

BEST CORPORATION: HOTEL TRAINING CENTER

INTRODUCTION

The Hotel Training Center Partnership (HTC) provides pre-employment and incumbent training for the hospitality sector. The partnership is led by BEST Corp., the designated training provider for the Hotel Union Local 26 and involves all 23 unionized hotels in the greater Boston area¹. In addition to employers, the partnership involves several community partners, including the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, Project Place, Julie's Learning Program, and the Boston Private Industry Council. HTC provides a mix of occupationally specific training as well as basic education since both components are seen as essential for advancement in the sector.

CHANGES TO MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Sectoral Focus

The sectoral focus of the partnership continues to be hospitality, specifically the unionized portion of industry. While the majority of partner employers are hotels, there are some exceptions. Unionized food services companies such as Aramark, which staffs the concessions at Fenway Park, and new partner, Levy Restaurants, which took over concessions at Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (BCEC), are also members of HTC. HTC focuses on assisting members of Local 26 who are employed at partners and on helping pre-employment participants gain employment in those same partners. This sector is noted for attractive starting wages and benefits. HTC reports that a starting wage for an entry room attendant is \$15.73 an hour plus nearly \$7 in benefits. The wage differential between the union and nonunion portion of the sector means that it is not unusual for HTC to see participants who are currently employed in nonunion hotels seeking training so that they can find a job in the better paying union hotel.

Structure of the Partnership

HTC continues to be an active and engaged partnership with strong leadership from BEST Corp. and an active group of employers. While there are 23 employers that are part of the partnership, in actuality, the active partners are a much smaller subset. The level of hotel involvement is tied both to the specific needs of the hotel and to the interest of hotel leadership. As will be discussed later in this document, BEST Corp. has invested heavily in reaching out to employers to both better meet the needs of active employers and to engage some that have not yet been deeply involved. HTC will likely see the results of these efforts in 2011. HTC designated 12 hotels as

¹ The 23 hotel partners of BEST Corp. and Local 26 are the Back Bay Boston Hotel, Boston Park Plaza Hotel, Colonnade Hotel, Copley Square Hotel, Courtyard by Marriott Boston Logan Airport, Courtyard by Marriott Cambridge, Courtyard by Marriott South Boston, Fairmont Battery Wharf, Fairmont Copley Plaza, Hampton Inn & Suites (Boston), Hotel Commonwealth, InterContinental Hotel, Lenox Hotel, Logan Airport Hilton, Nine Zero Hotel, Omni Parker House, Ritz Carlton Boston Common, Sheraton Boston Hotel & Towers, Sheraton Braintree, Sheraton Commander, Taj Boston, Westin Copley Place, and Westin Waterfront.

“active” employers this year. That 12 included the Intercontinental Hotel, Aramark (first at BCEC then at Fenway Park), Omni Parker House, Ritz-Carlton Boston Common, Boston Park Plaza, Westin Waterfront, Westin Copley, Copley Square Hotel, Levy Restaurants (new food service vendor at BCEC), Colonnade Hotel, Sheraton Boston Hotel and Towers, and the Fairmont Copley Hotel. While 12 were “active” in the partnership, seven employers actually had incumbent workers who participated in HTC training.

The evaluators conducted a survey of active employers this year as a component of the evaluation and can provide insight into how employers were involved this year in HTC. Active employers engaged with HTC on a variety of dimensions. Most common involvement was in hiring of new employees and in training design. Key partners have regular input into service design, have also invested in-kind resources to support partnership activities, and some regularly attend participant graduations to celebrate the individual and program achievements. More than half indicated that they were involved in the governance of HTC, which would indicate their involvement in HTC’s quarterly meetings.

Employer Participation in HTC	
	% Somewhat or Very Involved
Governance/planning/advisory	57%
Training design	71%
Screening of program participants	43%
Training delivery (e.g. job shadowing, tours)	57%
Hiring of new employees from HTC	86%
Recruitment/referral of existing employees to HTC services	57%
HTC provided services to existing employees	71%

Source: HTC Employer Survey, 2010. Total number of responses: 7

HTC’s non-employer partners also include a mix of service providers and community partners. HTC has worked with a new service provider partner this year. HTC partnered with Boston Earned Income Tax Coalition for the first time this year to offer a financial literacy class for SkillWorks participants. HTC also expanded its relationship with Project Place. Previously, HTC had sought opportunities for Project Place participants to become involved in HTC pre-employment classes. This year, HTC worked with Project Place to pilot its professional guest services class. In addition to the partners mentioned above, HTC also considers the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, Julie’s Learning Program, and the Boston Private Industry Council as partners, but their role roles are fairly limited to referral and occasional advisory capacity.

Staffing Changes

HTC has experienced little change in staffing this year. The only permanent change was in the education coordinator position. However, BEST Corp. staff all pitched in to cover the temporary absence of HTC's director of workforce development (who has oversight of the SkillWorks programs) while she took maternity leave during Year 2.

PARTICIPANT PROGRESS

Goals and Strategies

HTC planned to enroll 112 participants in Year 1 (2009) and to enroll 98 participants in Year 2 (2010) including 56 incumbents and 42 pre-employment participants. Participants may choose a variety of paths to advancement. The table below summarizes the pathways, or training tracks, offered by HTC.

