

## Job-Driven Training Principle Two: Earn and Learn

### *Swords to Plowshares Spotlight on Service Case Study*

In 2014, the Federal government held a review of federal training programs in order to identify and implement steps to make these programs more “job-driven.” Job-driven training, defined as “training that is responsive to the needs of employers in order to effectively place ready-to-work Americans in jobs that are available now or train them in the skills needed for better jobs,” includes seven core principles.

#### Seven Core Principles of Job-Driven Training

- Principle One: Engage with Employers
- **Principle Two: Earn and Learn**
- Principle Three: Use the Data
- Principle Four: Measure Results
- Principle Five: Stepping Stones
- Principle Six: Opening Doors
- Principle Seven: Regional Partnerships

Principle Two, Earn and Learn, means that individuals should receive training that is outside the classroom and in the workplace. In addition, they should receive a livable wage for their training. Some examples include paid internships, pre-apprenticeships, Registered Apprenticeships (RA), and on-the-job training (OJT).

Swords to Plowshares (Swords), a community agency providing services to homeless veterans in San Francisco since 1974, has a history of developing earn and learn opportunities for veterans in their programs. In San Francisco, an improving economy means candidate saturation, a challenge compounded by a high cost of living due in large part to an expensive housing market. This dynamic requires that local efforts to end veteran homelessness focus in on the important role that regular and immediate income play in helping homeless veterans achieve housing stability.

#### The Need for Immediate Income

The Swords staff have noticed several trends while serving veterans through their DOL-VETS Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant:

- The need for immediate income – to cover food, shelter, and transportation – often prevents homeless veterans from participating in training programs that could lead to long-term career success.
- As unemployment decreases, employers are struggling to find candidates for entry-level jobs. However, veterans in HVRP want career-track employment over entry-level positions.

#### Grantee Spotlight: Swords to Plowshares

HVRP grantee since: 1992

Current HVRP grants: Three – San Francisco, East Bay, and HFVWF

Other grants/services: SSVF (3), WIOA, HUD (PSH, Transitional, SSO), GPD Transitional Housing, VA Special Needs Program, HCHV Stabilization BEDS, among others.



*Dave Lopez, Deputy Director*

- Swords relies heavily on government resources to fund its employment and training programs for veterans experiencing homelessness, but private resources and employer commitments are needed to fill the gaps.

To better connect veterans in HVRP to in-demand local jobs, Swords developed innovative employer partnerships to open up earn and learn opportunities. That's when Dave Lopez, Deputy Director for Programs & Operations at Swords learned about Prudential's VETalent program (see insert). Because no Prudential subsidiary existed in the Bay area, Lopez and the Swords team began to think about how to create their own comparable program geared to meet the specific needs of the veterans they serve.

### **Finding Funding for Earn and Learn Programs**

As a successful grantee of several Federal programs, Swords first sought Federal funding for the project, but their approach did not match the objectives of any current Federal grant program serving this population. Next, they looked to state government grants. While some of those programs encouraged using an on-the-job training (OJT) model, employers were reluctant to participate because of potential paperwork demands. Finally, the Swords team looked to private funders and employers to fund the project. The team developed a targeted pitch for the program, differentiating this program support from the general operating support their private funders usually provide.

#### **The Prudential VETalent Program**

VETalent is a collaborative approach to workforce development that brings together corporate, social service, and academic partners to help veterans achieve certification, obtain work experience, and gain access to competitive employment. Prudential provides full scholarships for formal training and certification at a local university. During the training/education period, participants receive stipends allowing them to focus completely on the program. After completing the training, participants are placed onsite at Prudential or another corporate partner to gain real work experience that will qualify them for full-time career employment in IT, sales, or business operations.

Looking for a way to meet the needs of veterans, employers, and funders, Swords is developing a variety of OJT training programs that provide veterans with a stipend during training. These earn and learn opportunities include:

#### **PG&E PowerPathway™**

Funded by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), this 10-week program is a cross between traditional OJT and a paid internship. PG&E provides high-quality training for utility workers and funds a weekly stipend of \$200-\$300 for participants that is distributed by Swords. The training is connected to current hiring needs and only runs when there are related vacancies.

#### **EBMUD (East Bay Municipal Utilities District)**

In May 2015, Swords to Plowshares partnered with East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) to put four veterans through a 12-week Plumber Internship Program. Administered by EBMUD's Affirmative Action Office, this Plumber Internship Program was made possible through a partnership with EBMUD, Swords to Plowshares, and Laney Community College. Swords to Plowshares recruited and pre-screened the veterans. These veteran interns gained hands-on experience working alongside EBMUD water distribution plumbers and other trades employees across Alameda and parts of Contra Costa counties

and each received an \$8,400 stipend in this earn and learn model.

Swords' creative approach to meeting the disparate needs of veterans, employers, and funders has created a win, win situation. First and foremost, homeless veterans receive income while participating in high-quality OJT that leads to a credential, and often, an offer of employment. Second, employers are able to test training curricula and potential employees with minimal upfront cost. Finally, private funders are able to see the measurable impact of their investment through direct support of veterans.