

Script for Partner Engagement

Slide 1:

Maisha:

Hello and welcome to Our Journey Together Summer Webcast Mini-series on Partner Engagement.

Workforce programs can't do it all. Partners are critical pieces of the puzzle, which can provide additional resources to support and train youth. Creating partnerships in a time of limited resources is essential to providing the most effective, targeted, and appropriate services that can help youth identify and successfully progress along a career pathway.

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Maisha:

Today we will be talking with Patricia Crosby & Donna DuSell from Franklin Hampshire Employment & Training Consortium (FHETC).

Franklin Hampshire was awarded a Career Pathways for Youth, or Summer Jobs, grant and has been doing some great work around Partner Engagement.

Patricia, please tell us a little about the program

Patricia:

The Franklin Hampshire Regional Employment Board's territory covers 1400 square miles in Western Massachusetts. We are the state's largest geographical and least populated workforce area. Our challenge is to provide services for constituents across two counties and in the neighboring North Quabbin region.

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Maisha:

Patricia, What practices have you implemented to engage partners in your program operation?

Patricia:

Our strategy for Summer Jobs & Beyond was to target three high schools, 20 miles apart, with particularly high-risk youth populations. Our major partner has been the region's anti-poverty agency, Community Action of Franklin and Hampshire County and the North Quabbin region. They have very strong at-risk youth, plus many complementary services under their umbrella. We at the REB have very strong in-school youth/staff development experience through our MA School-to-Career initiative. Together we have created a two-agency team in each school. Coordination can be a challenge, but the partnership allows us to address multiple goals, with "no wrong door" for youth.

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Patricia:

This school team is supported by a community team in each region made up of the School Principal, a Town Administrator, and a community-based organization. Some of these people had never met before, or worked in a small group on a common project. They each were asked to leverage in-kind or cash resources for SJB, and their consistent support has been a great boon to the project. We also hope it will help provide for its sustainability in some form....

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Maisha: What strategies did you use that proved not to be successful? What did you learn from them?

Patricia:

An employer champion would have been a great addition to our team in region, especially in that first summer when we were trying to get 60 youth across the region into summer jobs in not much more than 30 days, some of them in a town where we had almost no prior on-the-ground presence. We also should have spent more time up front orienting people to the high expectations of summer youth supervision, which took some by surprise; and we discovered our special projects activity was flawed in that we had one

entity developing service agreements, but charged another entity with overseeing them – not an ideal configuration!

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Maisha: Identify some of your non-traditional or unique partners. Why are they important to your program?

Patricia:

Every community has different organizations who rise to the challenge of a project like this. In some it might be a Chamber, in another a civic association, in another a particularly creative and engaged Town Library. We've learned not to have preconceived ideas about who "should" be our go-to entity, but to let those entities whose roots in the community are deep and motivation is strong rise to the top. In this case it was a community development corporation, a community resource center, and a social service coalition that stood out, and their projects were tremendously varied and very successful.

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Maisha: What enhancements do your partners bring to the program?

Patricia: For the answer to that question, I'd like to turn things over to our Youth Pathways Coordinator, Donna DuSell, who can tell you about our Youth Council.

Donna: We have a vibrant youth council which was originally formed in 2000 and chose to continue meeting after WIOA enactment made that an optional activity. The council acts as a hub for individuals and agencies who serve youth: it comprises regional business representatives, multiple youth and community serving organizations, representatives from adult, secondary, and higher education, and Employment Board and Career Center leadership and staff. Our Youth Council serves as the recommending body to the Regional Employment Board for youth workforce funding in our region. They review and recommend the provider/ providers to implement WIOA Youth programming and assess progress in meeting goals and measures set forth by

state and federal guidelines. But as important, the Council convenes regularly to provide a networking opportunity for area educators, employers, and community-based organizations who are eager to support youth in our schools and community.

Slide 8: Thank you Franklin Hampshire for sharing those great Partner Engagement Tips and thank you all for listening to Our Journey Together Summer Webcast Mini-series