HTC Training Tracks	
Training Track	Description
Culinary	Designed to give pre-employment participants and incumbent workers the skills needed to obtain an entry-level culinary position. Training includes basic culinary skills and food safety training.
Entry-level Hospitality (Room Attendant)	Unemployed and underemployed participants enter the entry-level hospitality track to receive a basic orientation to the hospitality industry and the hard skills needed to obtain an entry-level position.
Professional Food Service	Designed primarily for incumbent workers (but includes some pre-employment) to prepare them for work as food servers (room service, banquet, or restaurant).
General Skills Enhancement	Incumbent participants seeking career advancement who are in need of general skills enhancement in the areas of ESOL, computer skills, and/or customer service in order to achieve career plan.
GED	Incumbent participants enter this track with the end goal of obtaining a GED. Courses include Basic Academic Skills (pre-GED) and GED prep classes.
Postsecondary Education	Incumbent participants enrolled in the postsecondary education track are enrolled in credit bearing courses and have a long-term certificate or degree toward which they are working in any field.

Goals of Educational Advancement

The majority of advancement opportunities in the hospitality sector, for the population served by HTC, do not require a high school or postsecondary degree. While HTC supports participants who are interested in pursuing postsecondary education, BEST Corp. and SkillWorks reached agreement in Year 2 that demand by employers and participants did not warrant making postsecondary education advancement a significant focus of the partnership's effort in the near term. Basic education appears to be a more pressing need for participants and an interest of employers, as well as a necessity for pursuing further education and skills training, should the participants have this as a goal.

New or Changed Services for Year 2

While the majority of HTC's service offerings remained the same in Year 2, there were some modifications and additions.

- *Financial Literacy*: BEST added a financial literacy program, in partnership with Boston Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition, targeting SkillWorks participants. Students attended half-day workshops and had individual follow-up sessions with a financial coach.
- *Professional Guest Services*: Employers had identified a need for higher-level customer service among employees as a critical skill for advancement, and HTC has sought to address this need in a couple of ways. First, a two-hour standalone workshop was developed that can be incorporated into occupational training entailing guest contact. This workshop has since been added to room attendant training. In addition, HTC, with prompting from the SkillWorks Initiative, developed a Professional Guest Service class that was piloted this summer with Project Place participants. The class officially launched for HTC participants recently. The class meets twice a week. One day a week it is taught by a highly experienced doorman from Omni Parker House and focuses on learning about Boston. This builds on a previous class offered by BEST Corp. The second class of the week involves a mix of classroom interaction to practice customer services skills and invites guest speakers who introduce different front of the house occupations such as doormen and bellmen.
- *Culinary*: HTC continues to tweak the culinary offering. The program that started in December 2009 and completed in April 2010 included more hands-on experience for participants. Participants were required to spend three hours a week on meal preparation at St. Francis House. HTC is exploring opportunities for similar hands-on experience with Community Servings.
- *Professional Food Server/Banquet Server*: HTC offered a narrower course offering specifically on the skills needed to be an on-call banquet server early in Year 2. This closely resembled BEST Corp.'s original offering prior to SkillWorks involvement. Participants were extremely interested in this course because graduates can add occasional shifts that can supplement existing work. Class participants who expressed an interest in longer-term career advancement in food and beverage were subsequently enrolled in SkillWorks and offered coaching and access to supplementary classes to work toward their goal. HTC is offering a full professional food server program in the fourth quarter of Year 2.
- *GED/Pre-GED*: At SkillWorks' request, HTC worked to attract additional participants for its pre-GED and GED offerings. BEST Corp. tried to rebrand the classes as "basic academic skills" to capture people who may not feel the need for a GED but are interested in improving their skills. BEST also tried to reach out to those who wanted to attend college with the thinking that some might need to complete their GED as a preliminary step. BEST also started administering the TABE on site which gave them a richer understanding of participants' interests and abilities.

HTC has also devoted substantial effort to curriculum enhancements that will be rolled out in 2011. For instance, BEST has been working with employers around the development of green curriculum that will be incorporated in the room attendant training next year.

HTC also invested heavily in Year 2 in strengthening its outreach and recruitment of incumbent workers. The lengthy and multi-faceted effort is still a work in progress. HTC’s approach to addressing this issue has involved extensive work with employers. As a result, the effort will be described later in this document as a component of its work with employers.

Accomplishments Related to Individuals

Services Provided

HTC enrolled 103 participants in its first full year of implementation, close to its goal of 112. At the end of the third quarter of Year 2, HTC had enrolled 55 participants. To achieve its enrollment goal for Year 2, HTC will need to enroll an additional 43 individuals in the fourth quarter — an ambitious number. Incumbent enrollment appears to be the challenge for HTC. HTC finished Year 1 approximately 20 percent below its enrollment goal for incumbents. HTC is currently 55 percent below its goal for incumbents in Year 2, with one-quarter of the year remaining.

Total Enrollment						
	Goal for Year 1	Year 1 Actual		Goal for Year 2	Year 2 as of September 30, 2010	
		#	%		#	%
Pre-employment	52	56	54%	42	30	55%
Unemployed	32	39			22	
Employed outside Sector	20	17			8	
Incumbent*	60	47	46%	56	25	45%
Employed by Partner		39			19	
Employed by Non Partner		8			6	
Total for Pre-employment and Incumbents	112	105		98	55	
Note: Data as of October 20, 2010. Third quarter data may not be complete.						
Note: Two Year 1 participants missing data on whether they are pre-employment or incumbent.						

Participants have actively engaged in the variety of services HTC offers. The largest service provided has been the entry-level hospitality training, preparing people for openings as room attendants. Approximately 42 percent of participants have attended that training. Culinary is the second largest offering for HTC. While 20 percent of participants are enrolled in services focused on “general skills enhancement,” many of these participants have completed a more occupationally-specific training and are working to build basic skills needed for advancement. In some cases, individuals who are working with career coaches on specific career advancement plans are enrolled in this track based on skill needs identified with the coach. The table below provides further data on the focus of participant skill development.

