one college and career counseling to participants continuing at NOVA after Training Futures. Presents at least one orientation to NOVA and community college workshop for each Training Futures' cohort.
Training Supervisors	Training Futures/ Northern Virginia Family Service	Provides case management, instruction, job search and placement assistance. Works with Liaison on issues related to financial aid, enrollment and registration.

Working with bureaucracies and administrative issues across two institutions poses many complexities. Enrolling participants in not one but two very different organizations is challenging. For adult learners, and especially immigrants, the challenges of enrolling in college and applying for financial aid can lead them to walk away from campus—without ever having stepped foot in a classroom. To prevent this, staff from both the college and nonprofit have resolved several registration and financial aid issues. For example, many Training Futures participants are foreign born and/or the first in their family to attend college. Some have previously attended a foreign college. For these participants, the federal financial aid application form, commonly known as FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and process is often difficult and unfamiliar. Many participants are confused or intimidated by formal (and bureaucratic) FAFSA correspondence. To overcome this, NOVA's College Liaison helps participants complete practice forms and then the real forms, plus

helps throughout the registration and financial aid application process to address other issues such as the need to obtain missing documents. The liaison also receives reports on participants' financial aid packages and, as a result, can personally counsel participants, rather than sending computer-generated correspondence (which is the norm elsewhere).

Another potential involves participants who have previously attended NOVA and have holds on their college accounts that prevent them from registering, due to a grade point average below 2.0, an outstanding balance owed to a NOVA department or student loans in default. To prevent a participant from being dropped from Training Futures, NOVA's Central Financial Aid Director places a "do not drop" indicator on the student's record until the issue can be resolved. The diagram below illustrates how a Training Futures participant enrolls in NOVA and details how staff members such as the College Liaison make the registration, financial aid and enrollment processes work well.

Registration and Enrollment Process for Training Futures Participants



Processes such as the one above, while cumbersome and arduous to plan and implement, are crucial to helping Training Futures' participants avoid potential administrative and bureaucratic pitfalls during the registration, enrollment and the financial

aid application process. Over time, the partnership developed a planning tool to track the activities and responsibilities of various staff members.

Partners use the planning tool to set performance measurement outcomes, outline

Examples from Partners' Planning Tool			
Major Joint Activities and Action Steps	Target Date for Completion	Institutional Lead Accountability	Individual Accountabilities/ Notes
Class recruitment		Training Futures/ Northern Virginia Family Service	Training Futures/NVFS Staff
Assist participants with NOVA admissions		NOVA	College Liaison
Hold Financial Aid Workshops at Training Futures, help participants complete FASFA online		NOVA	College Liaison
Enroll participants in classes		NOVA	Administrative Assistant at Business Technologies Division
Place "do not drop" order for all students in computer system		NOVA	Central Financial Aid Director

** To see the full Training Futures planning tool, visit AspenWSI's Courses to Employment toolkit at www.aspenwsi.org/resource/how-c2e-partnerships-work/*

roles and responsibilities, and establish deadlines and timeline . The activities they plan include: recruitment, registration and enrollment, applying for financial aid, assessment, instruction, faculty certification, syllabi, entrance testing, grade reports, revenue sharing and entering credits onto transcripts. The table below shows how partners outline their respective tasks. These processes, which the partners developed to integrate the Training Futures program into NOVA, are now laid out in their formal agreement.

Partners' Roles and Responsibilities

The partners' roles and responsibilities have developed during their relationship. As they gained a better understanding of participants' changing needs, the partners often responded by adding another service or implementing another strategy. Moreover, as their knowledge of each other's institutions, strengths and weaknesses grew, roles were assigned accordingly to one institution or the other. Below is the partnership's arrangement, as of 2011.

