U.S. Department of Labour's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training (TAACCCT)

Network of Open Orgs' Collaborative Project:
Case studies that demonstrate the success of Open Educational Resources

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Name of the initiative	Trade Adjustment Assistance Community Colleges and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant programme
URL	https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/skills-training-grants/community-colleges
Categorization of impact (access to education/ learner outcomes/ costs/ continuous professional development)	• Access to education • Learner outcomes • Open policy
Partners	• United States (U.S.) Department of Labour • U.S. Department of Education • Creative Commons • MERLOT-California State University, Jobs for the Future • 700+ community colleges • 2,500+ industry sector partners
Funding sources	U.S. Department of Labour ($1.9 billion)
Years it has been operational	11.5 years

Description, purpose, and aims of the initiative

The U.S. Department of Labour's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant programme was a major investment to promote the ability of U.S. community colleges to address the challenges of today's workforce. Grants were provided to community colleges to create new or redesigned degree programmes to help workers eligible for training under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for Workers programme, as well as a broad range of other adults. TAACCCT targeted high priority industries: manufacturing, healthcare, information technology, energy, transportation, and about a dozen other industry sectors. All materials produced by the grant funding were required to be openly licensed using the Creative Commons (CC) Attribution 4.0 licence (CC BY). The TAACCCT program also funded the creation of an open library to host the TAACCCT funded Open Educational Resources (OER) called SkillsCommons (www.skillscommons.org). SkillsCommons provides free and scalable access to workforce training materials for all.

Successes and achievements

Through TAACCCT, U.S. community colleges developed or redesigned nearly 2,600 programmes of study to help adults learn skills that lead to family-sustaining jobs. Each college or consortium of colleges developed programmes that were aligned with local and regional business needs. These were identified through partnerships formed or strengthened with grant funds. To help adult students obtain industry-recognized credentials more quickly, colleges used TAACCCT funding to innovate with strategies such as career pathways, credit for prior learning, competency-based models, online training, and strong student support systems. The curriculum and other

learning materials developed by TAACCCT grantees are still available to all types of training providers on SkillsCommons.org.

Through this expansive effort, the U.S. Department of Labour helped strengthen U.S. institutions of higher education as engines of economic opportunity where adults can succeed in acquiring the skills, degrees, and credentials needed for high-wage, high-skill employment, while also meeting the needs of employers in hiring skilled workers. The Department of Labour implemented the TAACCCT programme in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education.

Image from TAACCCT page on U.S. Department of Labour's website

Evidence of impact

- **Increased training capacity and access:**
  - A total of 498,793 individuals have been enrolled in TAACCCT supported programmes
  - Students have earned 351,202 credentials for TAACCCT programmes.[1]
- **Improved learning and employment outcomes:**
  - Many TAACCCT programmes measured increased retention rates, increased graduation rates, and an increased rate of employment amongst students.[2]
  - In one study of a subset of projects, 40% of people who finished the course work were employed in a job related to their training, compared to 14% of people who did not finish their course work.[3]
- **Improved policies:**
  - U.S. Department of Labour and most U.S. Department of Education discretionary, competitive grant programmes now require grant-funded products to be licensed using the CC Attribution or a similar open licence to ensure work funded with department grants is available to the public.
  - Over 700 community colleges have engaged in the TAACCCT programmes and all had to learn about OER, CC licensing, and the opportunity for reusing OER to improve speed, cost, and quality of developing workforce programmes.
- **Improved scaling and sustainability of TAACCCT:**
  - Over 65,000 workforce development OER were produced and made freely available in SkillsCommons. As of November 2021, users had downloaded over 3.8 million of the

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[1] Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labour. (2018). TAACCCT. Available at: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/TAACCCT/pdfs/TAACCCT-Fact-Sheet-Program-Information.pdf
[2] See https://support.skillscommons.org/showcases/outcomes/
[3] Abt Associates. (2020). Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant Programme: Round 4 Early Outcomes Study Report. Available at: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/ETA_TAACCCT_Round4_Outcomes-Study-Report_December2020.pdf

OER and over 50% of the recorded downloads occurred after the Department of Labour funding ended (December 2018).

o People from every country have used the publicly funded OER in SkillsCommons.

o The project captured practices of innovative and productive programmes to enable scaling of open degree programmes.

Challenges and perceived failures

- Organizational development and technical assistance: All levels within the education and industry organizations would benefit from some professional development on why and how open education strategies produce significant benefits to students, prospective employees, higher education institutions, and employers. Change management is a critical need and minimal funding and support were provided – especially at the start of the programme.
    - o This highlights the need for readiness assessment to implement open education strategies (using OER, open practices / pedagogies, and support services)
- With the completion of the grant funded project, sustaining access to the OER is a challenge due to insufficient funding.