Participant Track Activity by Cohort								
	Year 1 Cohort				Year 2 Cohort			
	In Progress	Completed	Did Not Complete	Status Unknown	In Progress	Completed	Did Not Complete	Total
Culinary	3	24	4		10			41
Entry-level Hospitality		36	2	1	2	25	1	67
GED	15		2		9	2		28
General Skills Enhancement	25	1			4	1		31
Postsecondary Education	5							3
Professional Food Service		16	3		2	1		22
Total	48	77	11	1	27	29	1	192

Note: Data as of Oct 12, 2010 (with some modifications based on October 20, 2010 data). Third quarter data may not be complete.
Note: 35 individuals have enrolled in more than one track.

Despite HTC’s new outreach strategy, it does not appear likely that Year 2 GED enrollment will exceed Year 1. While postsecondary education is not a major focus of HTC, there is a handful of participants who are choosing that pathway. Five participants have enrolled in college and two additional participants have enrolled in X-Cel’s College Prep class.

Enrolled Participant Characteristics

See the attached appendix for tables of demographic information.

Residency

More than half of participants from both Year 1 and Year 2 reside in Boston.

Educational Attainment

The educational background of HTC participants reflects the fact that the hospitality sector does not place significant emphasis on educational attainment for entry positions. More than 40 percent of all participants in Years 1 and 2 do not have a high school degree. In general, Year 2 participants have less education than those who enrolled in Year 1. In Year 2, 45 percent of pre-employment participants and 58 percent of incumbent participants did not have a high school degree. Just 12 percent of Year 2 participants, pre-employment and incumbent, have any college experience.

English

Participants’ English ability is a major barrier to advancement, particularly among incumbent participants. While slightly less than half of pre-employment participants indicated that their English was a barrier to advancement, more than two-thirds of incumbents, a full 71 percent in Year 2, indicated that English was a barrier to advancement.

Income Level

Pre-employment participants are largely low-income. In fact, 84 percent of Year 1 participants and 89 percent of Year 2 participants have been determined to be low-income. HTC intake data suggest that more than two-thirds of pre-employment participants have a household income of less than \$21,000 per year.

Roughly half of incumbent participants are considered low-income as well in both Year 1 and Year 2. Despite starting wages of \$15.73 an hour, there are reports that some workers struggle to get sufficient hours. Approximately 21 percent of incumbent participants work part-time hours².

Outputs and Outcomes

HTC was successful in implementing the key components of its planned services for individuals. HTC has closely followed its proposal for Year 2 and appears to have met the stipulations set by SkillWorks as conditions of funding for the year. While HTC will be challenged to meet its enrollment goals by the end of Year 2, the organization has successfully delivered a substantial number of services to date. Of the 105 participants who enrolled in Year 1, 76 have completed at least one training track (one has completed two tracks). One-quarter of the Year 1 participants have chosen to continue skill enhancement following completion of their first training track. Most of these participants are now improving basic skills or have enrolled in the GED classes. While it is early to look at outputs from Year 2, it is worth noting that half of participants enrolled in Year 2 have already completed at least their initial training.

Educational Outcomes

HTC's programmatic focus reflects the sector in that there is limited emphasis on educational attainment pathways leading to postsecondary degrees. In total, three individuals are enrolled in a postsecondary track and are pursuing college coursework. Over the two years, 28 have enrolled with the goal of receiving a GED, although among the 22 are individuals whose current work is best described as "Pre-GED" since their current academic skills were not sufficient for GED coursework. To date, two individuals have received their GED.

HTC has placed greater emphasis on helping participants gain either locally- or nationally-recognized industry certifications. Graduates of the room attendant training track are considered to have received a locally-recognized credential as are graduates of the on-call banquet program. Graduates of the professional food server and culinary program are considered by HTC to have gained an industry recognized credential with recognition beyond the local market. In addition, HTC has prepared many participants for national certifications required for certain hospitality positions. Many participants have received multiple certifications. HTC reports the following outcomes:

- 41 individual have received certification in Food Safety Training from the National Environmental Health Association, a nationally-recognized credential;

² This figure may be higher than expected because HTC frequently schedules classes and enrolls new participants during slow periods at hotels when it is more likely that participants will have less than full-time hours.

- 31 individuals have received TIPS, a nationally-recognized credential that prepares people to serve alcohol responsibly; and
- 14 received Choke Saver for Restaurant Emergencies.

While these certifications were intended to be a component of professional food server and culinary training, it appears that other SkillWorks participants, including room attendants, have enrolled in these trainings as well.

Employment Outcomes

Pre-employment

HTC has shown strong performance in placing its pre-employment participants into employment. Furthermore, the performance is still improving as HTC learns and adapts its intake process.

Pre-employment Year 1 and Year 2 (through 9/30/2010)								
Enrollment	Program Completion		Placement					
# Enrolled	# Graduating	% of Enrolled	# Placed in Partner Employer	% of Graduates	# Placed in Non-Partners	% of Graduates	Total Placed	% of Graduates
85	73	85.9%	36	49.3%	21	28.8%	57	78.1%

Combining Year 1 and the first three quarters of Year 2, 86 percent of pre-employment graduates completed the program. Of those who completed, approximately 78 percent were placed into employment. More than half of graduates were placed at partner hotels. The average starting wage was \$13.13,³ although generally participants gaining employment received higher wages than those employed at non-partners (\$14.40 vs. \$12.87). HTC refined its intake process in late 2009, which has improved the number of participants completing the training program. While 11 individuals did not complete the SkillWorks program in Year 1, no SkillWorks pre-employment participants have dropped out of the program in Year 2 to date. Room attendants and culinary graduates have most readily found employment, although room attendants are far more likely to find employment with partner hotels. One culinary graduate was placed at a partner hotel. A few have gone to Aramark at Fenway, while others have found related employment at non-partner establishments, including hotels and restaurants. One pre-employment culinary participant has subsequently enrolled full-time at Le Cordon Bleu.

