



MODULE A: RESEARCH AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

PluggedInVA prepares adult learners for success in entry-level positions in high-wage, high-demand jobs where they will have the opportunity to earn a life-sustaining wage. Strong employer partnerships are essential to the success of this goal. Prior to program planning, research the local labor market, identify job opportunities, and examine training requirements.

IN THIS MODULE

- Identifying local employment demands and trends
- Determining training requirements for targeted industries
- Mapping job opportunities and existing education and training programs
- Locating gaps in available training and education for targeted industries

jobs? If so, why?	
<p>4. Requirements of the targeted occupations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What qualifications do local employers seek in applicants for the jobs at each level? <input type="checkbox"/> Do employers in the region use common assessment tools or skill certifications in hiring? <input type="checkbox"/> What professional certification or licensing standards exist for the targeted jobs? <input type="checkbox"/> What screening criteria do employers use (e.g., educational credentials, work experience, drug testing, criminal background)? 	Findings:
<p>5. Education or training programs that prepare adults for the jobs identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Which institutions or organizations provide these programs? What types of programs are provided (certificate, degree)? <input type="checkbox"/> What curriculum and support services (including job placement and follow-up) do these programs provide? How long is each program (number of hours per week and number of weeks)? 	Findings:
<p>6. Requirements for training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What competencies must students have to enter the program? <input type="checkbox"/> What assessments and other methods are used to screen applicants? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there any additional eligibility requirements such as those imposed by specific funding sources? 	Findings:
<p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential sources of information for local labor market demand and projections include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The “business and industry” contract training division at a community college. ○ Faculty in occupational degree programs at community colleges or technical 	

I. Identifying Local Employment Demands and Trends

Below is a list of resources to obtain information about local labor market trends.

- ▶ Reaching out to local employers and discussing hiring needs can provide a realistic ground-level picture, as well as a foundation for future partnerships.

▶ Local Workforce Investment Boards and One-Stop Career Centers may also be able to provide invaluable planning information about employment trends.

To locate your local [Workforce Investment Board](#), search the listings here:

To locate local [One-Stop Career Centers](#), search here:

▶ The following sites may also help in determining local employment demands and trends.

[Virginia Workforce Connection](#)

This site is for both employers and job seekers. It provides comprehensive job matching between job seekers and employers; information on wage data, skill requirements, as well as industry and occupational trends; and information on potential training opportunities.

[Virginia Workforce Network](#)

The Virginia Workforce Network (VWN) is a system of career development, business and educational partners and agencies that seek to connect Virginians to opportunities that help them develop a better career. Through the VWN, individuals receive support, education and training that prepare them for the jobs of today and tomorrow and businesses are connected to a skilled and prepared workforce.

The Virginia Municipal League

The Virginia Municipal League is a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan association of city, town and county governments established in 1905 to improve and assist local governments through legislative advocacy, research, education and other services. The membership includes all 39 cities in the state, 156 towns and 10 counties.

The Virginia Associate of Counties (VACo)

VACo supports county officials and to effectively represent, promote and protect the interests of counties to better serve the people of Virginia. VACo's missions are to:

- represent local governments at the state and national levels in legislative and regulatory processes and to
- provide a valuable resource network for planning and implementing new ideas and technologies.

II. Determining Training Requirements for Targeted Industries

Questions to Consider in Identifying Job and Education Requirements

<p>1. Industries of economic importance to the region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Which are the largest industrial sectors in the region (e.g., manufacturing, healthcare, retail)?<input type="checkbox"/> What jobs in these industries pay \$9 to \$12 per hour at the entry level plus full benefits?<input type="checkbox"/> Is building a workforce for these jobs a priority for the region?<input type="checkbox"/> What are the potential target occupations for workers without extensive education or skills (i.e., for workers with less than an associate degree)?	Findings:
<p>2. Characteristics of the targeted jobs/occupations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> What are these jobs and what are the next steps up the job ladder?<input type="checkbox"/> What wages and benefits do each level offer?<input type="checkbox"/> What is the current and projected demand for these jobs among local employers?<input type="checkbox"/> What employers in the area hire for these jobs?	Findings:
<p>3. How do employers secure their workforce?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> From what sources and with what methods do local employers hire for such jobs?<input type="checkbox"/> Do local employers have difficulty hiring for any of these jobs? If so, why?<input type="checkbox"/> Do local employers have trouble retaining or advancing workers in these	Findings:

schools.

- Community-based organizations with strong ties to local employers
- Universities
- One-stop career centers
- State departments of labor and employment security
- State and local workforce boards
- Local economic development groups and commissions
- Chambers of commerce, employer or trader associations
- Reach out to employers to discuss their hiring needs and challenges.

Adapted from *Bridges to Careers for Low-Skilled Adults* by Women Employed

III. Mapping Job Opportunities and Existing Education and Training Programs

TARGET OCCUPATION(S)				
Job Levels		Existing Education & Training Programs		
Characteristics	Requirements	Provider(s)	Content	Entry Requirements
Position: Wages: Benefits: Demand: Career Path/ Next Job Level:	Qualifications: Assessment Tools: Certifications: Screenings	Name: Type:	Curriculum: Services: Length:	Competencies: Assessments/ Tests: Program Eligibility:
Position: Wages: Benefits: Demand: Career Path/ Next Job Level:	Qualifications: Assessment Tools: Certifications: Screenings	Name: Type:	Curriculum: Services: Length:	Competencies: Assessments/ Tests: Program Eligibility:
Position: Wages: Benefits: Demand: Career Path/ Next Job Level:	Qualifications: Assessment Tools: Certifications: Screenings	Name: Type:	Curriculum: Services: Length:	Competencies: Assessments/ Tests: Program Eligibility:

Adapted from *Bridges to [Careers for Low-Skilled Adults, Women Employed](#)*

IV. Locating Gaps in Available Training and Education for the Targeted Industries

Questions to Consider in Locating Gaps in Training and Education

<p>1. Employer Demand and Existing Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Are existing programs meeting the demand from employers in the region in terms of both quantity and quality?▪ Is there sufficient demand from employers to warrant the building of bridge or feeder programs into the existing education and training programs?▪ Are existing programs operating at or near capacity?▪ If not, how many additional students could each accommodate?	Findings:
<p>2. Recruitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is the demographic profile of students in each program (e.g., age, educational level, race/ethnicity, parental status, work experience)?▪ How are students recruited for these programs and from what sources?	Findings:
<p>3. Retention and Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How many students complete each program every year?▪ Do the programs have trouble retaining students? If so, why?▪ Which programs are most effective in preparing students for employment and further learning in the target sector?	Findings:
<p>4. Bridge Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What are the most common reasons that applicants are rejected from existing programs?	Findings:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there remedial programs for individuals who do not qualify for the programs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If so, whom do they serve, what instruction and support do they provide, and how effective are they? ▪ Given the above responses, what are the opportunities for bridge program development? 	
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Tips:

When working with the following institutions, consider these questions in locating gaps in training and education.

Community college: Examine the extent to which students in adult education (ABE, ESL, or GED) or developmental education programs advance to college-level occupational programs in the target field and the extent to which adults trying to enter college-level occupational programs are successful or unsuccessful.

Community organization: Examine the extent to which clients with low literacy skills enter job training and other occupational education programs within the organization or with other education and training providers.

Employer: Think about the sorts of qualifications more applicants should exhibit for the jobs in question. What are the most common deficiencies in applicants for these jobs? Do entry requirements clearly relate to what is required for success on the job? How prepared are current employees for their jobs, and what improvement in skills or work behaviors do they need?

Adapted from *Bridges to Careers for Low-Skilled Adults* by Women Employed