Lessons learned and practices that made a difference

- Open education strategies should be required as part of the request for proposals and be specifically outlined within project plans. These requirements include CC licensing, instructional design, cataloguing and storage, file format, and reuse/revise/remix of existing OER (when possible).
- Open licensing policies across government lead to more efficient reuse of publicly funded grant outputs. A TAACCCT grantee working on a green energy degree was able to reuse a U.S National Science Foundation funded project that had produced wind turbine technician training materials.
- Change management strategies must be integrated into the programme implementation (including building awareness, desiring change, providing training, delivering support during implementation, and celebrating accomplishments).
- It is useful to build open education strategies at the start of the programme, not the end. SkillsCommons was added as a TAACCCT project after all the funding was distributed and when a quarter of the grant projects were ending within two months. By preparing project leaders with open educational strategies from the start, the production, curation, CC licence marking, storage, and reuse of OER can be more efficient and effective.
- Leadership development is essential for project success as well as the integration of open educational strategies. Supporting competent and persistent leadership with funding and with professional development is key to success. Leadership is distributed throughout the organization, from the campus president and provost to the project director and industry manager.
- Partnership management between the stakeholders in a complex workforce ecosystem is essential for building sustainable capacities.

- Open education support services need to scale to support more people. For example, Creative Commons started with one-on-one staff support for the community colleges and finished with a CC Certificate that can train thousands of educators and librarians.[4]

Resources and publications

- Department of Labour TAACCCT website: https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/skills-training-grants/community-colleges
- SkillsCommons
  - About us page: https://support.skillscommons.org/about
  - Support centre: https://support.skillscommons.org
  - Showcases: https://support.skillscommons.org/showcases
- Creative Commons
  - About us page: https://creativecommons.org/about
  - TAACCCT-related content: https://creativecommons.org/tag/taaccct
  - About CC licences: https://creativecommons.org/about/cclicenses
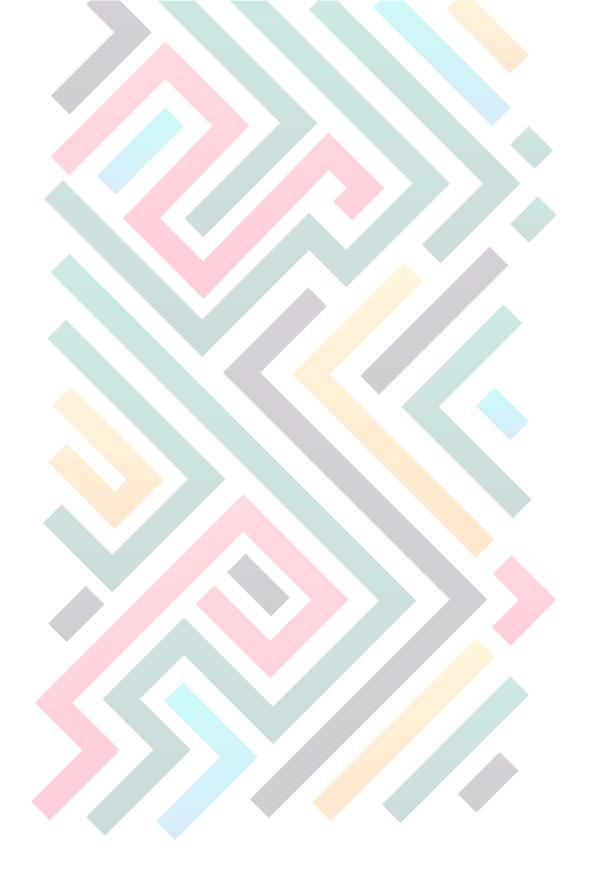
Translating local insights into an international context

- With the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid migration to online education and training, SkillsCommons and MERLOT have produced over 20 locally branded portals for local institutions, many of them serving international communities. Using MERLOT's free Content Builder tool, these portals were co-created quickly with community leaders and then turned over to their control.
  - Translation into the users' native language is very important. MERLOT provides Google Translation and has used UTF8 in coding the application so the user can type in any language and it will be correctly represented in the library.
- As this case study exemplifies, when governments require publicly funded educational resources to be openly licensed, the reuse of those OER are orders of magnitude larger than if the resources were not openly shared. That is, the U.S. Department of Labour required the outputs of their TAACCCT grant to be openly licensed with the CC Attribution licence; those OER are now in SkillsCommons; and (as the data above indicates) the OER have been downloaded by many more people and educational institutions than the community colleges that created them.

Recommended citation

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[4] See https://certificates.creativecommons.org