Incumbent

Among incumbent workers served by HTC, there are two distinct groups of participants: participants employed by employer partners and those employed by non-partners in the sector. In many ways, the participants working at non-partners within the sector are more like pre-employment participants in that the primary career goal is to gain employment within the union portion of the sector as opposed to seeking advancement at their existing employer, since union

³ Two participants from this category were placed into food service positions and receive gratuities, which are not reflected in this average.

employers offer higher wages and better benefits. Given the distinction in career goals, those two types of incumbents will be examined separately. BEST has enrolled 13 incumbent participants employed at non-partner employers since the beginning of Year 1. Of that 13, five have completed training successfully to date and four have subsequently obtained new employment at partner employers.

Looking more closely at the outcomes to date among participants employed at employer partners, BEST served 39 such participants in Year 1 and 10⁴ for the first three quarters of Year 2 (according to available data). It is most relevant to examine employment outcomes among the first cohort of participants since they have been engaged with BEST long enough that employment outcomes are more likely to be seen. Of the 39 participants who enrolled in Year 1, 20 completed at least one training track, five did not complete, and 13 are still in progress. Of the 20 who completed, BEST has employment data available for 18. Among the 18, two received promotions related to their training. One individual was promoted from banquet houseman to banquet supervisor (wage increase from 14.75 to 15.73), and another individual was promoted from server assistant to in-room dining (wage increase from 13.00 to 15.83). Both were graduates of the professional food server program. Another individual advanced within the sector due to HTC support, shifting to a newly-opened hotel. The advancement appears to show no income gain but since the new position is tipped, participant-reported information suggests he almost doubled his hourly wage to close to \$30 per hour. While the data show that 14 of the 18 received a wage increase, the increase is likely due to the collective bargaining agreement with Local 26 and not a performance-based increase.

Participant Reflections on HTC Training

[The program was] awesome. It inspired me to do better and program will back me up in the long run.
-- Culinary graduate

[The program was] much better than I expected. I know I sound like a commercial for the program, but it's really helped me.
-- Culinary graduate

I'm so glad I found them. So helpful.... I'm so happy. Got a certificate from the hotel -- the manager's signature and the HR department signature saying I'm doing a good job. I'm so happy.
-- Room attendant graduate

It has helped me to get myself ready for going into this industry. I got a job. I'm still in contact with career coach, which is very helpful. Encouragement has been very, very positive. If I'm having a moment, she hears me out and gives positive encouragement. Very good that you do have someone there who understands you are human.
-- Room attendant graduate

My career coach and BEST have been helping me since I attended the housekeeping training and I am benefit from ESOL and computer classes a lot.
-- Room attendant graduate

I received the job skills training and found a job. I continue to learn and improve my English and computer. I received the ongoing support and assistance from career coaches and teachers.
-- Room attendant graduate

Overall, 24 participants employed at partner hotels have received a wage increase (includes enrollment from both years and includes some individuals who have not yet completed training).

One Year 2 participant has advanced to date and that change was related to training. A Year 2 participant who worked with the career coach while taking English and computer classes received a promotion from a steward to a barback (bartender's assistant) in the hotel restaurant.

⁴ HTC enrolled nine additional participants in Q3 following completion of this analysis.

The promotion came with a small raise initially, but the individual received a second wage increase three months later and now makes \$17 per hour.

Incumbent* Wage Increases and Promotions (Year 1 and 2 as of Sept 30, 2010)				
N=49	Wage Increase	% of total participants	Promotions	% of total participants
Total	24	49.0%	3	6.1%

*Incumbents in this table are only those employed at employer partners.

Three participants entered either culinary training or professional server training with a career goal of entering a hotel management position. They used the additional training as a way

of gaining exposure to other aspects of hotel operations. While none have been placed in management yet, one individual has now enrolled in the college track as a step toward the eventual goal of becoming a hotel manager.

Key Findings Related to Individuals

While the overall evaluation of HTC’s efforts is quite positive, interviews with HTC staff, employers, and the union have surfaced some challenges that HTC faces that will pose obstacles in meeting its desired outcomes over the five years.

➤ **BEST Corp. has great success getting low-income, low-skilled underemployed or unemployed individuals into good jobs with benefits.**

BEST’s pre-employment track record is strong in terms of program completion and placement. BEST has strong demand for its programs, and employers see the quality of graduates as generally high, particularly for entry-level room attendants. Improving economic conditions in the hospitality sector, a refined intake process, and BEST Corp.’s growing reputation among employers have made placements easier in Year 2.

➤ **Few incumbent participants have demonstrated career advancement to date.**

Of the 49 incumbent participants employed at employer partners, the relevant group for career advancement, only three have received a promotion to date. BEST anticipated that the two primary vehicles for incumbent worker career advancement were culinary and food server pathways. To date, two participants from the food server program advanced, but none of the participants from the culinary program advanced at their partner employer. Employer partners are not just looking for skills developed in a training course; they value experience in both server and culinary staff. Although HTC has added a hands-on component to the culinary program, it does not appear to have swayed employer partners to hire from the program. Even in situations where an employer would consider a participant for advancement, participants may not be willing to switch jobs. The role that seniority plays in shift assignments in the hotels may be a deterrent for incumbent workers pursuing career advancement.

