

Chapter 9: Professional Development

Chapter Overview:

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Identify the professional development opportunities provided by JTED.
- Reference professional development expectations for grantees.
- Consider the internal professional development needs of your staff.
- Ensure your program integrates the core equity values.

Grantees must participate in professional development and technical assistance to improve their performance and meet program requirements. Professional development includes group structured training sessions offered in-person or via Webex, and one-on-one or small group assistance. Each grantee is responsible for complying with professional development requirements. In addition, grantees must consider the professional development and technical assistance their staff will need to successfully deliver the program.

Professional Development Expectations

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (“the Department”) aims to cultivate a network of equity-focused programs with a track record of program success.

Variables that impact a program’s success may include, but are not limited to:

- Organizational capacity
- Previous experience
- Subject matter expertise
- Program partnerships and providers

To help ensure program success, JTED provides the following professional development and technical assistance offerings:

- Webinars training sessions
- In-person training sessions

- Technical assistance
- JTED meetings (bi-weekly meetings - Thursday)
- Workforce Summit JTED Meet-and-Greet

Note: JTED will provide basic equity training. Grantees are responsible for all other related staff development related to equity training, based on the needs of their staff.

Webinar and In-person Training Sessions

Webinars and in-person training sessions are designed to provide grantees with information on entering and accessing program data in the JTED Reporting System, utilizing the Grantee Manual, and implementing critical program requirements.

Onboarding and professional development webinars will be held after grantees are selected and grant contracts are finalized. After onboarding is completed, the program will deliver regular and ongoing professional development webinars.

Topics may include, but not be limited to:

- Orientation and Onboarding
- Basic equity training
- Providing barrier reduction service
- Employer Engagement
- Child Support Services and Community Outreach
- Collaboration for Success
- Telling the Story in Case Notes
- Reporting System
- Customer Centered Approach
- Delivering effective transition services
- Building relationships with apprenticeship programs and employers
- Using data for continuous program improvement
- Budgeting and fiscal requirements
- Grantee-requested topics

Information about professional development opportunities will be provided on the JTED Partner Guide. Webinar events will be recorded and made available on the JTED Partner Guide as well.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, grantee administrators, financial managers and program managers must attend all webinars. Depending on the topic, other staff may also be required or encouraged to attend.

Technical Assistance

Your first line of contact is the grant manager. If you have questions about administering the program, you should reach out to them, and they will assist you or direct you to someone who can help.

Technical assistance is available upon request. It may also be driven by program reports and delivered with the goal of program performance improvement. In general, technical assistance involves troubleshooting and problem-solving to ensure program compliance and the ability to achieve the program's desired outcomes. Grantees may also receive technical assistance to ensure their program is aligned with JTED requirements and is reaching milestones for the successful implementation of their program.

Grantees should plan to meet with their Grant Manager at least once every other week. If additional support is needed, Grant Managers may request to meet more. Grant Managers may host online office hours as needed for grantees to receive assistance and ask questions.

JTED Meetings

JTED bi-weekly meetings will be held online or in person to provide professional development opportunities for workforce grantees. These meetings are intended to promote networking and coordination opportunities between grantees and programs. Training and development sessions will focus on grantee needs, provide programmatic updates, and support data entry into the JTED Reporting System.

Grantee Internal Professional Development

Grantees are encouraged to develop an **Internal Professional Development Plan** to meet the specific needs of their program instructors and staff. JTED will recommend specific focus areas that should be incorporated into the grantees' plan.

According to the Illinois Community College Board (2021), "A well-trained staff is necessary for effective programming, and a well-developed professional development plan is essential to ensuring staff have the skills necessary to perform their jobs" (p. 95).

An **internal professional development plan**, at a minimum, should include:

- Staff expectations regarding knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes.
- Professional development opportunities and requirements.

Staff expectations identify what program staff *need to know* and *be able to do* to succeed in their role, including:

- Knowledge - Facts and information acquired through training, education, and experience.
- Skills - The ability to do something well, perform, or execute a task.
- Behaviors – Actions, including how one conducts themselves towards or around others.
- Attitudes - Ways of thinking or feeling that impact actions, decisions, and others.

There are many **professional development** opportunities available for program staff including, but not limited to:

- Continuing Education - Academic courses and workshops through colleges or other educational institutions.
- Professional Development Organizations - For example, professional associations and conferences.
- Training/Skill-based Training - For example, certificates/certifications or trade development programs.
- Mentor/Sponsorship - For example, peer-to-peer support across grantee organizations or topic specific discussions.
- Feedback - For example, regular performance review or accessing specific JTED Reporting System dashboards and reports.

Professional Development around Equity

Successful implementation of the JTED program integrates the program's six core values: diversity, equity, inclusion, welcoming, belonging, and accessibility to foster an environment that allows individuals to feel safe, participate fully, develop professionally, and reach their fullest potential. **All members of your team should receive training in these six core equity areas.** The Department will provide basic equity training; it is the grantees' responsibility to ensure their staff is appropriately trained to incorporate the six core equity values into their service delivery approach.

Below are a few available resources:

- [An Introduction to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for All State Employees](#), developed by the Illinois Department of Human Rights.
- Illinois State Board of Education [Equity Information and Resources](#)
- Illinois Board of Higher Education [Illinois Educational Attainment and Equity Dashboards](#).

Note: JTED will provide basic equity training. For additional information on the six core equity values, see Chapter 2: Equity and Program Culture.

Professional development related to equity may involve helping staff develop the linguistic and cultural competency skills necessary to interact with diverse customers.

Skill development may include, but not be limited to:

1. **Refraining from judgment.** Cultural differences can cause certain interactions to feel odd or unusual. These impressions are normal when individuals from different cultures interact. Interactions should not be categorized as good, bad, wrong, or right. They should be seen as different and non-punitive.
2. **Empathizing.** Empathizing with others, or putting yourself in their shoes, helps ease communication and provides a foundation for kindness and respect. When staff and customers can empathize with each other, especially across differences, this improves team cohesion and helps to prevent potentially harmful misunderstandings.
3. **Clarifying Understanding.** Clarify your understanding of what is being communicated. Broken English, accents, and dialects can interfere with effective communication. Do not assume! Instead, respectfully clarify your understanding by either paraphrasing or reframing (Madaan, Agrawal, Sethi, Kumar, & Singh 2016) what was heard and asking for confirmation that your understanding is accurate.
4. **Seeking First to Understand.** When reasoning seems irrational or unfamiliar, seek first to understand (Covey, 2012). Understanding intentions and/or the implications of what is being communicated is just as important, if not more important, than clarifying understanding. While clarifying understanding gives you the “what,” taking time to seek first to understand intentions gives you the “why.” This information can be key to fully understanding someone inquiring about your program, either for themselves, relatives, or a customer, and effectively responding to their needs. Use phrases like “Tell me more” or “Can you explain further?”

Additional Resources

See the [JTED Partner Guide](#) for webinars and other technical assistance sessions.