Partners' Roles and Responsibilities	
Task	Detailed Processes and Strategies to Serve Training Futures Participants
Application, Enrollment and Registration	<p>Participants in Training Futures fill out applications to NOVA in a proctored setting typically off-campus at a Training Futures' facility as part of the co-enrollment process. Training Futures' staff submit the applications to a NOVA liaison in the Business Technologies Department. The liaison manages and oversees participants' enrollment into the appropriate classes. The liaison troubleshoots any registration problems with other NOVA staff including problems with residency certification, financial aid and student holds.</p> <p>Participants take the Accuplacer or Compass tests during the middle of the program to allow them time to brush up on basic skills and test-taking strategies. This process was implemented because college applicants who fail these tests must take an expensive five-credit English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course, for which financial aid is not available, or take a course offered by a community based organization, then retake the exam within six months. Taking the exam in the middle of the program allows participants to improve their skills to pass the test and avoid taking these additional courses.</p>
Financial Aid Applications	Participants apply for financial aid with guidance from Training Futures staff. Before officially applying, participants complete practice FASFA applications. NOVA's financial aid department staff work with the College Liaison to help participants address holds on their account and identify other financial resources.
Class Scheduling	Because Training Futures is a six-month program that runs during NOVA two semesters, partners coordinate class scheduling.
Instruction and Faculty Approval	Training Futures/NVFS recommends to NOVA the instructors it wants. These instructors must apply to NOVA for appointment to the college's adjunct faculty pool. Although these instructors are technically hired by NOVA and on the college's payroll, they are paid by Northern Virginia Family Service.
Tuition and Fees	Participants usually qualify for financial aid but some have a degree from their home country limiting their access to financial aid or do not qualify for other reasons. To support these participants, NOVA created an additional fund.
Training Space	Training Futures is located in the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) Enterprise Building, after relocating from office space in a Booz Allen Hamilton building. NVFS provides the training space and classroom facilities.
Training Materials	NVFS is responsible for all instruction equipment. However, NOVA helps provide computer hardware and software. Virginia state law requires that NOVA update campus computer equipment every few years.

Grades and Progress Reports	Instructors submit grades to NOVA. Participants receive a grade for each class, which appears on their academic transcript. Participants sign a confidentiality waiver that allows NOVA to share their student record and transcript information with NVFS about participants' progress and grades.
Outcomes Tracking	A Training Futures database specialist tracks participants' demographics and relevant intake information as well as education and employment outcomes. Instructors provide NVFS with grade reports and participant progress reports to aid outcomes tracking. NOVA also has created an indicator in the college database specifically for Training Futures' participants that allows their records to be easily accessed a group from the college system to ease data collection and analysis.

* To see a sample Training Futures Memorandum of Understanding, visit AspenWSI's Courses to Employment toolkit at www.aspenwsi.org/resource/how-c2e-partnerships-work/

Data Management and Participant Outcomes Tracking

As seen in the table above, the partnership's nonprofit organization assumes a lot of the responsibility for tracking outcomes. The Training Futures' program has a sophisticated management information system that is web-based and allows program staff located at multiple sites to input and use participant data. Staff collect information on demographic characteristics including native language, ethnicity and educational history. They also collect information about employment experiences, before and after the training, directly from participants through phone calls, in-person meetings, email and periodic on-line alumni surveys. Employment data includes participants' employment status, including start and end dates of different jobs over time, hourly wage, number of hours worked, employer name, and job title. This post-training employment data is often difficult to collect and manage for many workforce programs. However, Training Futures' personal involvement and close relationships with trainees after graduation has fueled its success in collecting this data.

To track participants' educational data and whether they complete the program, staff from Training Futures' program submit progress and

grade reports. To learn more about participants' education after Training Futures, NOVA's Office of Institutional Research approved the creation of an indicator or "flag" to the enrollment record in the college database for each Training Futures participant. This indicator allows Training Futures' participants' transcript data to be downloaded as a group for analysis. The transcript data helps show how many credits participants earned for Training Futures as well as their academic experiences and accomplishments at NOVA after Training Futures. This data helps NOVA staff lobby for support and funding to aid the transition of Training Futures' graduates to NOVA.

Conclusion

The partnership guiding Training Futures has inspired a nonprofit-community college partnership movement at NOVA. Under President Robert Templin's leadership, NOVA has used what it learned from the partnership involving the Training Futures program and Northern Virginia Family Service to partner with several other nonprofit organizations, including a local Goodwill affiliate, and has often adopted similar co-enrollment and revenue-sharing agreements to its agreement with Northern Virginia Family Service. NOVA now works with over 15 nonprofit and public institutions, through the Adult Career Pathways

initiative, to conduct outreach to low-income populations and provide low-income adults with intensive enrollment, registration, financial aid and career counseling services.

This case study highlights one model of a nonprofit-community college partnership. But the Courses to Employment Demonstration Project found that there is no one way to structure, design or implement this type of partnership.

Courses to Employment did find that nonprofit-community college partnerships can benefit from learning about each other's work. One partnership may be able to adopt or adapt a successful strategy that was successful for another partnership. We hope this case study strengthens other partnerships, spawning fresh ideas to best serve low-income adults so they succeed both in the classroom and the labor market.



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