➤ **Demand for HTC services continues to lag among incumbents.**

Despite extensive efforts at marketing its programs to both employers and incumbent workers, it appears unlikely that HTC will hit its target enrollment figures for incumbent participants again. HTC is still working to understand the various factors that have contributed to limited interest,

but it appears clear that a complex web of forces makes advancement a more unusual occurrence in this sector, not the norm. Below is a list of some of the factors, many of which were raised in last year's report:

- Advancement is not a concept familiar to many in the sector. When career coaches recently conducted information sessions for workers in the hotels, the coaches discovered that workers were unfamiliar with the term “career advancement.” In some cases, coaches could find language more specific to the hotel that allowed workers to understand the concept.
- Advancement to many workers in hospitality means more hours or a better shift, maybe more tips, not a change in work responsibilities with a compensatory wage increase.
- An employment system based on seniority is a major barrier to advancement that requires shifting job classification. Shift assignments at the partnering union hotels are determined exclusively by seniority. The longer you have worked in a given position in a given hotel, the more likely you are to receive regular shifts at the times desired. If a worker changes jobs, he starts at the bottom in terms of seniority. This jeopardizes not only what shift they are assigned but how many hours they are assigned as well.
- Some pathways to advancement require leaving the union, which some find either financially or socially risky. Supervisory positions are often nonunion positions and would involve losing the excellent benefits package and security of union protection valued by many members. In addition, some employers have mentioned that workers are afraid of the social isolation that they might face in becoming the “boss” of their former peers.

HTC is trying to grapple with how best to help participants increase their financial stability in an environment in which advancement is not the generally accepted path to achieving these goals.

EMPLOYER PROGRESS

Goals and Strategies

In addition to HTC's overarching goal of delivering quality training services to participants in areas of demand to employers, there were a couple of specific goals for Year 2. First, HTC recognized that it needed to get a clearer understanding of the career pathways in partner hotels. Second, HTC wanted to engage front-line supervisors as a means of attracting more incumbent workers and developing more robust advancement strategies. Third, HTC wanted to better understand the existing hotel offerings to see if there were opportunities to dovetail its offerings with the training programs run by hotels.

Accomplishments Related to Employers

Services Provided

Relationships with employers have largely followed what HTC anticipated. Employer partners are involved in multiple aspects of the partnership. They have a strong voice in the curriculum design. Some employers welcome participants to job shadow at their hotels. Employer staff

regularly attend graduations and contribute in myriad ways to ensure the high-quality programming offered by HTC. HTC supplies the employers with a steady flow of candidates well-prepared for entry-level room attendant positions. HTC has also aided specific employers with employee training for some of the certifications needed by hotel staff such as food safety or TIPS.

Outputs and Outcomes

Employers offered high praise of the work of HTC. Employers consistently found HTC highly competent and responsive. If anything, employers wish that more of their employees took advantage of HTC offerings. Some also wished that hotel employees who were not members of the union could take advantage of the same services. The table below, which is based on information from the 2010 survey of HTC employers, provides greater granularity in the areas that employers are most and least satisfied. The results confirm a high level of satisfaction, but point to the ongoing concern about whether the culinary program and possibly the food server program are truly meeting partner employer needs. Employers appear most satisfied with HTC’s pre-employment offering, many seeing it as directly beneficial to their organization⁵.

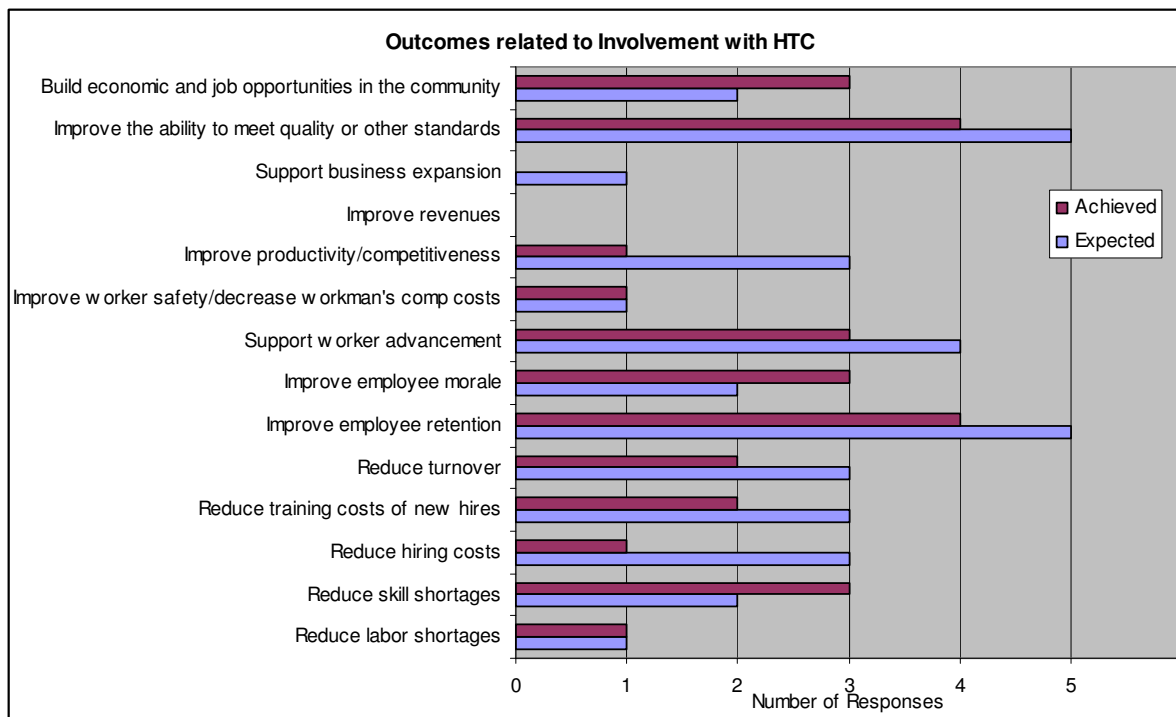
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding HTC?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Response Count
The occupational training and coaching services provided to my current employees are directly beneficial to my organization.	2	4	0	0	0	1	7
The pre-employment training and coaching services provided to individuals before they are hired are directly beneficial to my organization.	3	1	1	0	0	2	7
HTC provides the appropriate type and level of skills and competencies required for an entry room attendant position.	1	4	0	0	0	2	7
HTC provides the appropriate type and level of skills and competencies required of a food server.	1	2	3	0	0	1	7
HTC provides the appropriate type and level of skills and competencies required for entry-level culinary positions.	1	2	2	1	0	1	7
HTC has a good understanding of the paths to advancement at my establishment.	1	4	0	0	0	2	7
HTC provides valuable assistance in identifying, understanding, and addressing challenges in hiring, retaining, and advancing my workforce.	0	3	3	0	0	1	7
HTC provides valuable assistance in designing or developing new or improved career pathways that make advancement more accessible.	1	3	2	0	0	1	7
HTC’s quarterly employer meetings are a valuable tool to share information and best practices regarding workforce development with other employers and training providers.	2	2	1	0	0	2	7

Source: Employer Survey, 2010. Total number of survey responses: 7.

⁵ While employer contributions support a significant portion of incumbent worker training, the highly valued pre-employment services are supported through other sources such as public or philanthropic funding such as SkillWorks.

Employers were seeking the following outcomes through their involvement with HTC: improve the ability to meet quality or other standards, improve employee retention, and support worker advancement. The majority feel that they have achieved their desired outcomes through participation with HTC. While the employer survey results suggest that employers are coming close to achieving their goals from participation, a closer examination of the data highlights the continuing struggle for HTC to figure out incumbent pathways to career advancement. The desire to advance workers is not a universal goal of the partnering employers. Three of the seven who responded to the survey did not pick advancement as a goal of their participation.



Source: Employer Survey, 2010. Total number of survey responses: 7.

Employers point to a few reasons why HTC and SkillWorks' goals for worker advancement may not be fully achieved:

- Hotel partners look for individuals with prior experience, not merely training, in culinary and server positions, the occupations HTC had identified for incumbent advancement.

Even though I love the courses offered by HTC, unfortunately, when we have openings, we often want experienced candidates. This is an industry with some entry-level positions (Front Desk Agent) but most positions require prior experience (i.e., Culinary, Server...).

-- HR representative at partner hotel

The desire for experience makes it difficult for employees to change occupations at their existing employer without first finding a second job elsewhere to gain the required experience.

- There are incumbent workers at the partner hotels who are eager to advance and who might be interested in participating in HTC services, but they do not qualify because they are not Local 26 members and, hence, do not qualify for the benefit offered to union members, which is the primary source of funds for BEST Corp. Two employers specifically asked that HTC offer services to non-members.
- While HTC has targeted positions for advancement (culinary and food server) that require switching departments within the hotel, employers do seek internal candidates to promote within their departments into supervisory positions; however, they find little interest among existing workers. One employer reported,

I practically begged my room attendants to apply for a supervisor role. No one would apply. No one wanted to supervise their friends. I finally had to hire from the outside.

-- HR representative at partner hotel

As was discussed earlier, supervisory positions are not attractive to many participants; however, it is a path to advancement and apparently an area where employers sometimes struggle to promote from within. As a result, it likely warrants further exploration by HTC.

SYSTEM CHANGE

HTC laid out three main system change goals for Year 2. The three goals follow, and the specific strategies HTC took to pursue these goals are described, as are the outcomes to date.

1. Map internal career pathways to identify advancement opportunities with clear interim steps.

While mapping career pathways was listed as a system change goal, this endeavor touches on all aspects of HTC operations. It gets to the heart of one of HTC's challenges around participant services: low incumbent enrollment. It also relates to the fact that a limited number of employers see their involvement with HTC leading to incumbent worker advancement.

Strategies

HTC has pursued a number of strategies in 2010 to better understand internal career pathways. In the first quarter of 2010, the HTC director began meeting with human resource representatives at key employer partners to discuss the alignment of HTC coaching with the internal advancement processes within each hotel. HTC discovered very uneven practices among the hotels in terms of their own use of personnel review to provide information that would guide participants in skill development for advancement. One employer partner does not have any type of formal review process (written or verbal) in place for union employees. The human resources director explained that there is a perception among supervisors that union employees will not advance, are not interested in feedback on their performance, and that a formal review process could lead to union grievances. These initial interviews with key employers led HTC to introduce the concept of a common tool among employer partners to appraise a participant's current performance. The tool would also aid in the design of a skills development/learning plan to facilitate discussions between coaches, managers, and participants. Despite initial interest,

when HTC shared a possible tool with employers at an advisory meeting, there was not broad support to move forward. HTC tabled this idea for the moment, although the topic may be revisited in the future.

Career coaches also worked to build stronger relationships with human resources staff this year and are looking to build stronger connections with supervisors as well. One step in building a more transparent relationship was to modify incumbent enrollment. Previously, there was no notification to supervisors or to human resources that an incumbent worker was pursuing skill enhancement. In 2010, HTC introduced a consent form that requires sign-off from the participant, the human resources office, and the participant's supervisor, and is in the process of rolling that out. The consent form is used as long as the participant is willing. Participants still have the option of participating without involving their supervisor or human resources if they prefer. Coaches strengthened relationships with employers through meetings to introduce the changes in the enrollment process.

While originally coaches intended to meet with supervisors in the third quarter to orient them to HTC's coaching services and to secure their support in identifying and referring incumbent workers, that work has been delayed as coaches spent additional time reaching out to incumbent workers to understand their perspective on and desire for career advancement. Coaches did meet with supervisory staff from the Ritz Carlton Boston Common Hotel earlier this year. Most of the supervisors, referred to as learning coaches, were only vaguely familiar with HTC programs and services, and had not referred associates to programs before. They discussed new mechanisms for sharing opportunities, including a monthly highlight of HTC trainings in department morning meetings.

Outcomes

This work is still ongoing. There are not tangible outcomes in terms of new advancement opportunities with clear interim steps. HTC staff do have a clearer understanding of worker perceptions of advancement as well as the existing internal processes (or lack thereof) at partner employers to support advancement.

2. Align HTC services with employers' existing internal career advancement resources.

Strategies

HTC used the discussions with human resources staff referenced above to clarify employers' internal programs supporting career advancement.

Outcomes

HTC learned that the programs are more geared to management and are not well suited to the Local 26 members served by HTC. While there may not be immediate opportunities for participants to benefit from the employer advancement programs, the discussions highlighted for HTC some common principles that should be important whether the program is run by HTC or by the employer. Employers value soft skills — communication skills and conflict resolution.

While HTC already incorporates these into existing training, it plans to revisit the curriculum in light of the discussions with employers.

3. Expand collaboration with other hospitality training programs.

Strategies

HTC met with other Boston hospitality training providers to the end of establishing better communication and working relationships among the providers and to explore opportunities for future collaboration. JVS Culinary Training Program, International Institute of Boston's Hotel Career Center, Community Servings' Culinary Training, and the Hotel Training Center all attended. The group surfaced several ideas for increased collaboration.

Outcomes

One immediate outcome is that Community Servings now uses HTC's computer lab for training. HTC and Community Servings are in active discussions about developing an agreement where culinary participants could practice skills at Community Servings. The information exchange has also enabled the training providers to cross refer candidates from one training program to another. The group will reconvene in November.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

➤ HTC has delivered a strong record of performance in its pre-employment programs.

HTC can point to strong outcomes among the pre-employment participants, including 86 percent completing the program and 78 percent of those graduates placed in employment (half at partner hotels). With an average wage over \$13 per hour, new hires are earning wages well above minimum wage. The room attendant training appears to be the strongest feeder to jobs at HTC's employer partners.

➤ Despite a substantial effort, HTC has yet to develop a robust pathway for incumbent advancement.

Enrollment of incumbent workers employed with partners continues to lag expectations. HTC devoted substantial effort to working with employers and conducting outreach with workers, but that has yet to yield major changes in enrollment or outcomes. Although it is early, advancement outcomes for these workers are fairly minimal as well. Only three individuals have received promotions related to the training they received. Promotions and other commonly-used definitions of career advancement likely do not fully capture the economic gains of HTC participants. HTC is seeking to capture the broader economic gains participants receive as a result of their skill enhancement. Moving from a nonunion hotel (offering hourly wages below \$12) to a position at an HTC partner employer; retaining employment; working increased hours by establishing seniority; earning additional income by working additional shifts in other departments; and increasing tips and gratuities are all forms of economic gains that HTC would like to consider as part of a more holistic picture of participant career advancement.

➤ **Employers are highly supportive of HTC and value its services, but they also question the likelihood that HTC services will help a substantial number of their employees advance.**

Employers highly value HTC for its English classes, computer classes, and its pre-employment program. They speak highly in interviews of the professionalism of HTC staff, and a few have expressed a desire that HTC offerings be made available for non-Local 26 employees, even if that were on a fee-for-service basis.

Employers are more doubtful about the interest of their entry-level workers in advancing, particularly if that advancement entails either leaving the union or switching positions in a way that would affect their seniority. Moreover, given the areas that HTC has chosen to focus on incumbent advancement — culinary and food server — the opportunities are limited unless participants work second jobs in that new field in order to gain the relevant experience needed to make them hireable at the partner hotel. Employer partners have yet to agree on what specific guest service skills HTC could provide that will likely lead to advancement in the near-term.

➤ **The challenges that HTC faces in achieving career advancement for incumbent workers at any significant scale may have less to do with its performance, but may rather be a reflection of sector culture and characteristics that make it difficult to implement the SkillWorks and NFWS model of advancement.**

Participants in this sector see advancement in many forms that do not fully align with the theory of change put forth by either SkillWorks or the National Fund. Participants see “advancement” as income gained through a variety of mechanisms:

- additional tips;
- more hours (even simply regular or better hours);
- picking up additional shifts through cross-training to supplement regular income;
- a side business.

As one HTC staff member put it,

“Our goals are very much in line with SkillWorks. The language we are talking in is similar: decent wages, benefits, and having the skills participants need to stay in the workforce. We all want to help low- and moderate-income people. We sometimes wonder, however, whether our industry is so different; our career pathways aren’t laid out like in healthcare. Is there still a way that we fit the model?”

SkillWorks funders will need to grapple with whether this broader view of advancement can be reconciled with the more accepted view of a skill-based advancement paradigm.

DISCUSSION POINTS FOR RE-FUNDING PROCESS

Questions for HTC

- Can HTC work more with employer partners to strengthen the lines of communication between participants and their supervisors or more broadly between Local 26 members and their supervisors?
- Is there potential for HTC to more specifically identify and support participants interested in advancing to supervisory roles?
- What information has HTC gained from discussions with employers and workers that will help HTC staff support participants enrolled in professional guest services achieve advancement?
- How can HTC and Local 26 further collaborate to support advancement of HTC participants?
 - Can Local 26 provide additional assistance with outreach?
 - Can Local 26 be a partner in the discussion around the use of performance review mechanisms, either as a tool to aid HTC's work or, more generally, to help promote a culture supportive of advancement?
 - Is there additional language in the collective bargaining agreement that could further support worker advancement?
- What are the opportunities and challenges associated with possibly expanding HTC's target population to include partner hotel employees who do not currently qualify for the Local 26 educational benefits?

APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Pre-employment Demographic Data for Participants				
	Year 1 Cohort		Year 2 cohort as of September 30, 2010	
	#	%	#	%
Enrollment				
Total Number Enrolled	56		28	
Boston Residency				
Yes - Boston Resident	31	55%	18	64%
No - Not Boston Resident	25	45%	10	36%
Total	56		28	
Missing				
Gender				
Male	23	41%	6	21%
Female	33	59%	22	79%
Total	56		28	
Missing				
Report English as Barrier to Advancement				
English is a Barrier	23	42%	13	48%
English is Not a Barrier	32	58%	14	52%
Total	55		27	
Missing	1		1	
Highest Educational Level and Certification Reported at Enrollment				
Less than 9th grade	5	9%	5	19%
9-12 grade, no diploma	14	25%	7	26%
High School Diploma or equivalent (GED)	24	43%	12	44%
Some college, no degree	10	18%	3	11%
Associate's Degree	2	4%	0	0%
Bachelor's degree (4-year) and above	1	2%	0	0%
Total	56		27	
Missing			1	
Annual Household Income Reported at Enrollment				
\$0 to \$21,000	39	70%	17	63%
\$21,001 to \$28,000	6	11%	5	19%
\$28,001 to \$35,000	6	11%	4	15%
\$35,001 to \$42,000	3	5%	1	4%
\$42,001 to \$49,000	1	2%		0%
\$49,001 to \$56,000		0%		0%
\$56,001 to \$63,000	1	2%		0%
Total	56		27	
Missing			1	
Family Determined to be Low Income				
Low Income	47	84%	25	89%
Not Low Income	9	16%	3	11%
Total	56		28	
Missing				
Employment at Enrollment				
Total employed at enrollment	17	30%	4	14%
Full-time workers*	6	35%	1	25%
Average hourly wage	10.6		8	
Part-time workers	11	65%	3	75%
Average hours worked	20.5		14.3	
Average hourly wage	8.90		11.76	
With employer-sponsored benefits	6	38%	2	50%
Without employer-sponsored benefits	10	63%	2	50%

Note: Data as of October 12th. Third quarter data may be incomplete.

Incumbent Demographic Data for Participants				
	Year 1 Cohort		Year 2 cohort as of September 30, 2010	
	#	%	#	%
Enrollment				
Total Number Enrolled	47		14	
Boston Residency				
Yes - Boston Resident	22	47%	6	43%
No - Not Boston Resident	25	53%	8	57%
Total	47		14	
Missing				
Gender				
Male	23	49%	7	50%
Female	24	51%	7	50%
Total	47		14	
Missing				
Report English as Barrier to Advancement				
English is a Barrier	31	66%	10	71%
English is Not a Barrier	12	26%	4	29%
Total	47		14	
Missing	4			
Highest Educational Level and Certification Reported at Enrollment				
Less than 9th grade	5	11%	4	29%
9-12 grade, no diploma	15	32%	4	29%
High School Diploma or equivalent (GED)	8	17%	4	29%
Some college, no degree	7	15%		0%
Associate's Degree	4	9%		0%
Bachelor's degree (4-year) and above	8	17%	2	14%
Total			14	
Missing	47			
Annual Household Income Reported at Enrollment				
\$0 to \$21,000	4	9%	1	7%
\$21,001 to \$28,000	13	28%	5	36%
\$28,001 to \$35,000	22	47%	2	14%
\$35,001 to \$42,000	4	9%	2	14%
\$42,001 to \$49,000	3	6%	1	7%
\$49,001 to \$56,000	0	0%	1	7%
\$56,001 to \$63,000	1	2%	1	7%
\$70,000 or above	0	0%	1	7%
Total	47		14	
Missing				
Family Determined to be Low Income				
Low Income	25	53%	7	50%
Not Low Income	22	47%	7	50%
Total			14	
Missing	47			
Employment at Enrollment				
Total employed at enrollment	47	100%	14	100%
Full-time workers*	34	72%	10	71%
Average hourly wage	14.39		14.37	
Part-time workers	10	21%	3	21%
Average hours worked	21.8		24.33	
Average hourly wage	13.51		11.69	
With employer-sponsored benefits	37	79%	10	71%
Without employer-sponsored benefits	10	21%	4	29%
Missing	3**		1**	

Note: Data as of October 12th. Third quarter data may be incomplete.